

The College Store

The Official Publication Of The National Association Of College Stores

TRACKING BACKPACKS

HOW DIGITAL CHANGED
THE ICONIC PRODUCT, p. 20

PLUS

TAKING STOCK
OF FALL

TAILORING SWIFT
APPAREL SALES

WHERE TO EAT
IN PHOENIX

2026

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Online Archives

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PUTTING THE STANDARDS TO WORK



Who's Shopping Your Store?

How much do you know about the customers who walk through your doors or visit your website? By gaining a fairly deep understanding of who they are and what they like, need, and want, your campus store can make more informed decisions about what products and services to offer, how to set up merchandising and displays, which marketing methods to use, and even store hours.

But because your stakeholders may span three or more generations, it's important to be aware of how their views and preferences differ—or are alike. For some insight, attend expert Meagan Johnson's CAMEX26 education session Zap the Generation Gap! and view her YouTube video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJu78hl9Oas>.

BEYOND THE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC

Of course, college students comprise the store's primary customers. However, they aren't the only customers dropping by, and the store could lose out on incremental sales by catering solely to students.

Consider who else may shop the store, depending on the type of campus, your location, and other factors: faculty, staff, students' parents and other family members, prospective students, sports fans, patrons of campus cultural events, general visitors, and local community residents. Explore how the store could fit these groups into your merchandise mix while still focusing on your core student customer.

CAS CAMPUS STORE STANDARDS

Variety of Products & Services. *Campus stores' mission must define the wide range of products and services to be provided in collaboration with the campus administration, with feedback from other key constituents, and in the context of the unique institutional characteristics, demographic, and campus culture. (Part 1 Mission, pg. 6)*

Assessment, Adaptation, & Change. *Campus store leadership must develop, adapt, and improve programs and services in response to the needs of changing environments, populations serviced, current research, and evolving institutional priorities. (Part 6 Leadership, pg. 20)*

"In reality, Generation Z is a uniquely different generation than their predecessors, the millennials."

**—Meagan Johnson,
author and CAMEX26 presenter**



UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES CUSTOMERS TICK

When it comes to your institution's student body, helpful information might include age ranges and medians, family economic factors (relates to disposable income), where they are from, full-time status versus part-time, brand and style preferences, how they prefer to receive communication from the store, and other factors.

Collaborate with the internal experts in departments such as institutional research, student affairs, family programs, and admissions to learn more about the characteristics of students on your campus. Alumni affairs and development staff can give you a hand with information about graduates. Also, network with similar stores during industry events such as CAMEX to find out what's selling for them.

CAS CAMPUS STORE STANDARDS

Expert Collaboration. *Regardless of its organizational structure, campus stores must work in close consultation and collaboration with experts and utilize resources to meet the needs and interests of its constituents. (Part 2 Programs & Services, pg. 7)*

Industry Involvement. *Campus store leadership should seek out and be involved with industry associations to stay current with industry changes, make connections, and seek new opportunities through applicable industry conferences—both retail and collegiate. (Part 7 Human Resources, pg. 22)*



TAP EMPLOYEES' KNOWLEDGE

Give store employees opportunities to share what they have observed about customer behaviors and preferences, especially frontline staff who interact directly with shoppers. Create a way for staffers to pass along customer comments or reactions, or set aside time in staff meetings to talk about customers. Your student workers, in particular, provide an invaluable built-in focus group and can also clue you in to feedback from their friends and roommates.

However, there's a caveat, most critically involving ordering merchandise for students: The store's full-time employees most likely belong to generations older than your students; they may choose items they find appealing but students won't touch. Be sure to check the student perspective as part of your buying process.

CAS CAMPUS STORE STANDARDS

Student Employment: Importance. *Campus stores must include student employment as an important component of the overall campus store organizational development plans to provide experiential employment opportunities for students, enhance communication with students as the primary constituents, and increase operational efficiency. (Part 7 Human Resources, pg. 23)*

Putting the Standards to Work features examples of how the Campus Store Standards can be applied and why they are important to store success. Under the sponsorship of the NACS Foundation, NACS collaborated with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and more than 80 volunteers from throughout the collegiate retail industry to develop the standards. The CAS Campus Store Standards provide the external validity of two international organizations and can be used for assessment and improvement, strategic planning, and program development. For more information about the standards and to get a copy of the standards (free to NACS store members) navigate to www.nacs.org/campus-store-standards.

