by now, you are most likely familiar with the NACS Foundation Standards Project. You know that it will provide stores with the information and the tools needed to measure their performance on an ongoing and consistent manner, industry data to compare results to that of their peers, and resources to assist in driving operational improvement.

At this point, let’s take a broader view across the campus to understand why your administration may very well have an appetite for this type of information and how stores can best frame these efforts in order to drive campus understanding and support.

For expert insight into the perspective of the campus administration, we recently spoke with Rich Keeling, chairman of Keeling & Associates, a consulting and professional services firm that works exclusively in higher education to create change for learning.

When asked why the process of assessment is important, Rich replied that it provides the basis for continuous improvement, positively impacting the store’s service to the campus community. Assessment involves asking ourselves such fundamental questions as:
- Are we performing as well as we could?
- Is what we’re doing consistent with what other stores are doing?
- Are we aligned with the industry’s best practices?

Rich noted that most colleges are facing a variety of demands to demonstrate that their intended outcomes are achieved and to assure their stakeholders that they are making the best use of available resources. Assessment responds to all of that. There is a compelling need to stay in touch with best practices, make best use of our resources, and stay current with the field. It also serves to assure the administration that resources are being put to best use.

Additionally, administrations are more cautious these days about how their resources are being used. When they approve plans, an internal assessment regime is a convincing argument for continued resourcing.

Authoritative and reliable data provides the type of evidence that is most sought after in higher education today. This assures the administration that resources are being put to best use and the store operation is meeting intended goals.

When the conversation turned to industry standards, Rich noted that self-assessment against those standards is how we hold ourselves accountable regarding the value of the work we do. It also ensures that that work matches best practices. It’s a remedy for the problem of isolation and stores that isolate are at tremendous risk of being outsourced.

Without standards, how would you know if the work you’re doing is meeting the goals that have been set? Without the supporting, objective data resulting from the assessment process, it is much harder to make claims of value to the institution.

Rich further explained how assessment can impact a store’s performance, citing customer...
service as a good example. Observing a store's operation and collecting relevant data such as customer feedback can help assess customer satisfaction with various aspects of the store's operation. Once the data is fed into the assessment process, it is crucial to close the loop by making changes to the identified processes and then repeat the assessment process to gauge the impact of the changes on customer satisfaction.

Colleges already undertake academic assessment—student learning related to curriculum and programs. However, since institutions think of assessment as it relates to mission-central, student-facing goals, they may not consider including the store in this process. Therefore, the store needs to reach out to them.

Most schools have a team working on assessment as this is required for accreditation. This process often resides in an office called Institutional Assessment. Those to whom the store reports (CFOs, VPs of business affairs) already work with those teams since they are involved in assessment processes in other areas of campus. As a result, store industry standards and a related self-assessment process may very well find recognition and support in the administration.

The NACS Foundation Standards Project and its related resources can be essential tools that stores can use to objectively measure their success. The school's administration already understands the value of standards and assessment. They will most likely be a willing partner in this process and should welcome the resulting data and messaging that reflects the store's value to the campus community. 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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several scenarios where adoptions are not able to be published 45 days before the start of the term. The changes also removed language requiring faculty to turn in adoptions to the bookstores at least 75 days before the start of the term.

Illinois: The Illinois College Course Materials Affordability and Equitable Access Collaborative Study Act and Task Force (“CCM Task Force”) held its first meeting on March 28. I was appointed by the governor to represent college stores on the task force. We have been assisting the task force and staff with research on the topic. At the first meeting, staff presented NACS OnCampus Research results, among other data they have so far collected. The task force plans to survey institutions in the state and the next meetings in May will feature presentations on various topics and programs occurring in the state and nationally to address the issue.

Also, in Illinois, the legislature passed and the governor signed HB 4724, a long-sought technical correction to the University Credit and Retail Sales Act to clarify the ability for students to charge at the bookstore for inclusive access type programs. The legislation had been introduced in New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. In December, the governor of New York vetoed a nearly identical measure. Library lobbying groups are also pursuing federal legislation to allow them expanded rights in how they use and distribute digital content.

Ohio: The Ohio legislature included a policy rider to their FY 2021-2022 budget last year requiring institutions to consider establishing automatic textbook adoptions if a professor fails to notify the bookstore before the opening of registration. The proposal is based on a similar policy adopted a few years ago at Wright State University. The law does not mandate that institutions adopt autoadoptions, however, it does require that if such policy is to become effective that the faculty senate, administration, and the board of trustees vote to approve such a policy and to communicate this information by August of this year.

West Virginia: The West Virginia legislature passed and the governor signed a new law HB 4355 creating new rules for inclusive access and flat-fee models like equitable access programs. The legislation goes further than the 2021 Texas law and attempts to not only require a multitude of new disclosures, but also places limitations on campus discount programs.

The legislation languished in the Senate Education Committee for a few weeks in the short 60-day legislative session until the final week of the session and was passed within about 72 hours with several amendments. The final bill included a technical amendment NACS proposed regarding financial aid and a few other amendments that improved the bill in some respects and made it worse in others.

Due to the haste of consideration of the bill and last-minute amendments that undermined institutions’ ability to lower prices of course materials, we requested through a letter to the governor that he veto the bill, however, Gov. Justice signed the measure on March 30. We expect the legislature will revisit the legislation next year to address issues and we are hopeful that they will. We registered to lobby in the state through the rest of this year so we can continue to engage with policymakers.

Library e-book licensing legislation: In April a federal judge tossed out a Maryland law (passed in 2021) as unconstitutional; the law provided special licensing rights for libraries to use digital books and materials including course materials. The state attorney general decided not to appeal the ruling. The Association of American Publishers had filed the lawsuit, arguing it violated federal copyright law. Identical legislation had been introduced in New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. In December, the governor of New York vetoed a nearly identical measure. Library lobbying groups are also pursuing federal legislation to allow them expanded rights in how they use and distribute digital content.

As always, if you have any questions, need more information on a specific bill or policy or help, or have intelligence to share, please do not hesitate to contact me at govrelations@nacs.org. Stay safe and be well. Richard Hershman is vice president of government relations at NACS. He works out of NACS’ Washington, D.C., office.