all are invested in the success of the independent college store.

IT TAKES AN INDUSTRY
THE NEW STANDARDS ARE THE WORK OF MANY PEOPLE.


Eighty professionals in all.

What do all of these individuals have in common? They are all invested in the success of the independent college store. They are also the industry stakeholders who are currently at work brainstorming, advising, developing, and testing various components of the NACS Foundation Standards Project.

Some say it takes a village. In this case, it takes an industry.

Under the management of the NACS Foundation Board of Directors and working in concert with NACS staff, this group of volunteers is currently shaping industry performance standards and developing the Campus Store Insights (CSI) data visualization platform—essential tools that will help you drive the success of your college store.

Andy Dunn, director, campus retail and licensing, Lope Shops, Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, AZ, who serves on the project’s Industry Standards Development Committee, noted the value of this broad range of participants:

“By gleaning insight and knowledge from not only store managers, but school administrators, systems providers, and vendors, it will add value and acceptance of the standards for collegiate retail both with the business side of higher education as well as the academic community.”

The Standards Project is truly an industry undertaking. The process leverages the wide-ranging experience and perspectives of those involved which promises to result in tools that truly benefit college stores of all types.

In fact, the diversity of stores represented was a key element in the selection process. Differences in the types of institutions served by stores—two-year and four-year, smaller and larger, public and private—can significantly impact store operations and it is critical that each has seats at the table and a voice in the process.

There are also factors related to an institution’s geographic location that can impact how a store best serves its campus community. These can involve cultural, political, and socio-economic variables that can impact the goals and policies of a community college system, a state’s public university system, or a single-campus private school.

Our Canadian colleagues are also represented. Although their overall goals and a lot of their processes are similar to those in the U.S., there are differences such as terminology, laws, regulations, etc., that must be taken into account when working on this type of broad industry undertaking.

It was also important when identifying project participants that various reporting structures be included. A store that reports up to Student Affairs may very well have meaningful differences in processes, expectations, etc., from one reporting to Finance and it is essential that the Standards Project takes this into account.

In addition to the participating stores, it is important to note the significant involvement
The process leverages the wide-ranging experience and perspectives of those involved which promises to result in tools that truly benefit college stores of all types.

of many of the industry’s business partners. All of the major retail systems providers are contributing their insights and many familiar names in the general merchandise, publishing, digital content, and used book markets are investing their time and sharing their expertise. Their singular goal here is the success of the independent college store.

Travis “TJ” Cochran, director, Brown Bookstore, Brown University, Providence, RI, is the current NACS Foundation president-elect and is serving on the project’s Industry Standards Development Committee. His comments regarding this experience reflect the value of the wide range of perspectives and of the overall process:

“The participants come from all aspects of the industry and their experience and approach to our business is fascinating. Although I’ve been in the college store industry for more than 25 years, I’m learning something new all the time, and that shows the strength of the team working on the project and gives me confidence that everyone is well-represented.”

The participation of a true cross section of the industry working on the NACS Standards Project will result in standards that will prove effective for all types of college stores. The project’s related tools and processes will help drive store success and will benefit the broader campus communities they serve.

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

More on the Standards Project

Learn more about the NACS Foundation Standards Project at www.nacsfoundation.org/nacs-foundation-standards-project. The site explains how standards help the industry, how standards are applied, the development process for the standards and who’s involved, the standards model espoused by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), the standards framework, and a complete list of standards approved so far.

Richard Hershman is vice president of government relations at NACS. He works out of NACS’ Washington, D.C., office.