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COVID-19 Requires Changes in the Way Higher Education Does Business

RYAN GREENE, CASP
NACAS PRESIDENT

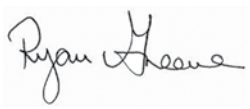
It is absolutely astounding how much has changed since I wrote my last article for College Services. Since February, the world has turned upside down, and higher education has been required to adapt quicker than we ever imagined possible. More importantly, the Auxiliary Services industry has been obligated to face challenges that most of us would not have predicted possible, until we were left no choice but to completely reimagine how we offer services in a COVID-19 world. For those of us who will get the opportunity to provide campus services in the fall, we must think outside the box more than ever before – offering our services while social distancing, keeping everyone safe, delivering exceptional customer service, and doing our best to replenish reserves, just in case we are faced with this nightmare once more.

The last edition of College Services had a theme of technology, and little did we know how much more reliant we could become on technological solutions. It just goes to show, our industry is always changing, and we must remain vigilant and flexible in order to face whatever's next. COVID-19 has required everyone to change the way they do business, including NACAS. Over the last two months, NACAS has provided a record number of virtual webinars and there is no sign of interest letting up. All face-to-face regional CX conferences have been cancelled, and all Leadership Series institutes have been moved to an online format. Networking has shifted from local conferences to virtual meetings, and we are discovering new ways to interact with our business partners in a virtual world. The way we offer our services might look slightly differently, but it is clear that our association is needed now more than ever before. Thousands of members are looking for ideas, standards, innovative approaches and ultimately "the answers" on how to best combat COVID; and it just so happens, NACAS is still the place to discover how to enrich the campus experience, even during a global pandemic.

The theme for this edition of College Services is C3X: NACAS's annual conference that offers a multitude of ways to cultivate campus commerce. This year the conference is scheduled to be in Anaheim, California – however, we would be short-sighted to assume that this year's conference will be the same as our last 51 annual conferences. All options are currently on the table, but our primary goal is to offer a conference – in-person, virtual, or a hybrid combination – that provides the same solutions you've come to expect from NACAS: vast education on current industry trends, abilities to network with business partners and peers, and insights into the future of auxiliary services. More information will be forthcoming, but I am hopeful that everyone will consider joining us in November, no matter how we decide to meet.

We are all transparently aware that the upcoming academic year will be no cake walk. Budgets are already in flux, but I encourage everyone to remember the importance of our association during these unprecedented times. NACAS has and will continue to provide the means to connect institutions and peers from around the world – even if it is through Zoom, Skype, Teams, BlueJeans, GoToMeeting, Webex, Join.me, Adobe Connect, Google Hangouts or a good old-fashioned phone call.

We knew 2020 was going to be an exciting year... just not **this** exciting. Let's keep our heads high and continue to make the most of it, one virtual meeting at a time.

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COVID-19 ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES:

Providing Basic Needs at the University of Houston During a Public Health Crisis

BY ROSIE ASHLEY, PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON AUXILIARY SERVICES

Colleges and universities across the country are facing many challenges, and have had to learn to quickly adapt to a "new normal" as COVID-19 continues to spread around the globe. The fluidity of the COVID-19 pandemic and local government mandates have made providing basic needs, such as food service, a unique challenge to institutions like the University of Houston (UH).

City of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner declared a local state of disaster on March 11 after two Houstonians tested positive for COVID-19. On March 12, UH announced it would extend spring break by an additional week and classes would go online after that. On March 16, Harris County started requiring restaurants to close their dining rooms and provide pickup or drive-through-only services in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. This mandate applied to our food service establishments at UH.

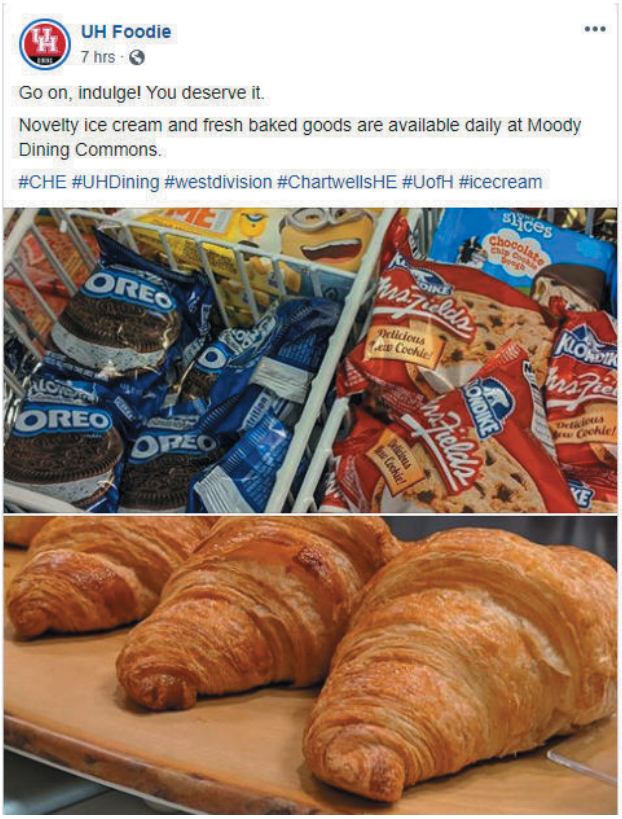
UH Dining had to quickly adjust to the new "no dine-in" mandate and make operational changes to remain compliant while still serving students and employees. Residential food service was consolidated to a single dining commons where a "pick-up and go" process could be executed quickly and in an orderly fashion. All stations in the all-you-care-to-eat dining commons remain open; the only difference is that customers are served by UH Dining staff instead of being self-serve. Our students have expressed appreciation about still having all their favorite foods available.

Limited retail options and deliveries from Starship robots are also available. The Starship robot delivery service is an innovative enhancement to the UH Dining program in general, but it has also proven to be beneficial during this crisis. Individuals who are trying to reduce their public exposure are able to order food and essential items from one of two campus market stores and have their orders delivered directly to their buildings by friendly robots.

Communicating with the campus community during an evolving situation can also be a significant challenge. Still, the partnership between UH Dining and the university's communications team was a key component to ensuring that there was little to no interruption in serving students. As hours of operations and regulations changed on a daily, or sometimes even hourly basis, we worked as a cohesive group to distribute a unified message.

It is important to note that UH Dining is no stranger to responding quickly to a crisis. In late February, the City of Houston dealt with another unexpected event in the form of a major water main break that shut off water to the city and closed our campus for several days. UH Dining implemented a similar "pick-up and go" process for that crisis. There is no doubt that the experience from this event helped UH Dining adjust operations for COVID-19.

On March 24, Harris County issued a "Stay Home, Work Safe" order. Due to this order and transitioning to online education for the rest of the Spring 2020 semester, UH encouraged residential students to go home if able, which understandably created a major reduction in the number of on-campus students. Like many of our peer institutions, UH had to quickly come to a decision of how and when refunds would occur for its auxiliary units, including student meal plans.

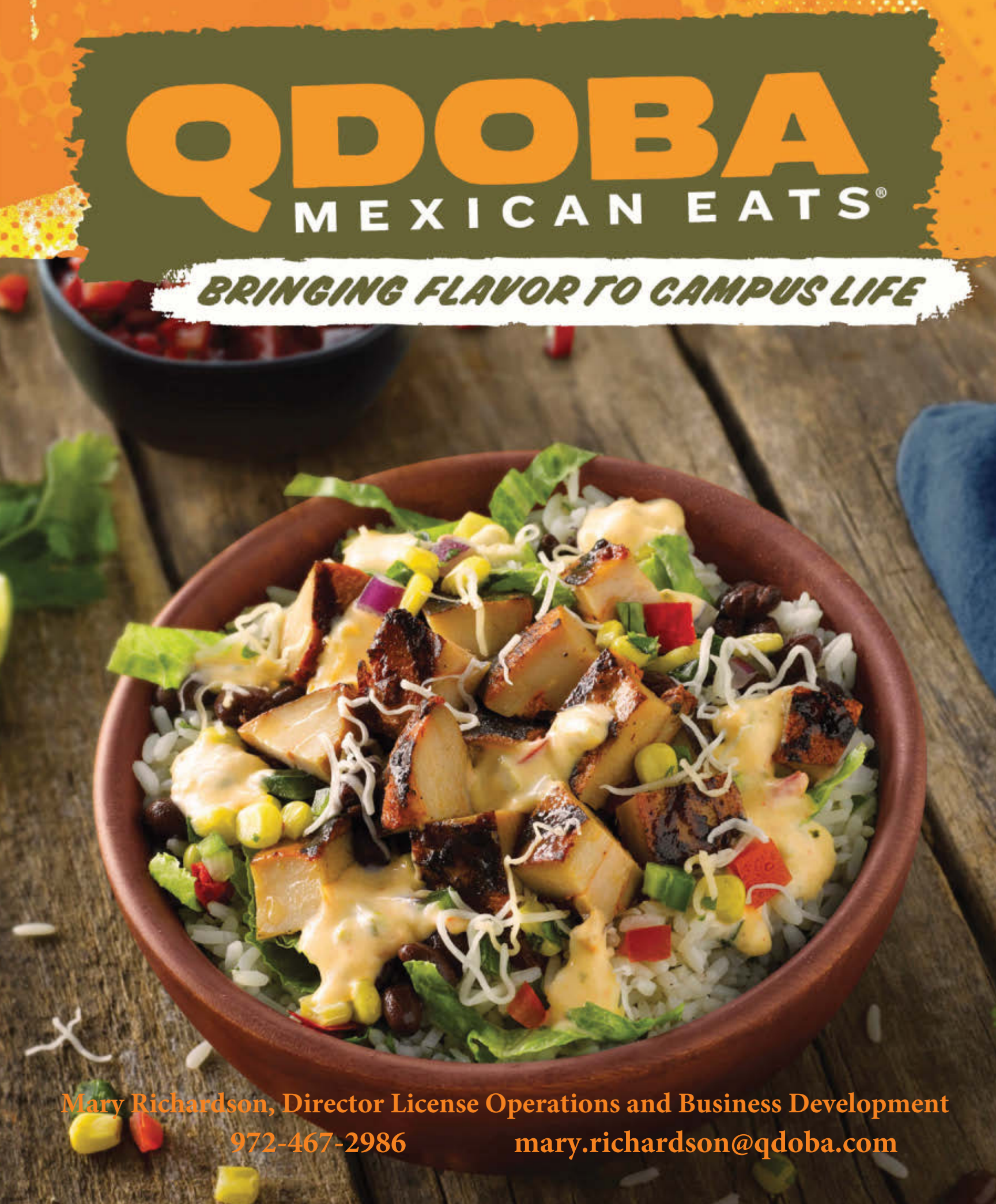


Ultimately, the university decided the right thing to do would be to provide refunds to students on a prorated basis. The refunds are applied as a credit against students' overall fee bills. An email was sent to student meal plan holders with information and instructions for refunds using the online student portal. Within one week, the university had received nearly 3,000 cancellations and requests continue to be received on a daily basis.

It is common for universities to pay their food service providers either in a lump sum or two to three payments each semester. UH, however, pays on a bi-weekly billing cycle based on the number of students enrolled in a meal plan during the previous two-week billing period. This proved to be an especially beneficial payment process because we avoided a situation where we would have to provide a refund back to our food service provider. In addition, students and their families do not have to wait to receive their meal plan credits during this difficult time.

As UH continues to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic, we are looking toward the months ahead and working on creative solutions to help alleviate the major financial impacts being caused by this crisis. In the meantime, UH Auxiliary Services would like to extend its sincere appreciation to our food service partner, Chartwells, for how proactive and accommodating they have been during this incredibly difficult time. We also would like to express deep gratitude to our student and employee customer base for their understanding and cooperation. We are pleased to be able to accommodate our customers during this challenging time as they continue to adjust to their own versions of a "new normal." ■

AS UH CONTINUES TO NAVIGATE THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WE ARE LOOKING TOWARD THE MONTHS AHEAD AND WORKING ON CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE MAJOR FINANCIAL IMPACTS BEING CAUSED BY THIS CRISIS.



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How to Win the Expo Hall:

THE VALUE OF C3X FROM A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

BY JIM GREGORY

Our company has an unusual approach to NACAS conferences: We don't go there to sell.

Wait, what? Isn't selling the whole point of a *sales* conference?

Not necessarily. We believe the priorities are to listen, make friends, and develop relationships – even with competitors. If we get the opportunity to offer a solution, and that solution happens to be one of our clients' brands, of course we'll do that.

But in our experience, relationships come first. Selling happens sometime later.

Our unusual approach got a boost when little OnCampus Brands took home the 2019 award for Outstanding Business Partner of the Year. NACAS invited us to share how we "won" at conferences, so we asked some like-minded friends to back us up with their take on relationships. We think their stories apply to any business situation, whether that happens in person, on a Zoom call, or in another space-time continuum.

STUMBLING BLOCKS ON THE WAY TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Phil Allison, Deputy Director of the Naval Academy Business Services Division, said it took him three years to get it right. He attended his first NACAS event in 2011 after being requested by NACAS East to host a dinner, which led to him attending a full

conference the following year. "It took me three years," but Allison learned to ignore his discomfort at networking with vendors and to take advantage of the opportunities that came with being involved.

Allison's background as career military, plus his current job at the Naval Academy, initially made him leery of talking to *any* vendors. Since federal procurement is not his responsibility, Allison can't authorize even the simplest purchase – much less sign multi-year contracts. And that's okay with him. However, he says, these limitations caused him to skip the vendor networking events and just walk through the Expo, avoiding conversations with business partners.

What Allison gradually learned was that he was missing a lot. First, he learned that people generally appreciate upfront honesty about his professional limitations. But more than that, he learned that that the most successful vendors never even asked for his business.

ASKING FOR BUSINESS IS NOT NECESSARILY THE PATH TO WINNING

Try not to go in looking for the win. Instead, just meet the members. Learn who they are, what they do, and what they are good at. Exchange information – that's where the real value is, says Mary Perry, VP of Strategic Accounts at Follett. Taking opportunities at Expo events, getting involved in the NACAS organization, vendor dinners, and other conference activities is how you build your network.

"When they know me, they learn they can trust me," Perry said. "That helps us be better partners for our customers. As you are building your network, you are also building your ability to take care of customers' needs and building your relationship with future customers."

When you know who people are and what they do, you will know how to send them referrals. Building relationships will help you provide better service to your customers, Mary says. Go to the networking events. Share information.

"We're all in this together," Perry said. "By identifying best practices, together we help students succeed."

Sure, we expect a return on our investment of time and money when we participate in NACAS, says Mark Palmore, an independent consultant. That return, however, isn't usually a sale right on the spot.

The return comes through the relationships you build by attending and participating in NACAS events and helping to plan them. You build the kind of relationship where it's safe to call someone for advice or some background. It's a two-way partnership.

Palmore says many of his consulting jobs are a result of referrals from people with whom he met at a conference and, over time, built a relationship. Even rivalries and professional competition can be a source of useful information, tips, job leads, insider information on upcoming contracts, and more.

WE WERE ALL NEWBIES ONCE

Advice to those new to NACAS conferences from Palmore, Perry, and others: get involved right away. Talk to people in the line at the airport, waiting for the shuttle, in line at the bar, or waiting for the next session to begin.

Don't hesitate to make friends with competitors, Palmore adds. That competitor could send you a referral for expertise or resources they don't offer. That referral could lead to another long-term relationship, this time with a client. Be friendly. Listen to what they have to say.

Palmore cited one contact he made when he was starting out. The contact was an assistant at a small college, new in his position. But years later that friend is now the top decision-maker for auxiliary services at a major university. Did Palmore know this new connection was going to be a big shot at a big university? Of course not.

LISTEN AND LEARN – AND SHARE

It's all too predictable for a salesperson to introduce themself at a conference, ask a few questions to "qualify the target," then move on if the immediate opportunity looks unlikely. Don't be that person!

Carrie Chutes-Charley, CASP, now Director of Auxiliary Services at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX, started attending NACAS in 2002. "I can't say I attended very seriously at first," she says. But when her role changed to managing contracting services, her attitude toward NACAS and the conferences "changed 180 degrees."

"I learned so much from my interactions with others," Chutes-Charley said. "I talked with competitors, too, and many have become big partners." She regularly calls partners with questions or for advice, a theme that was repeated by everyone interviewed for this article.

Jason Levy, Senior Director for Student Centers & Conferences at Temple University and NACAS East President, has been attending conferences for seven years. He cites the relationship he has developed with Renaud Rodriguez at Ricoh. Ricoh doesn't currently have a formal partnership with Temple, but the programs Levy and Rodriguez have developed or attended together have resulted in a "wealth of useable information" Levy takes back to campus. In return, Levy says, he is able to share information with Rodriguez about trends and best practices from Temple and beyond.

VENDORS ARE LEADERS AND TEACHERS

Everyone interviewed for this article agreed: Go to the Expo. (Or attend the Zoom!) Participate in the vendor events. (And use the chat room.) Put yourself out there for new friendships. The opportunity to make new friends is all around you.

Being part of the higher education world means we have an obligation to learn about the new products and hear new ideas at the NACAS conferences, Chutes-Charley believes.

Don't approach an event looking for anything but information, Levy advises. Learn about best practices so you can do a better job for your institution or clients. ■

As this article goes to press, we aren't sure whether C3X will happen in person, online or in a form we don't even know about yet. Prior to Covid-19, we would react to such circumstances like Vizzini in The Princess Bride: "Inconceivable!"

But this crisis has taught us a few new things, like how to be flexible. And it has renewed our understanding of some old things, like what's really important in business and in life.

Friends and family are important. Community is important. Relationships are important.

We already knew that – didn't we?

- Jim Gregory

JIM GREGORY is Founder and Co-Owner of OnCampus Brands.

Creating an Engaged Campus Experience in a Socially-Distant World

PHILIP GABRIEL PHOTOGRAPHY

BY KERRI DIXON

The COVID-19 pandemic is mandating that every organization, in every market, quickly create new business models based on the changing consumer behaviors and expectations of a post-crisis world. Higher education campuses must be agile and nimble to reconsider previous strategies and implement creative tactics to adapt and succeed in offering the expected dynamic student experience, firmly grounded in safety and wellbeing.

WHAT ARE STUDENTS THINKING? AND HOW CAN WE RESPOND?

In April and May 2020, Aramark conducted a series of pulse surveys with higher education students to begin assessing the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their attitudes and behaviors. Overall, students were excited to get back to school in the Fall, with 72% saying they would likely return to campus.[1] But there were understandable levels of concern and uncertainty around the ability for the desired higher education experience (both academically and socially), while staying safe and healthy. Our findings revealed five vital areas for delivering the needed assurances, while still creating campus engagement.

- **Building Trust**
  40% of high school seniors and 25% of current college students claim that university response around COVID-19 is poor.[2] To successfully reopen and move forward, campus leaders must gain and, most importantly, sustain student trust. The deep and frequent cleaning of facilities and dining halls, compliance with CDC standards, increased sanitation and hand-washing, and availability of employee protective apparel will be required to ensure confidence that the campus is safe. While students are eager to return to a normal routine, they will still gravitate toward environments that allow for safe distances and self-protection. Communal areas and dining halls should be adjusted so students feel comfortable, yet connected, to each other. Anticipate and develop a plan to alleviate concerns around areas like dining, dorm living conditions, classroom sizes, and financial aid options. Stay abreast of changing dynamics – related to news, best practices, and health guidelines – and be transparent about adjusted campus operations. Be creative around the use of virtual platforms and utilization of social media channels as well. Open and frequent communication with students and parents will sustain trust and drive the engagement that is vital to a rewarding student experience.

- **Focusing on Innovation and Technology**
  Rapid innovation and technology usage are now core expectations. Speed to market is critical, but perfection is not. Consumers understand processes may not be perfect and are more forgiving of mishaps. Adoption of technology is accelerating even faster in the COVID world. With social distancing continuing for the foreseeable future, contactless pickup and delivery will become more popular. Touchless technologies like motion sensors, wave technologies, and voice and facial recognition will become more prevalent. We must focus on new products, service offerings, and capabilities with relevant solutions to best meet evolving student dining, facilities, and other needs.
- **Delivering Value**
  Students may have fewer financial resources as a result of personal or family job loss. More than ever, higher education must take into consideration students' need for convenience, value, and affordability. This will require fluid, strategic thinking to provide flexibility and affordable options for dining (i.e. value meals, combos, and bundled meal plan options), housing, and campus activities.
- **Supporting Local**
  The widespread economic effects of the novel coronavirus have also engendered desire to assist local communities, businesses, and employees. Delivering community support via partnerships and purchasing with local restaurants, suppliers, and experiences will drive student engagement and connectivity to the campus community.
- **Promoting Health And Wellness**
  Consumer fear and anxiety around health and COVID-19 will necessitate greater emphasis on creating a culture of physical and mental well-being on campus. Students are looking for activities and nurturing habits that enable them to "feel well." This includes offering more healthy and grab-n-go options for onsite campus dining, and student wellness activities like virtual cooking classes, recipe sharing, meditation or yoga, and free workshops that help with mental health issues.

LEVERAGING THE P3 ADVANTAGE TO ENHANCE YOUR CAMPUS

Many universities and colleges have forged strong business relationships with outsource partners to help operate their campuses – including public-private partnerships (P3). A P3 can help your institution thrive during these trying times by providing professional support in a number of critical areas including:

- Expertise and resources your institution needs to navigate today's higher education landscape;
- Rapid and effective changes to your campus in the face of ever-changing circumstances;
- Extensive research on student trends for dining services, campus life ,and social spaces; and
- An affordable and efficient approach that aligns with both campus needs and student demands.

To ensure agile, sustainable solutions that still deliver a fulfilling student experience, Aramark is reconfiguring its service model with innovative strategies, new service methods, and enhanced safety protocols. The company recently launched Aramark EverSafe™, a multi-dimensional operational safety platform to enable the safe reopening and sustainable management of its client locations across all markets. EverSafe has been developed in partnership with Jefferson Health and in accordance with recommendations of the CDC, WHO, and other leading health organizations. It leverages research around society's expectations in today's environment and is built on four key tenets: strive for total well-being, commit to operational impact, power frictionless experiences, and leverage collaborative expertise.

MOVING FORWARD

Recruiting and retaining the next class of students is more important than ever. Higher education's challenge will be incorporating health and safety into a seamless campus lifestyle, without sacrificing the college experience that students expect and deserve. Each campus will need its own sustainable and future-forward reopening plan, customized to its unique staff and student body. Now, when uncertainty and constant change are the new order, open communication and responsive decision-making, creative thinking, and collaborative partnerships are paramount to reassure current and prospective students and secure a thriving future for higher education. ■

For more information or resources, please visit http://campusinsights.aramark.com/

1 Aramark Consumer Survey, April 2020
2 Simpson Scarborough: Higher Ed and COVID-19 National Student Survey

KERRI DIXON is Director of Marketing for Aramark Higher Education and Healthcare.

A Campus Movement: One Meal at a Time

BY AMEA THOMPSON

Throughout my four years at Valdosta State University, I've had the privilege to work with, and in, the office of Auxiliary Services. It all began during my freshman year when I first became a Student Government Association Senator. Soon afterwards, I was hired as a student assistant in the Parking and Transportation office. I was able to experience first-hand how everyday services like parking and transportation can help enhance the overall experience of each student. As a representative of the student body, my goal is to make sure students always feel valued and heard. I consistently try my best to hear out concerns from students. Some of the most common issues I hear relate back to parking, dining, and housing. However, there's one concern in particular that I hadn't heard much of until recently – food insecurity on our campus. If I'm entirely honest, I had trouble wrapping my mind around the fact that this was a battle our students were facing. With such a significant stigma associated with students receiving food assistance, it often gets forgotten. SGA made it one of our top priorities for the year to reduce that stigma and make sure that *all* students are receiving the support they need for a brighter future. To accomplish this goal, we worked in conjunction with Auxiliary Services.

Food insecurity is defined as the lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable, nutritious food. Studies show that nationally 1-in-3 college students face food insecurity. A large number of our students come from low-income households and/or are supporting themselves on their college journey, and as a result, become food-insecure. These students often hold down a job in addition to their classes, receive scholarships and loans, but in some cases, these resources are just not enough. This often leads to a lack of access to communal spaces, like a dining hall. Unfortunately, conversations relating to these situations have been sidelined for many colleges and dining administrators. But, for the past few years, Valdosta State has been approaching this problem with an increased sense of urgency and has devised innovative and effective ways to combat the challenges.

One of the steps adopted to combat the food insecurity problem here at Valdosta State was to open up a campus food pantry called the "Drop-N-Shop." This resource provides non-perishable food, hygiene products, and professional attire to VSU students who are in need. However, with limited resources and hours of operation, we wanted to find more practical solutions to end student hunger. It all started with the establishment of the Dining Advisory Committee, which I have served on for the past two years. We were able to create and implement a student-led initiative called Swipe It Forward.

After six months of research and planning, Swipe It Forward was one of the innovative measures the Student Government Association produced with Auxiliary Services and Blazer Dining to combat food insecurity on our campus. As part of a national program to end hunger on college campuses, we partnered with Swipe Out Hunger. It is a nonprofit organization that allows students the opportunity to give and receive meal swipes throughout the semester. We were able to start the initiative this past January. During a one-week span, students with a meal plan were allowed to donate **one** of their meal swipes to help out another Blazer in need. To help make the Swipe It Forward process unique, we allowed students to visually showcase their swipe with their name on a flame in Palms Dining Hall. Throughout that week, I interacted with many students, but there was one that stood

1st Place

out in particular to me. It was a student who had only 50 meal swipes for the semester. This student was very hesitant at first with donating one of her meal swipes but remembered how someone had swiped it forward for her in the past. From that single interaction, it reminded me of the purpose and importance of the Swipe It Forward program, and how Auxiliary Services is genuinely making a difference in students' lives – one meal at a time. The initiative was a big success, with more than 900 meal swipes donated in just one week. Another active measure that was taken to connect more students to life-changing resources was having students with dining dollars purchase an item from one of our dining markets to help stock the Drop-N-Shop. We ended up receiving the equivalent of $700 in food donations for our campus pantry. These initiatives not only increased awareness on campus, but inadvertently extended into the Valdosta community.

After an entire year of developing plans to respond to hunger on our campus, our biggest win was our Swipe It Forward drive. The nearly 1,000 meals donated allowed us the opportunity to provide real food security to students on our campus. Unfortunately, the semester's abrupt end due to COVID-19 made it appear that these meals would be lost like so many other things associated with campus activity. However, these meals ended up being used to support our student's nutritional needs in a scenario much different than we could have ever imagined. More than that, our auxiliaries have risen to meet many challenges resulting from this pandemic.

Auxiliaries meet so many of the physical needs of our students. Whether it is the food we eat, the books we need, the access card we carry, the shuttle we ride, or some of the auxiliary functions we can't see, auxiliaries make it possible to facilitate the learning that happens face-to-face on our campuses. As we grapple with the notion of meeting the needs of our students who remain on campus during this unprecedented pandemic, auxiliaries are a key player in continuing to make learning possible for so many of our students as they support the holistic wellbeing of our students day in and day out.

Students will experience improved health and nutrition, less stigma and isolation, and increased academic wellbeing as a direct result of the work being done by Auxiliary Services professionals. ■

AMEA THOMPSON is a senior at Valdosta State University.

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The Importance of Auxiliary Services: Fostering Holistic Wellbeing at Sonoma State University

BY SAMANTHA SINATRA

The transition to a college atmosphere entails many unknowns. For some students food, housing, amenities, and other basic needs are included in this list. Many universities strive to make these needs accessible to students to ensure they can fulfill their best potential while in attendance. Cultivating an environment for success includes more than just providing academics. An atmosphere of food security, mental health options, and a sense of community is essential in building a better student and, in turn, a body of successful students. Auxiliary services provide many of these non-academic needs that can contribute to greater student success by increasing the holistic wellbeing of the student body.

Sonoma State University serves as an example recognizing exactly what a student needs to get through their college years with the utmost possible fulfillment integrated into their everyday lives. From offering food security with Lobo's Food Pantry, free counseling at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), different meal plan options at the residential dining hall, The Kitchens, a plethora of free events on-campus, and even during these uncertain times of COVID-19, Sonoma State University has integrated services that enable reaching success possible for every student, regardless of their circumstances. These services turn Sonoma State University from simply just an institution to a community focused on a holistic student body.

Lobo's Food Pantry officially opened in 2018 at Sonoma State University, providing students experiencing food insecurity with an outlet to receive food at no cost. It is in operation weekly for students to visit and pick up nonperishable food items. Additionally, pop-up events are held monthly with access to free, fresh produce. Providing students with this resource aids in giving students access to food, a basic need vital for success. Now more than ever during the pandemic of COVID-19, food is an essential that not all students have access to. Lobo's Food Pantry continues to be in operation to provide students with food at no cost. This is vital in contributing to the holistic wellbeing of students during a time of fear and potentially loss of income.

CAPS is another resource offered at Sonoma State University's campus. Students are offered 10 free individual sessions during the academic year where they can be seen for short-term counseling needs. If further assistance is needed, CAPS is a resource in aiding students to services off-campus. Additionally, CAPS holds group sessions and workshops on a variety of topics, connecting students with others experiencing similar circumstances in a confidential environment. Such services positively impact students' holistic wellbeing while in attendance and post-grad. During the closure of Sonoma State due to COVID-19, CAPS continues to offer its services to students via phone or video, which is of huge importance to some students' wellbeing during a time of heightened anxieties.

The Kitchens is Sonoma State University's primary dining hall, and offers meal plans to fit any student's need. From a full meal plan to just a certain number of swipes, students are able to purchase a payment plan option to make on-campus dining affordable for all that want it. Referring back to the campus closure at this time Sonoma State University is still taking initiative in giving students food options. Meals are still offered for take-out and individual meals are still able to be purchased for a decreased price of $10 a meal.

On-campus events are something that Sonoma State University prides itself, giving a free outlet to students to come together. Events hosted by Sonoma State range from weekly trivia nights, to themed dinners at The Kitchens, to the annual "Big Nite" carnival held at the beginning of the academic school

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2nd Place

year. The variety of things to attend on-campus provides students the ability to continually be involved and meet new people with similar interests, enabling wellbeing through social experiences. Additionally, some free trips expand off-campus, such as hikes, farmer's market trips, and bowling nights. Engaging in non-academic activities are vital to students' wellbeing and arguably just as important in growth as an individual. The opportunities provided feed that growth and are what truly gives Sonoma State a sense of a tight-knit community. Even during campus closure, virtual events are still being held on campus including: virtual trivia nights via zoom, online speakers, and resources and links provided to free virtual activities available on the internet.

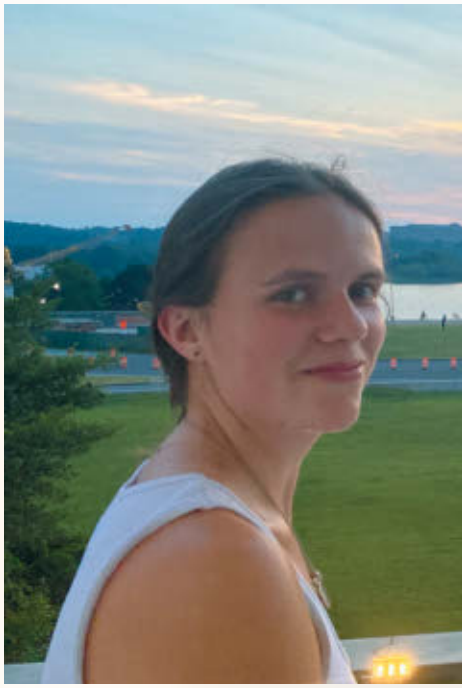
On a personal note, on-campus events specifically have aided in the fulfillment of my holistic wellbeing at Sonoma State University. When I came to school in 2016 from San Diego, I didn't know anyone. I was prepared in all aspects academically, but struggled socially. I specifically remember calling my mom crying the day after she left because I didn't want to eat at The Kitchens alone. I saw there was an event that was taking students to the farmer's market and signed up, hoping to meet someone I could befriend. That event is where I found some of my first friends at Sonoma State University, and from those friends, found my current roommate. This changed the course of my future years in school for the better, giving me social happiness I would have missed out on if events like these didn't exist.

It is during hardship that communities come together. It is necessary to touch on this, especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sonoma State University has transitioned to fully online learning during the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester. A sense of community may feel lost during this time, as every Seawolf is away from each other. However, Sonoma State is doing anything and everything it can to continue to create a constant feeling of community and Seawolf pride. As mentioned previously, outlets and resources are still available such as: Lobo's Food Pantry, CAPS, food at The Kitchens, and virtual events. In addition, the library is offering to mail laptops to students who do not have access to their own. All of these are non-academic related but provide a better wellbeing for students who need it. The community of Sonoma State is moving through this unknown time together, and the wellbeing of students is a top priority. Without these services, the students are isolated, taking on finishing the semester alone with no outlets to improve their wellbeing beyond academics. Moving these services virtually was a vital move to continue the fostering of community at Sonoma State. This is a primary example of just how much auxiliary services do to help the student body.

Auxiliary services instilled at Sonoma State University offer students the ability to fulfill their best potential. Students can come to campus knowing that they do not have to worry about where they will get their next meal, how they will seek the mental health help they need, how they will make friends, and further, how they will succeed. Each of these subjects contribute to the holistic wellbeing of a student. It goes beyond academics. Auxiliary services are the crutch to push students up when they need it, move them into the community, and give them the full experience of college they are searching for both mentally and physically for their well-being. Sonoma State University's services do just that; make campus home.

SAMANTHA SINATRA is a student at Sonoma State University.

Making Food Mean More: The GW Dining Experience



BY JILLIAN MORGAN

The George Washington University is a very unique place. GW's main campus resides in the energetic neighborhood of Foggy Bottom, Washington, D.C. Just steps from the National Mall, GW's campus is not only a place where innovation and learning take place, but also where communities outside of ours come together in our vibrant neighborhood. Our campus is filled with businesses, restaurants, tourism, and culture. The woven nature of GW's campus within greater Washington, D.C. provides a unique set of opportunities and experiences that are open to our students. GW's location and resources as an institution ultimately contribute to the growth of our students far beyond the walls of any classroom. With that comes a responsibility for our students to step into city living, which contributes to challenges and stressors that GW students must overcome.

I would like to share my experiences at GW as a student and university employee. I am a third-year student at The George Washington University. I currently am pursuing a degree in nutrition science from the Milken Institute School of Public Health. In May 2019, I began working in the Business and Auxiliary Services (BAS) department at the University. I was hired as the Dining Services Program Coordinator. With no experience working in auxiliary services before, I was not sure what to expect. But one of the first things that I quickly became acquainted with was that each initiative, program, and policy implemented by BAS has a central guiding factor: safety, health, and happiness for ALL students. Moreover, for the purposes of this article I will be focusing on how those principles emulate through and guide the Dining Services Team at GW.

I can speak from experience that leaving home for college presents many new emotions, challenges, and stresses. One of the major changes in transitioning from home living to college life is dining. While many universities have a traditional dining program with a dining hall, dining services at GW looks very different. The GW Dining plan is administered through a declining-balance account. Students have access to those funds that they can use at over 105 vendors, ranging from grocery stores, sit down restaurants, grab and go food service locations, and more. There are no meal swipes or flex plans; the program functions similarly to a debit card. With the vast variety and abundant dining options offered on the GW dining plan, students must manage their dining funds independently. Living in the city requires GW students to adjust to the independent nature of city living. The independence can be difficult for many students to navigate, especially during their first year away from home. This is where our Business and Auxiliary Services team helps to provide students resources needed to navigate independent eating and living.

GW Dining Services provides a series of programming that works with students to help them learn how to create food budgets, efficiently grocery shop, and meal prep to maximize dining funds. One of my jobs as a program coordinator is to plan, promote, and work to enhance these programs to better suit all students' needs. An example of one of the programs that GW runs is called Supermarket Sundays. The Supermarket Sundays Program invites students to grocery shop, spend $40 in Dining Cash on meal prep groceries, and receive a bonus $10 dining cash back in their account. This program was designed to encourage students to meal prep and create a food budget in an effort to maintain sufficient funds. Students expressed concerns regarding having sufficient funds to sustain them for the duration of the semester. This program was built to relieve some of the stress surrounding dining funds and food security. In addition, Supermarket Sundays allow for our dining services team to have regular face-to-face interaction with students. These conversations give auxiliary services the opportunity to hear students' concerns and learn more ways auxiliary services can work to help them reduce stresses surrounding food insecurity while maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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3rd Place

The programming doesn't stop there! GW Dining runs many other programs that aim to serve students. GW Dining runs weekly cooking classes in residence halls across the university. The Cooking Class Program was built in partnership with the Student Life Division of the university in an effort to build a stronger community, inspire students to get in the kitchen, and show students how to take advantage of the community kitchens on campus. The classes give students the opportunity to learn how to prepare healthy, affordable, and delicious meals while hanging out with staff and other peers. By conducting these classes, GW Dining has been able to offer students resources that they no longer have to seek out themselves. Cooking instructions, tips, and tricks are all offered to students at the classes. Students get to engage in the cooking activity to get hands-on experience with the different kinds of recipes. While the cooking classes serve as instructional programming, the classes also foster a stress-free environment for students to come cook and forget about the worries of their day. For myself, I know that each day I look forward to getting into my kitchen, putting on music, and cooking myself a delicious meal; it not only fills me up physically but speaks to my heart! I could not make that statement if it wasn't for programming like the GW Dining Cooking Classes that gave me the opportunity to explore a passion, I never knew I had.

Overall, programs such as Supermarket Sunday and Cooking Classes are just a glimpse into how auxiliary services at GW works to support the holistic well-being of students. The GW Business and Auxiliary Services Division not only provides integral policies and structures that impact students' daily lives, but also BAS understands the importance of promoting a fulfilling lifestyle outside of the classroom. Through BAS programming we are able to provide valuable resources that functionally serve students while also supporting their health, happiness, and overall wellness at GW.

JILLIAN MORGAN is a third-year student at The George Washington University.

Creating a Better, Circular Economy

BY DEBRA ROWE AND DR. SUZANNE SAVANICK HANSEN

"Portions of this article are from "Sustainable Procurement and the Circular Economy," published in APPA's March/April 2020 issue of Facilities Manager magazine (www.appa.org/facilitiesmanager) and utilized with their permission."

The Higher Education Associations Sustainability Consortium (HEASC) – of which NACAS is a member – is helping to bring information on sustainable procurement and the circular economy to higher education. HEASC is a network of higher education associations with a commitment to advancing sustainability within their constituencies and the entire system of higher education.

NACAS members have a unique and important role to play in helping to create a less polluting and more sustainable economy. The current "take-make-waste" linear economy needs to be transformed. The circular economy offers a framework for change that is based on three key principles:

- designing out waste and pollution,
- keeping products and materials in use, and
- regenerating natural systems.

There is increasing discussion on the role of higher education auxiliary services and their supply chain. While companies such as Renault have developed their own closed-loop supply chains to ensure a

stable, cost-competitive supply of recycled plastic, this ability to influence and create circular supply chains is not just limited to the automotive industry.

University campuses wield tremendous joint purchasing power and can significantly influence their supply chains in multiple ways. Many companies want access to students as their future consumers and value placing their brands on campus. Requesting and utilizing products and services that follow the key principles of a circular economy is good modeling for students and the community, and also creates changes in the larger economy. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation's "toolkit for policymakers" has a dedicated chapter on public procurement, which has multiple synergies for those in the auxiliary services area of higher education. There is a range of resources available to help support the transition to a circular procurement model, and links to many of these are included below.

Following are five key ways in which your institution's choices can influence the transition to a circular economy:

1. Use your new campus project as a research base or testbed for new circular economy models, products, or services.
   - Arizona State University has worked with the City of Phoenix on the RISN (Resource Innovation and Solutions Network) project, which has seen the creation of 16 new companies and 74 jobs, and stimulated changes in the local economy that provide more circular business solutions in the supply chain.
2. Put circular procurement policies in place at the highest possible level within the university.
   - The City of Toronto established a cross divisional Circular Economy Working Group to apply circular economy principles to the city's procurement processes. Could you convene a cross-departmental/school group to achieve this result?
3. Use circular economy criteria when tendering new contracts.
   - Use onsite anaerobic digesters as part of your new waste management contract, with the digestate being used to fertilize gardens or even food growing projects, such as those at UC Davis and examples from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.
   - Employ reusable canteen containers and cutlery systems in preference to recycling systems. A GO Box system is set up in Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California.
4. Use your procurement to stimulate the transition to new business models.
   - Do you need to buy new furniture? Could you lease it instead? Product-as-a-service is a viable circular economic business model that has been used in higher education. Examples include Georgetown, Carleton College and Florida Atlantic University.
5. Use circular economy criteria in the maintenance, renovation, or development of all campus buildings and landscape.
   - Ensure suppliers hold a registry of building materials and components so that value can be captured and reuse is made possible.
   - Use cradle-to-cradle (C2C) principles when designing new buildings or retrofitting. Venlo City Hall in The Netherlands is a good case study of how this can be accomplished.

The following resources are useful reading and can be utilized to support university procurement policies:

- REBus (Resource Efficient Business Model) case studies include a guide for circular procurement and suppliers. REBus is a project funded by LIFE+, the European Union's funding instrument for environmental action.
- Case Study: C2C carpets for buildings in San Francisco.
- The Green Deal in the Netherlands provides a good case study library of public procurement for a circular economy. This government program furnishes advice on regulation, administration, financing, and in some cases amendments to regulations, while facilitating the involvement of key stakeholders. The government has managed to stimulate economic activity from the ground up without offering any further financial incentives. Here you can find a review summarizing three years of the Green Deal on Circular Procurement.

In spring 2020, a dedicated deep dive on procurement and supply-chain management will be released as part of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Learning Hub

- The Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council has many additional resources.
- Listen to a recording of a webinar and workshop from HEASC on this topic for NACAS members.
- Remember the importance of shifting from fossil fuels and moving to energy efficiency and renewable energies to diminish the worst impacts of climate change and reduce volatile energy costs. See how this can be a cost-effective transition for all energy usage, according to a newly released study.
- Students are increasingly taking courses in topics related to the circular economy. A new study, A Global Snapshot of Circular Economy Learning Offerings in Higher Education captured learning offerings from 138 higher education institutions. Your institution could offer students these types of classes or co-curricular activities as a living laboratory, hands-on research opportunity to implement circular economy projects.
- Many staff, community members and students feel despondent about the environment and may show up at your door, requesting more change. When they ask for more action on reducing the use of fossil fuels, you can help them get involved in state-level energy policies by sharing the resources developed by HEASC's initiative "Beyond Doom and Gloom: Engage in Climate Solutions." You and/or the students and other staff can participate in HEASC's Sustainability Policy Partners network. Over 90 campuses in 33 states are already involved. A sustainable future requires sustainability oriented policies at the campus, regional and national levels. ■

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DR. SUZANNE SAVANICK HANSEN is a sustainability consultant and a HEASC fellow. She served as the first sustainability staff in higher education in the region when she started the Sustainable Campus Initiative at the University of Minnesota. She also led Macalester College's award-winning sustainability efforts for 12 years and started the Upper Midwest Association for Campus Sustainability.

HEASC THE HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS SUSTAINABILITY CONSORTIUM (HEASC) is a network of higher education associations with a commitment to advancing sustainability within their constituencies and the entire system of higher education. HEASC was formed in December 2005 by leaders of several higher education associations to support and enhance the capacity of higher education to fulfill its unique and critical role in creating a healthy, just, and sustainable future. Members recognize that fulfilling their mission in the 21st century requires a broader, systemic, collaborative approach to their own work and that of the constituents they serve.

RENIERA O'DONNELL, co-author with Debra Rowe of the article in Facilities Magazine, is the higher education lead at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and can be reached at reniera.odonnell@ellenmacarthurfoundation.org. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is championing the new circular economic model in Europe, the United States, and beyond, working across businesses, cities and governments, and educational institutions in many areas, such as plastics, food, fashion, and finance.

For a deeper dive on this subject: International Society for Industrial Ecology https://is4ie.org/

"Right as this issue goes to press, the United States is in the midst of protests over recent and longstanding acts of racial violence. NACAS stands with the Black community in the fight against systemic racism. We are committed to providing the best resources and solutions to help our members and business partners create safe and inclusive spaces for their communities. In addition, we will continue to examine our own practices to ensure that we are fully embracing diversity and being inclusive of all. This fight belongs to all of us. The time for change is now."

AMIDST UNCERTAINTY, FEAR, AND FRUSTRATION NACAS REMAINS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING LEADERSHIP TO ADVANCE AND SUSTAIN CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS WORLDWIDE

The world looks a little different from the last time I wrote this letter. Now, in the middle of a global pandemic, we have had to act quickly and strategically in the face of uncertainty. At the heart of it, our mission as auxiliary services professionals is to create the environments that students need to succeed. While there have undoubtedly been hurdles to jump and trials to overcome, I am so proud of and humbled by the work you, our members and business partners, have done to ensure the collective safety of your campus communities.

As I am acutely aware, this is a long way from over. Now we are faced with the behemoth question mark of the fall semester. There is no return to "normal" operations – not yet, and more than likely, not ever. We have to work together to find a solution that promises peace of mind to ourselves, our staff, and our students, while also meeting the needs and goals of our institutions. It's no small task, that's for sure. That's why I encourage you to take the time and space you need for yourself so that you can show up with energy and empathy around this work. To be able to demonstrate clear-headedness whenever possible, to be authentic in your relationships, creative in your solutions, and bold in what the future might hold.

At NACAS, it is our mission to advance campus experiences that enrich the quality of life for students. We do that by providing sustainable resources to make your institutions safer for your students and your operations more streamlined for your staff. We are working around the clock to provide ample opportunities for you to connect with other professionals who can act as a sounding board for your ideas and issues. We encourage you to show up in partnership with other members and business partners, who can support you in finding new, innovative ways to drive revenue and bring additional stability during this difficult time in higher education.

Usually the summer issue of *College Services* includes a full preview of C3X. It goes without saying that our top priority is your health and wellbeing. We are closely monitoring local, state, and federal guidelines on large gatherings and exploring all options for holding our event this fall. We will still gather (virtually or otherwise) and will have more information on how we plan to move forward with C3X in early summer/late fall.

While there is certainly frustration and fear in the unknown, we at NACAS are keeping positive by holding fast to our promise to you: to provide the leadership needed to advance and sustain campus environments worldwide. We will continue to explore different avenues for service-solution delivery. Whether that's through webinars and virtual roundtables, coffee chats, or paid online events like the Virtual Leadership Forum, we will serve as a guiding light through this journey. We can get through this, together. ■

Kelsey

Kelsey Harmon Finn
Chief Executive Officer,
NACAS

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