The establishment of operational standards for college stores is long overdue. Most of the nonacademic side of higher education institutions utilize accepted industrywide performance standards so the concept is one with which administrators are familiar.

The NACS Foundation’s project will leverage NACS’ membership in CAS, the Council on Academic Standards in Higher Education (www.cas.edu). CAS is a consortium of more than 40 professional associations related to student-focused programs and services and is well-known and respected by your campus administrators. They maintain sets of standards and guidelines for many functional areas including Dining Services, Student Unions, and Auxiliary Services.

The Foundation’s formal proposal to CAS for campus store standards is currently in development. If that proposal is approved, the proposed standards will then be finalized and submitted to the rigorous CAS consensus-driven process of review, editing, and approval.

A series of committees and councils has been established by the NACS Foundation Board of Directors to drive the standards development process. They are working under the direction of Jeff Nelson, the NACS vice president of industry collaboration and development, who has also assembled an internal NACS work group that is developing the necessary processes and resources to ensure the successful rollout and ongoing support of the project.

There are many ways that recognized performance standards will benefit the college stores.
store. These include setting performance benchmarks against which stores can measure themselves, developing consistency of readily available industry data and analysis, and facilitating reporting to the institution’s administration.

The focus of the initial set of college store standards is financial resources. These include basic financial controls, the routine monitoring of financial results, and a mutual understanding of the administration’s financial expectations.

Another key component of this initial standards focus is benchmarking financial results against other college stores. NACS is currently developing Campus Store Insights (CSI), a new business intelligence and data visualization platform that will serve as a critical resource for benchmarking and reporting financial results. CSI will provide stores a much more user-friendly presentation of survey results that will include an interactive, web-based interface as opposed to a static PDF.

The NACS Foundation will also partner with NACS Education to support the development and presentation of educational programs specifically tied to the project’s standards. In addition, the CSI platform itself will include an educational component to assist stores to achieve key operational goals.

It’s easy to see how the NACS Foundation Standards Project will be an invaluable resource that helps college stores successfully serve their students, faculty, and institutions.

Look for more detailed information along with progress updates in the Standards Project section of the NACS Foundation website as well as in future NACS publications.

Stephen Hochheiser is a past president of the NACS Foundation and is retired after a 40-year career in publishing and bookstore management.

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—Jason Lorgan, executive director, UC Davis Stores, University of California, Davis

“The opportunity to have standards will not only guide campus stores to success but give stores the tools to measure and evaluate operational efficiencies and financial performance.”

—Debby L. Shively, associate vice president, business affairs-auxiliary services, The University of Arizona

“The outcome will be a playbook and roadmap that will allow any store engaged in this business to have a strong foundation that will allow them to better assess their operation, advocate for resources, and tell their stories more effectively.”

—Christopher A. Bradie, EdD., associate vice president, business services, University of Pennsylvania

“Trying to assess a college store without industry standards to guide the process can lead to uninformed conclusions and poor decisions.”

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