By now, you’re probably familiar with the NACS Foundation Standards Project. You know that it will provide a set of approved industry standards and that it is being developed to help campus stores achieve or maintain excellent operational results.

However, you may not be aware of the tangible ways in which the project will directly benefit your store staff as well as your institution’s administration and even your business partners. Let’s take a look at some of the project’s specific financial resource standards and how they can address “What’s in it for me?” for virtually every responsibility area within a campus store.

Approved Financial Communication Standard:
The campus store must understand the financial KPIs that are tracked and benchmarked and communicate those financial results with analysis and commentary to the campus administration or store’s board of directors, depending on the ownership structure.

This standard provides store management with clarity and agreement regarding goals and metrics along with the ability to lead store staff in an agreed-upon direction. The new NACS Campus Store Insights (CSI) business intelligence platform will serve as a powerful tool for store management by providing dynamic filters to benchmark the store’s performance against the overall annual NACS Financial Survey results as well as against selected store cohorts.

This standard will also benefit store buyers and other staff since they translate the storewide goals into department-specific direction and action. They develop and track the appropriate metrics, they use the information to make good decisions and offer suggestions, and they have clear expectations which enhance performance and assist with reviews. They can also share the store’s performance information with their business partners to collaborate on better solutions that drive success.

The institution’s administration benefits from the clarity of metrics and goals as well as the security realized from mutually agreed-upon store priorities and a better understanding of the store operation. The store benefits from the administration’s increased understanding of the financial position, being on the same page, and developing a better-informed partner.

Sharing this store performance information with your business partners allows them to craft appropriate store-specific solutions to drive incremental sales for you both. For example, understanding a store’s inventory level and turnover goal for a product category could yield strategies to reduce inventory, create open-to-buy, and drive inventory turn with the purchase of fresh merchandise.

Approved Inventory Markdown Frequency Standard:
The campus store must take markdowns at least quarterly throughout the year as needed in order to maximize inventory value and avoid skewing the annual performance at fiscal year-end.
Effective management of inventory movement and payment methods will reduce financial losses and promote the store’s fiscal health.

Store management benefits from accurate metrics that contribute to an enhanced understanding of the store’s financial performance. This leads to smarter strategic and procedural direction for the store operation throughout the fiscal year.

The store staff benefits from understanding the need for and the process related to markdowns including clear performance expectations. It also promotes the staff’s ability to offer suggestions designed to improve related store performance.

It is fair to state that your administration doesn’t like surprises, which is what they’ll get if the store sits on dead stock throughout the year. This standard helps the store maintain accurate reporting and generate more predictable year-end results.

Sharing markdown information with your business partners gives them a better understanding of what sells (and what doesn’t) in your store. This helps them with their planning and equips them to better serve your store going forward.

Approved Cash Handling and Fraud Prevention Standard:
All campus stores must define, document, and manage procedures for basic financial controls, including:
• Bookkeeping—cash handling, banking, and deposits
• Cashiering, cash drawer, and checkout device security
• Daily sales reconciliation—for all methods of payment
• Internal/external fraud—including e-commerce transactions
• Credit/debit card security—Payment Card Industry (PCI) and related

These types of controls benefit store management since they improve overall store performance and contribute to staff understanding the importance of these loss prevention opportunity areas. They also assist management in developing staff procedural manuals and executing staff training and performance reviews.

Store employees involved with shipping and receiving, cashiering, retail systems, and accounting will all benefit from the clarity of these essential controls and the setting of precise performance standards. Effective management of inventory movement and payment methods will reduce financial losses and promote the store’s fiscal health.

These examples of the campus store performance standards allow all of us—store management, store staff, and stores’ business partners—to understand how we will benefit from the various elements of the program. It also reflects why there is so much support and excitement for this game-changing project across the industry.

The development of the campus store standards and eventual submission to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) for their review and approval is the culmination of years of work by the NACS Foundation. Donations to the Foundation will help ensure that this continued work will provide substantial, valuable benefits to independent campus stores.

You can learn more about the development of collegiate retail industry standards and the Campus Store Insights (CSI) platform and keep apprised of their progress on the Standards Project web pages at the NACS Foundation website: www.nacsfoundation.org.

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