The NACS Foundation Standards Project has been described as a multi-year undertaking designed to ensure that independent college stores have access to the data and tools that they need to be successful. But what does multi-year mean to this project? Two years have already been invested in writing standards and creating the Campus Store Insights (CSI) platform. You may be asking when the project will conclude.

What makes the NACS Foundation Standards Project different from past projects is that it does not have an end date. There is no finish line that we are working towards.

The NACS Foundation Board of Directors is committed to building a legacy that will bring value to the industry for years and decades to come. This project is designed to continually ask and evaluate, “What else does the industry need and how can we develop tools around those needs?” The project will continue to grow and adapt to the needs of the industry indefinitely.

Earlier this year, the launch of the CSI platform changed the way that stores receive the outputs of the financial survey data by creating a business intelligence and data visualization platform where stores could filter charts, graphs, and reports to meet their needs. This is a vast improvement to the inflexible data tables that were previously provided to survey participants.

With the successful launch of the CSI, the group of NACS and NACS Foundation staff that custom-built this platform turned their attention to improving the functionality by adding features, options, and additional reports that will increase the value of the already robust platform.

Because the CSI was built and developed by NACS specifically for their members, we can continue to build a platform that addresses the unique needs of independent campus stores.

Additional tools are in development, and we are looking forward to sharing them with you in the future.

The next tool anticipated to debut in conjunction with the Standards Project is a self-assessment scorecard. Although still in development, the scorecard will assist stores in walking through individual areas of the written standards to gain insights to their current performance, and identify areas where they are excelling and opportunities for change and growth.

We believe that this tool will help stores understand and tell their story. That is an important step in planning for the future.

There is no limit to the breadth of tools that can be developed in conjunction with the Standards Project.

The NACS Foundation Board of Directors is committed to exploring ideas and projects that will help stores solve problems and continue to be seen as valuable resources on their campuses.

The 12 areas for development of written standards have already proven to be full of potential opportunities for development of tools that will help stores with their day-to-day operation and planning for the future.

The project will continue to grow and adapt to the needs of the industry indefinitely.
Speaking of the written standards, a significant portion of the last two years has been devoted to the development of writing standards that are specific to campus stores. More than 40 professionals from across the industry have worked on this development process. This cross-section of the industry includes perspectives from large and small stores, two-year and four-year institutions, individuals from across the United States and areas of Canada, store employees, vendors, and industry organizations, as well as other demographics.

Once all standards are written and approved, that process will not end, either. There are already plans for maintaining the standards long-term. A committee is in place to continually review, edit, and update the standards as appropriate.

As we have previously shared, the written standards will be submitted to CAS, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, for approval and inclusion in their standards and guidelines for more than 45 functional areas of campuses. Adoption by CAS will add an extra layer of objective review and its own update process which will only enhance the legitimacy of the standards.

This industry is constantly changing, and the written standards will be a living document that will adapt to reflect the evolution of the industry, which will ensure that they remain relevant for years to come.

Luckily, the NACS Foundation is not in this alone. We have been fortunate that the vision of this project aligns with the vision and mission of NACS Education and led to a valuable partnership that will benefit NACS members.

As educational opportunities are planned, NACS Education and the NACS Foundation are identifying and labeling the ways that learning outcomes tie back to the written standards so that the correlations are evident.

NACS Education has deepened their commitment to this partnership by adding standards-related search features to their new learning management system (LMS) set to launch in the near future. Learning opportunities in the LMS will contain labels that show exactly which standards directly relate to the content included.

Users will be able to search for content by the standard topics that most interest them. That option will become exponentially more powerful when combined with other Standards Project tools such as the self-assessment tool.

When a store identifies an area of growth through the self-assessment tool, they can then use the LMS search feature to identify the learning opportunities that directly relate to that standard.

The opportunities for building valuable resources from the standards project are endless.

The NACS Foundation Standards Project is not a flash in the pan or a project that will end and be placed on the shelf and forgotten. It is creating the valuable groundwork that will allow the NACS Foundation to build relevant resources and create a legacy that stretches far into the future.

Jaymee Skelly is director of the NACS Foundation.

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the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) Coffee Talk group. NACS also collaborated with the Independent College Bookstore Association (ICBA), inviting their members to join our government relations webinar updates this year.

We engaged with various stakeholders in the education community including teachers’ unions, publishers, OER and library groups, IT and financial aid administrators, student organizations, and higher education institutions and associations. We also virtually attended conferences from the U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid Conference to the OpenEd22 conference and state-level discussions, often weighing in with comments or following up with presenters and attendees.

We also secured college store staff as speakers or suggested individuals from within our community that external groups and the media should talk with.

NACS also continued our student and parent awareness campaign on federal tax credits that can help defray the cost of course materials, supplies, and technology with press releases and updated tools NACS members can use to get the word out. We also released an updated back-to-college media kit for college stores this summer.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

The most rewarding part of my job during the year is responding to member inquiries seeking information or advice on laws, regulations, or problems they may be having with other stakeholders on campus or a vendor. In nearly every case I learn something I didn’t know before and it helps me and NACS become more effective advocates for stores. So don’t be shy in reaching out!

2022 in some ways was a slow return to the prepandemic world of higher education public policy; with most states resuming normal legislative sessions and Congress still unable to move bipartisan comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. However, like any year, particularly a major election year, 2022 proved at times difficult when politics or special-interest agendas got in the way of effective public policy or even common sense.

It is as frustrating for us as I know it for you when such things happen, such as how it helps a student in acquiring course materials in an upcoming term to know what a former professor might have taught with five years earlier.

We hope our government relations program in a small way has helped as you have helped us be more effective in supporting what you do.

As always, if you have any questions, need more information, 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.