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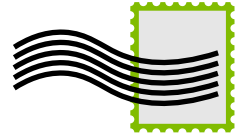
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# college services

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08

## 08 Academic Workforce Housing

Colleges and universities are wrestling with how to recruit and retain faculty and staff members. Many institutions throughout North America are turning to academic workforce housing and its various models to attract talent.

BY VICTOR VAN ZANDT  
AND ANDY LACHMAN, PH.D., CASP

## 20 Parcel Locker Revolution

With more and more students preferring online shopping and shipping, automated package delivery systems allow them to pick up their items on their schedule. In addition, colleges and universities are using delivery systems to save money on staffing and explore branding opportunities.

BY ROB ZINSKY

## 14 Micro-Farming Brings Sustainable Option to Food Service Industry

To advance its sustainability strategy, University of Louisville's Dining Services, run by Aramark, partnered with Babylon Micro-Farms. The vertical farming project has not only supplied fresh greens but has shown students another way to grow food responsibly.

BY SHARON RETTINGER  
AND LINDSAY KLINGENSCHMIDT



14

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### COMMENTARY

04

**Opening Remarks: Presidential Perspective**  
**BRETT JACKSON, CPA, CASP**  
We Are NACAS and We Are Better Together

27

**In Closing: Executive Summary**  
Rich Steele Takes Helm at NACAS

### DEPARTMENTS

24

**Member Spotlight**  
Farah Ally, Senior Project Manager of Enterprise Shared Services, University of Toronto

25

**Volunteer Spotlight**  
Sid Mehta, Senior Director of Ancillary Services, Simon Fraser University

26

**Business Partner Spotlight**  
William 'Bill' Corrigan, President and Co-Founder, Collegiate Press

28

**Advertiser Index**

### COLLEGE SERVICES

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## opening remarks

### Presidential Perspective

# We Are NACAS and We Are Better Together



**BRETT JACKSON, CPA, CASP**  
NACAS PRESIDENT

**A**s I reflect on 2024 for NACAS, I quickly think of the people who make this organization so special. NACAS is an organization filled with truly amazing people accomplishing extraordinary work on campuses across North America and abroad. Whether it be a member institution or a Business Partner, you don't have to look far on a campus to see the impacts of our services for our students. Whether we are feeding students, transporting them to class, or supporting their textbook needs, we help drive student success beyond the classroom. All of these auxiliary professionals coming together is what makes NACAS such a special organization.

Our colleague, Phil Allison, deputy director of auxiliary services at the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) in Annapolis, MD, put it really well recently when he shared a personal note of what NACAS has meant to him. "As a retired Naval Officer hired into an auxiliary position at USNA, I was lost for the first six years, and that all changed when I stumbled into hosting a NACAS East reception," he said. That NACAS East reception introduced Phil to the resources he needed to be successful when he realized NACAS gives him "access to webinars, peers in the industry, regional and national conferences, and even senior executive institutes." Phil credits NACAS with positioning him to more effectively support his campus community, and I am confident this is just one example of a colleague NACAS has helped be more successful.

As we kick off a new year and settle back into doing what we all do best after the disruptions of the past several years, I hope we will all find opportunities to get more involved, and at the end of the year, we all, like Phil, can reflect on how NACAS has helped position us to successfully support our campuses. There are a number

of ways to make the most of your NACAS membership beyond C3X, so as you plan out your year, be sure to take advantage of these events in 2024:

- Senior Executive Summit: March 24–27, Litchfield, AZ
  - Regional CX conferences:
    - NACAS South: April 21–24, Orlando, FL
    - NACAS Central: June 2–5, Indianapolis, IN
    - NACAS West: June 9–11, Sonoma, CA
    - NACAS East: June 16–19, Virginia Beach, VA
  - Women in Higher Ed Leadership: Fall 2024
  - C3X: October 27–30, Orlando, FL
- In addition, explore these opportunities for professional development and camaraderie:
- Online education: Webinars are available on your schedule and at your fingertips;
  - Volunteer: Opportunities help co-create value for your fellow members;
  - Diversity in Auxiliary Leadership (DIAL): Cohort 1 began a two-year program at C3X 2023;
  - NACAS Marketplace: Essential resources can help you source the best solutions to enrich campus experiences
  - NACAS Lounge: This social network supports auxiliary leaders on various issues;
  - NACAS Career Center: Job seekers and job posters can connect through this online portal;
  - *College Services* magazine: NACAS provides peer-driven content to its members; and
  - More!

The future of NACAS is bright because of people like you! I hope you will join me in taking advantage of these opportunities because each of you makes NACAS special. The way we share and learn from each other is truly unique. Together, we can create remarkable experiences for our campuses, so let's make this a great year for the entire NACAS community. ■

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*The Alturas faculty housing at University Hills at the University of California, Irvine, is inspired by Spanish architecture. The eight-plexes are like duplexes—all units have light on three to four sides.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELENO ASSOCIATES



# Academic Workforce Housing

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SEE THIS PROGRAM  
AS A RECRUITMENT AND RETAINMENT TOOL

BY VICTOR VAN ZANDT AND ANDY LACHMAN, PH.D., CASP

**R**eaders of *College Services* may be familiar with student housing but not with another type of institutional housing: academic workforce housing, also known as personnel housing, faculty housing, or housing assistance programs. As housing costs steadily trend upward, these programs centered around affordable housing products have the potential to play an important role in recruiting and retaining faculty for higher education institutions.

Traditionally, academic workforce housing programs have been created at colleges and universities

situated in higher-priced real estate markets. These programs historically have been located on the West Coast (such as in California) and throughout the East Coast. However, with the cost of real estate rising, several institutions outside of these regions have established or are in the process of establishing similar programs, including institutions in areas such as the Rocky Mountain West and the Piedmont region between the Appalachian Mountains and the Atlantic Coastal plain. The following is an overview of academic workforce housing for auxiliary services professionals.

It is often said, “If you have seen one auxiliary, you have seen one auxiliary.” This saying suggests there is a large amount of diversity in auxiliaries regarding programs, structure, funding, personnel, and all other aspects of operations. This extends to academic workforce housing programs, with their large variation in services and products. Typically, these programs will have one or more of the following components: rental units, housing for sale, financial assistance, and loan programs. Academic workforce housing programs are unique to their location and institution. Local context and institutional and regulatory constraints push programs toward certain solutions and limit options for them.

### WHY ACADEMIC WORKFORCE HOUSING IS NECESSARY

Colleges and universities, especially those with large, established campuses, have functioned for decades or even centuries without academic workforce housing. But as populations grow and housing supply falls behind demand, campuses across North America are being forced to consider how to recruit and retain academic talent in their cities and regions. This inevitably leads to questions of what factors are causing these issues and whether the campus should respond.

Not only is there a severe disparity between supply and demand for all types of housing, but there is also the related escalation in rents and prices. Unlike employees in the general marketplace, expecting academic pay to keep pace with the rate of housing cost escalation is unrealistic. Adding to these woes, higher-than-average student loan debt and other factors exacerbate the issue. As academic households attempt to afford housing units that meet their needs (bedroom count, access to schools, etc.), they must find housing solutions further and further afield from the campus core. Many college and university employees have nontypical work schedules, often requiring multiple daily trips to the campus. This dual burden of unrealistic costs and demanding commutes adds an unnecessary toll on colleges’ and universities’ academic talent, reducing their effectiveness, job satisfaction, creativity, and productivity.

Institutions cannot compete if they cannot hire the academic talent they need. It is clear that it is in the colleges’ and universities’ best interests to alleviate these pressures. However, we would argue that the lack of affordable housing is a moral issue, as well. The very purpose of the higher education institution is to create human knowledge and transmit it to the next generation, all with the overarching goal of moving humanity forward and improving society. How can helping to improve employees’ housing situations be incongruent with this overarching mission?

### ASSIST, BUILD, BUY, LEND, AND EMPOWER

Academic workforce housing programs have five elements (referred to by the acronym as ABBLE) that can be used together or individually. These tools are assisting with the cost of housing, building housing, buying real estate, lending, and empowering employees by educating them on the options and programs available to them.

#### Assisting With Finances

Rental and down payment assistance is an important academic workforce housing component for many campuses. The money is

typically a “grant” to individual employees and is considered taxable income. It is an imperfect solution, but it is a powerful, immediate (though short-term) way to show academic talent that the campus understands and is acting to address the cost of housing. Typically, rental assistance is for a short period of time, measured in months or single-digit years. Down payment assistance is typically forgiven annually for a defined period of time and is contingent on continued employment.

A recent innovation to down payment assistance is the shared appreciation model, where the campus or entity becomes a co-owner of sorts. A campus provides a percentage of the cost as a partner in the down payment (typically 5%–20%), which lowers the barrier to home purchase, can eliminate private mortgage insurance, and decreases the cost of ownership for the academic talent. Upon sale or other qualifying event such as refinancing by the employee, the campus will receive its investment back along with a pro rata increase based on the new value of the house.

#### Building New Housing

Building new academic workforce housing is the most involved element and has the longest time horizon. Many campuses have established housing solutions, going back to the 19th century with Stanford University’s on-campus ownership homes built at the urging of Jane Stanford on leasehold campus land in California. An attainably priced residential unit is different than a lab, lecture hall, or dorm. Creating new housing requires a very specific skill set often not found in the university structure. Finding design, construction, and operational partners is a necessary part of this option.

#### Buying Real Estate

Purchasing existing real estate near campus is often the low-hanging fruit, whether it be a residential unit, raw land, existing apartment property, or a commercial building that can be adaptively reused. Cities and stakeholders need to be brought into this vision so that campus purchases are seen as a positive benefit to the neighborhood versus being perceived as negative (through decreased property tax revenue and less housing stock available to the public). An effective example of purchasing is Chapman University’s rental homes sprinkled throughout the historic zone of its hometown, Orange, CA.

#### Lending

For campuses with an endowment or pool of funds that has flexibility, providing a first mortgage program is a classic win-win. Not only is the campus’ capital earning a consistent rate of return, but the risk associated with typical mortgages is also greatly diminished since campuses with mortgage programs often pull the mortgage payment directly from the employee’s paycheck. Because the funding is limited, many colleges and universities limit the number of annual mortgages and qualifying employee categories.

#### Empowering Employees

Many academic employees are not fully aware of all the resources available to them that could help in high-priced housing markets.



Units in the Alturas faculty housing at University Hills at the University of California, Irvine, face a pool. Irvine Campus Housing Authority develops and maintains the housing community.

Providing intentional, mandatory education on these resources could be a valuable step to ensure employees have a deeper understanding of their benefits. Some of these benefits may include campus discounts on long-term stay hotels, discounted deposits for local apartment operators, discounted real estate services, discounted mortgage rates at local banking institutions, relocation services, and down payment loans from 401(k) and 403(b) retirements accounts. The simple act of educating potential and current faculty and staff members will empower them to navigate the local housing market more effectively.

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNDING

There are many organizational structures for academic workforce housing programs. Some colleges and universities will keep all of the previously mentioned components under one office, while others will be split up. We would like to highlight two examples of how these programs fit in the overall structure of an institution. The first example is a program that falls under the control of the main governing structure of the institution. These programs may report to a vice president with other auxiliary enterprise oversight, human resources responsibilities, or who is in charge of the financial components. These programs benefit by being able to align quickly with college and university priorities; having access to college and university finances and funding; and being able

### PROGRAM PROFILE

**INSTITUTION:** Irvine Campus Housing Authority (ICHA)

**ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION:** University of California, Irvine (UC Irvine)

**COMPONENTS:** Ownership and rental units

**NUMBER OF UNITS:** 1,610 (1,226 ownership, 384 rental), with 104 more ownership under construction and 100 in planning

University Hills, UC Irvine's academic workforce housing neighborhood, is a 300-acre, 1,610-unit, on-campus planned community that includes typical community amenities such as pools, parks, a community center, ball fields and courts, trailheads to the preserve, school bus stops, and more.

Over 4,500 people live in University Hills, and it is widely considered the most successful on-campus program of its kind. The mission of ICHA is to assist UC Irvine with the recruitment and retention of academic talent. Additional ownership homes are in construction and planning.



*The Kau'iokahaloa Nui Apartments are part of the University Housing program serving the University of Hawai'i campuses on Oahu. They are in the Mānoa Valley.*

### PROGRAM PROFILE

**INSTITUTION:** University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

**ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION:** University department under the vice president for administration

**COMPONENTS:** Rental housing

**NUMBER OF UNITS:** 237

The University of Hawai'i's academic workforce housing program, known as University Housing, is a rental program consisting of three properties, two of which are shown here. (The third is condominiums.) These properties near the Mānoa campus offer below-market rental rates. The inventory ranges from studios to townhouses.

The program's purpose is to "support the university's competitive strategy in personnel recruitment by providing housing assistance, including primarily transitional housing." In line with the recruiting priorities of the university, tenure-track professors get preference in being assigned units.



*The Wa'ahila Apartments are part of the University Housing program serving the University of Hawai'i campuses on Oahu. They are near the Mānoa campus.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA

to leverage institutional town-gown relationships, referring to the residents in the surrounding community and the students and faculty members, respectively.

The second example is a program that operates independently for the benefit of the college and university. These organizational structures allow for various advantages that higher education institutions do not enjoy such as an arm's-length relationship between employee and housing. This makes for a nimbler entity that can react and respond to community issues and needs, procure vendors outside of institution rules and requirements, and manage the housing program without having to factor college and university politics in decision-making. These independent operators can be a for-profit partner, sole-purpose nonprofit, or more autonomous auxiliary.

The funding for these programs typically aligns with standard auxiliary enterprise models for financing where the program is self-sufficient by charging the program users to recapture expenses. These revenues consist of apartment rent, sales, ground rent, shared appreciation, community fees, and interest. These programs tend to have significant upfront costs, which are incorporated into the funding models. Institutions may fund these initial costs through bonds, short-term loans, and private-public partnership agreements.

Finally, not all academic workforce housing programs are self-supporting and may be subsidized by a college or university as part of its employee benefit, recruitment, and retention strategies. Subsidized housing benefits may be taxable to the employee, so campuses need to take care when considering any form of subsidy.

## MANAGING COMMUNITIES

Before an institution begins to construct or acquire housing, it must create a set of programmatic goals and rules. These elements should align with the institution's goals and maximize the benefit to its employees. Several components to consider in the administration of an academic workforce housing program with physical assets are how to distribute the housing, provide day-to-day management and longer-term maintenance, and pursue future expansion.

### Rentals

Academic workforce rental programs, where housing is leased to the institution's personnel, typically provide some combination of three benefits. First, these programs often provide units at below-market rates. Additionally, these units are on campus or close to campus, which is often useful for new hires as they gain a further understanding of the local housing market and community. Finally, these properties also provide an avenue for socialization and community among academics.

When establishing a rental program, the institution needs to consider several types of policies regarding the administration of the program. Among them are how long someone can reside in the housing; how much the housing should cost; and how units are assigned, including who should have priority to receive a unit. While these may, on the surface, seem like easy questions, they

## RESOURCES

- Council of Academic Workforce Housing at [cofawh.com](http://cofawh.com)
- Association of University Real Estate Officials at [aureo.org](http://aureo.org)

have large political implications similar to any policy involving the allocation of limited resources.

### For-Sale Programs

For-sale programs allow personnel the option to purchase housing. These programs offer many of the same benefits to residents as rental programs (e.g., savings, location, and community) with the added advantages of having equity in the property, longer-term housing stability, and the ability to customize their living space. For-sale programs will require a set of rules around resale price restrictions, waitlists, qualifying employees and categories, employment status, primary residency, and owner and operator obligations.

Some of the most important considerations when creating a for-sale program are how the property will be deeded to the buyer, an articulation of the obligations of the buyer and the college or university, and the limitations connected with the future sale of the property. For example, is the property being sold with the land under it (i.e., fee simple), or does the institution retain ownership of the land (i.e., leasehold)? In general, higher education institutions tend to desire vehicles of sales that allow the housing product to be sold in the future with many of the original benefits to other institutional personnel.

Additionally, attached product type will likely require the creation of a condo corporation. These issues are too complex and nuanced to address in this article. Deep research, expert advice, and collaboration with stakeholders will be required to structure a successful and sustainable system.

Overall, the academic workforce housing landscape is ripe for expansion as the cost of living trends upward. Providing these types of programs may be beneficial not only to employees but also to the college or university. However, when establishing a program, there needs to be careful consideration that the policies and components that provide the foundation for these programs align with the mission, needs, and resources of the institution. ■



**VICTOR VAN ZANDT** is CEO and president of Irvine Campus Housing Authority at the University of California, Irvine. He is also a founding member of the Council of Academic Workforce Housing.



**ANDY LACHMAN, Ph.D., CASP**, is manager of university housing, food, and mail services at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He is also a member of the Council of Academic Workforce Housing.



Louie's Greenhouse is a micro-farm where over 40 types of microgreens, herbs, and lettuces are grown at the Ville Grill, a contemporary dining venue at the University of Louisville in Kentucky.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BABYLON MICRO-FARMS

# Micro-Farming Brings Sustainable Option to Food Service Industry

'STUDENTS ARE AMAZED THAT WE CAN GROW EVERYTHING WITHOUT SOIL!'

BY SHARON RETTINGER AND LINDSAY KLINGENSCHMIDT

**FOOD SERVICES** at higher education institutions in the United States and Canada have been exploring and implementing various ways to meet the changing appetites of their campus communities while upholding sustainability and social responsibility.

Among these approaches is micro-farming—a small-scale, high-yield, sustainably minded type of agriculture. Micro-farms can range from open-air urban rooftop farms to raised-bed farms to container farming to small greenhouses, all of which are focused on providing environmentally friendly solutions for sustainable food production.

University of Louisville (UofL) Dining Services provider Aramark decided to explore vertical farming as part of its Be Well. Do Well. Initiatives. This Aramark strategy seeks to promote plant-forward food options, source responsibly, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, among other priorities, across the campuses it serves.

Aramark reached out to Babylon Micro-Farms, a small company based in Richmond, VA, started by two University of Virginia graduates, that is focused on innovative ways to grow crops in vertical spaces. Babylon Micro-Farms installed a unit in which plants are grown year-round with only water and nutrients in a self-contained indoor hydroponic system. The unit, Louie's Greenhouse, named after UofL's mascot, is located in the Ville Grill, an on-campus dining venue. Chefs there select from the more than 40 microgreens, lettuces, and leafy greens grown in the unit when creating their dishes.

Sharon Rettinger, national sales director, and Meredith Forbes, customer engagement manager, both of Babylon Micro-Farms, participated in a webinar with Lindsay Klingenschmidt, Aramark's marketing and sustainability manager with UofL Dining Services in Kentucky, where they discussed the impact of the micro-farm on the campus community. Following is an abbreviated version of that webinar.

**Sharon Rettinger:** What have been the most profound impacts you've seen on campus?

**Lindsay Klingenschmidt:** I love that students will ask what we're growing. Our employees are also very curious to know what we're growing, too. Students love seeing that we use what we're growing and that the farm isn't just a prop in the background.

**SR:** What do your students enjoy most about your farm?

**LK:** The students are amazed that we can grow everything without soil! When we're working in the farm, we usually have a few students who stop by to check out what we're growing and when it will be harvested.

**Meredith Forbes:** I understand you've had student interns to help with your farm. What have been the highlights of the student internship program so far?

**LK:** Definitely the stories that have been shared in the community and on campus. Someone posted a photo of the farm on their Facebook page, and a reporter from WDRB reached out to us for a news story. Sarah, one of my interns at the time, was able to be there to share her passion for hydroponics and food recovery.



*Herbs are tagged with identifying information for easy reference in Louie's Greenhouse at the University of Louisville in Kentucky.*



*The vertical farming greenhouse at the University of Louisville in Kentucky grows produce year-round in an indoor hydroponic system.*

In the spring, the university reached out to do a video to be released during Earth Week on campus. The university videographer interviewed me and my graduate student intern, Patricia. We were happy to share what we've learned and how we're positively impacting the students and the planet.

**MF:** Can you share some of your favorite comments students have made about your farm?

**LK:** There are a lot of students who ask how the farm works. They love being able to track the progress from seed to harvest. They usually double-check that we actually use what we harvest. When they find out how much we've harvested, they're usually shocked.

**MF:** You also created a poll to ask students what they would like to see growing in the micro-farm. What kind of programs and points of engagement have you used with your farm?

**LK:** We have signage next to the farm that has sustainably focused facts on it as well as a sign that shows what we're growing and harvesting next.

## MICRO-FARMS ACROSS THE U.S.

Explore how these colleges and universities are implementing micro-farming programs:

- **Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA**  
[youtu.be/tsSpMzts8aY?si=qCj5T7d\\_59MLU-L8](https://youtu.be/tsSpMzts8aY?si=qCj5T7d_59MLU-L8)
- **University of Nebraska—Lincoln**  
[youtu.be/NdoSR\\_U9\\_to?si=Ge40EhEBgAdnwqAa](https://youtu.be/NdoSR_U9_to?si=Ge40EhEBgAdnwqAa)
- **University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA**  
[youtu.be/I98f3-r4qpg?si=PxA1\\_ja5\\_M0Zdtsz](https://youtu.be/I98f3-r4qpg?si=PxA1_ja5_M0Zdtsz)
- **Xavier University in New Orleans, LA**  
[youtube.com/shorts/Xrf\\_UIZvgzk?si=2rBqs\\_c56nTxzfIP](https://youtube.com/shorts/Xrf_UIZvgzk?si=2rBqs_c56nTxzfIP)

## MORE ABOUT MICRO-FARMS

Check out these news sources for information about micro-farming:

- **WDRB news report about University of Louisville's micro-farm**  
[youtu.be/BJbStZ6zxa4?si=sFnTuwoTdnFYeG6g](https://youtu.be/BJbStZ6zxa4?si=sFnTuwoTdnFYeG6g)
- **Earth 911 Podcast: "Cloud-Based Vertical Farming With Babylon Micro-Farms"**  
[youtu.be/pLHkGG2Hvm8?si=5qdMP5oINIJwsd7g](https://youtu.be/pLHkGG2Hvm8?si=5qdMP5oINIJwsd7g)
- **Plug and Play Tech Center: "The Future of Ag Tech"**  
[youtu.be/DGYs2Bqv56E?si=1m9ndaUINIBrYbQI](https://youtu.be/DGYs2Bqv56E?si=1m9ndaUINIBrYbQI)
- **The Hill: "Changing America"**  
[youtu.be/Lo0sZ085tIQ?si=RGSj\\_jzFHGWdl6Zo](https://youtu.be/Lo0sZ085tIQ?si=RGSj_jzFHGWdl6Zo)

We have a fantastic social media following, and Casey, our marketing coordinator, has done a fantastic job showcasing what we're growing and how we utilize what we harvest. One fun Instagram post was when we asked the students what they wanted us to grow next.

When we harvest and use the herbs or leafy greens on a station, we make sure our chefs have a sign that says, "This was grown at Louie's Greenhouse." We were able to grow pansies and marigolds over the summer so when the students got back to campus, they painted flowerpots and took the flowers home with them. Who doesn't love arts and crafts?!

**SR:** I understand you've used other on-site growing solutions. Share your experience using the Guided Growing app/software to manage your micro-farms.

**LK:** The app is so easy to use. With the previous hydroponic system I used, I needed to fill the reservoir myself (no water line was



Plants are grown with only water and nutrients at Louie's Greenhouse at the University of Louisville in Kentucky.

available). I also needed to purchase my own carboys and tubing to fill the reservoir over the weekend.

I also needed to use a pH meter to determine how much nutrients to add. It took me anywhere from four to 10 hours per week to manage. None of the materials could be sent through our industrial washers, so I had to hand-wash everything.

I needed to purchase my own germination station (i.e., shelving, seed trays, LED lights) and seeds, as well.

The Babylon Guided Growing App makes seed starting, growing, harvesting, and cleaning easy. The app includes step-by-step videos, so if you ever get lost, you can refer to those. With the video feed in the app, I can check on how the plants are growing, and it even sends reminders for when your plants are ready to harvest.

**SR: How does this work with your campus's sustainability initiatives and align with Aramark's Be Well. Do Well. initiatives?**

**LK:** Our university sustainability coordinator lives, eats, and breathes sustainability. He enjoys seeing our new technology and hearing the updates for what we're growing and how we're incorporating into the meals at Ville Grill and across campus.

As for our Be Well. Do Well. initiatives, growing leafy greens and herbs on campus reduces our food miles to literal feet. The Babylon [Micro-Farm] program reduces food waste, reduces water usage, and uses LEDs for the lights, which are better for the plants and use less energy. Utilizing hydroponics in our day-to-day operations is a great way to touch on all of the eight priorities, in one way or another.

**SR: I see that you've branded your micro-farm and have some amazing marketing tools that showcase this. How did the brand of "Louie's Greenhouse" come to fruition?**

**LK:** Louie is our university mascot, and he pops up across campus in various ways, so why not give our mascot something to snack on? After a few iterations and ideas, our team finally decided on Louie's Greenhouse, and we think it's a hit.

**SR: With Louie's Greenhouse, you've received some press, great accolades, and you've done a great job of promoting on social media. Can you expand on some of those things?**

**LK:** We have a very creative marketing team, and they've done a great job making sure we tell our story to the students, faculty, and staff at UofL as well as the community. We had an idea to use an Instagram poll to ask the students what they would like to grow next; it went very well, so I think we'll use that idea again.

Building on the interview we had with WDRB, a teacher from a local high school saw the news piece and reached out to us. They wanted their high school students who were in the agriculture program to see how you could grow without soil. They were filled with questions. They wanted to see how the reservoir worked, how we chose what to grow, and how they can take what they learned and incorporate it into their high school program. They asked me questions until they were back on the bus.

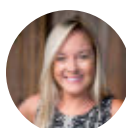


*The growth of each plant in Louie's Greenhouse at the University of Louisville in Kentucky is tracked using an app.*

**MF: You've shared a number of ways your farm has been able to contribute to and differentiate your dining operation. Why would you recommend the farms to your colleagues?**

**LK:** The farm is super easy to use, and it's a fantastic showcase piece in any dining hall. If students can see what we're growing, see the harvest in action, and can eat what we've harvested, they'll see we're prioritizing their future by utilizing the technology of the future. Gen Z students care where their food comes from, and this is one way we can be very transparent with our sourcing and sustainable food reporting. ■

*Editor's note: The entire webinar can be found at [sendspark.com/share/n2zu2gfnqdd3vig6](https://sendspark.com/share/n2zu2gfnqdd3vig6).*



**SHARON RETTINGER** is national sales director at Babylon Micro-Farms. She has been with the company for more than three years.



**LINDSAY KLINGENSCHMIDT** is Aramark's marketing and sustainability manager with UofL Dining Services. Prior to this position, she was the wellness and sustainability specialist for University of North Carolina at Charlotte Dining Services.

# Parcel Locker Revolution

AUTOMATED PACKAGE PICKUP  
IS DELIVERING BIG BENEFITS

BY ROB ZINSKY

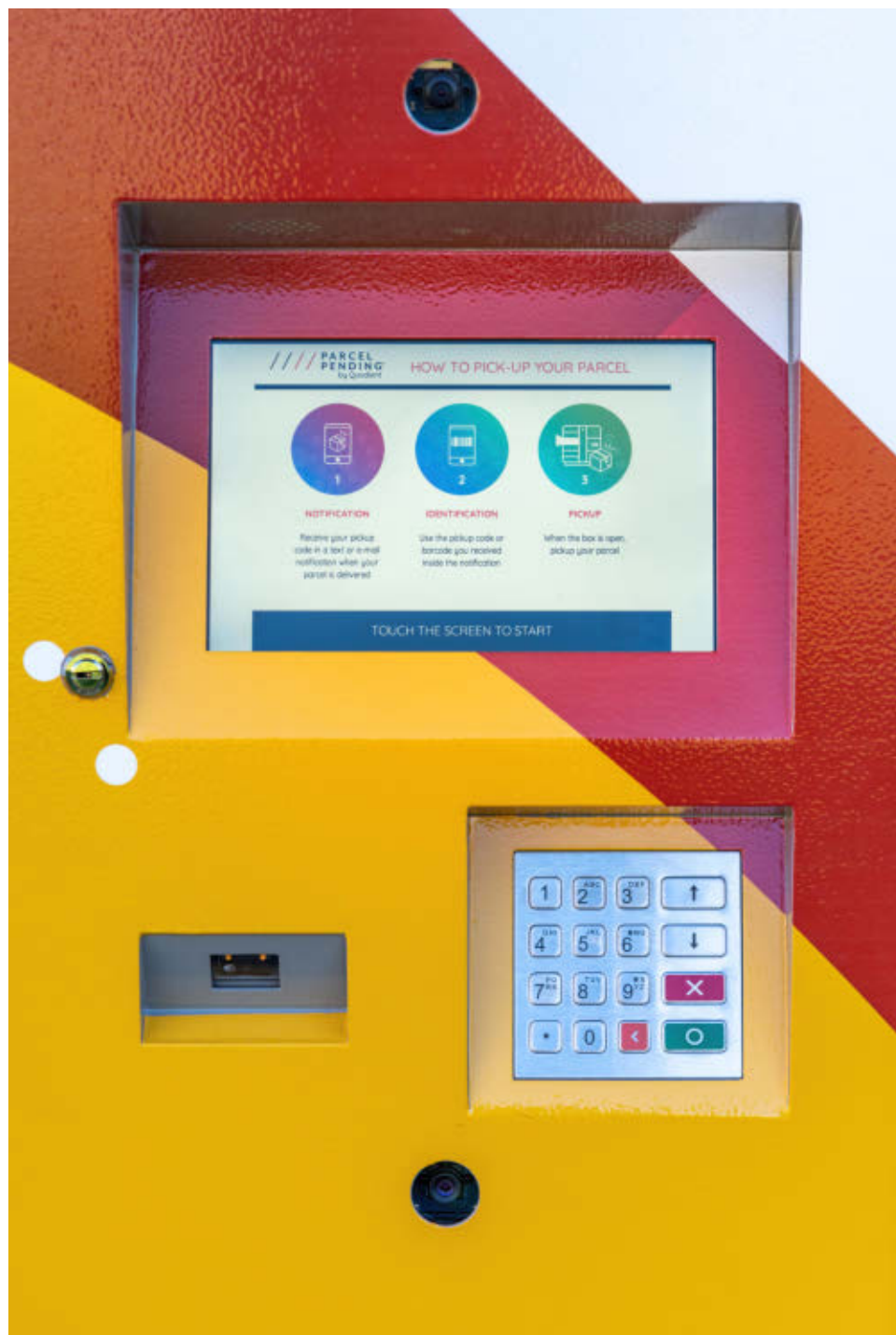
**IMAGINE** A slow-moving line of students is winding around the university quad on the first day of a new semester. After waiting for long periods, many students must step away from the queue to go to class or attend to other obligations. These students aren't in line for a university-sponsored event; instead, they are waiting to pick up their mail and packages from their campus mail center, housing office, or bookstore.

*Leadership at Valencia College, which has eight locations throughout Orange and Osceola counties in Florida, decided that mailing packages and incurring expensive shipping costs were not sustainable. The campus store tried curbside delivery, but it required an additional 20–30 workers per shift. The college pursued smart lockers, now branded the VC Vault, using them for managing orders from vendors to the bookstore, library, and food pantry.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF QUADAGENT







*This close-up of one of the smart lockers at Valencia College in Florida offers instructions via a touch screen to guide students through the retrieval process for their items.*

Historically, college mailrooms were designed to receive letters and packages, but free or rapid shipping combined with the online shopping boom brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in the campus mail center. Now, many students opt to purchase and ship their dorm essentials, textbooks, and school supplies from online stores rather than make these purchases in person. The resulting increase in package volume has created numerous new challenges for college auxiliary services, of which mail center staff make up a significant branch.

As a solution that leverages advanced technologies and innovative design, the emergence of intelligent parcel lockers on many campuses is helping to simplify the package retrieval process. Because higher education institutions anticipate students will continue to buy online, the adoption of intelligent lockers is booming, showing growth year after year.

## BENEFITS OF LOCKERS

As an automated distribution hub, intelligent parcel lockers are designed strategically. They offer multiple compartments of various sizes. Additionally, refrigerated lockers can safely store food and medication with temperature specifications. Once a package is placed inside the locker, the automated system generates a notification containing a secure code that is sent electronically to the recipient. Using the code, students can then pick up their package at their convenience 24/7.

The lockers also present unique opportunities for university branding. Intelligent parcel lockers can be decorated with a university's colors and logo or artwork. Conversely, they can be designed to look like bushes and blend into an outdoor environment unobtrusively.

In addition to these logistical and branding considerations, intelligent parcel lockers can help to address food insecurity on campus. For example, refrigerated lockers can provide a discreet, accessible, and convenient means for students to pick up food pantry items.

The implementation of intelligent parcel lockers also improves the mail center work environment for staff. Automating the distribution of packages reduces the need for additional shifts and frees up mail center staff to focus on other concerns. Automated tracking technology also means there

is a transparent chain of custody for packages. College and university employees no longer need to interact with packages between when carriers place them inside the locker and when students pick them up. This, in turn, reduces college and university liability for damaged, delayed, or missing packages while eliminating unnecessary stressors for mail center staff.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADOPTION

When bringing the idea of intelligent parcel lockers to college or university boards or other stakeholders, there are several things to consider. Foremost is the return on investment. While implementing parcel lockers involves an initial cost, this investment can yield long-term benefits, such as the improved efficiency in the mail center and enhanced parcel delivery experience.

There may be concerns related to physical space, as many mail centers currently lack sufficient room for storage and distribution of a growing volume of packages. The rear-loading capability of intelligent parcel locker systems optimizes space and reduces the amount of time packages spend in storage awaiting pickup—ultimately promoting a more efficient use of space and an invaluable return on investment.

### WHERE TO START THE PLANNING PROCESS

A seamless transition to parcel lockers begins with developing a strategic road map for implementation so the placement and functionality of the lockers align with the higher education institution's overall goals. Evaluate potential locations for the lockers based on climate, existing campus architecture, and the typical flow of students through campus. Start with smaller pilot projects, allowing time to assess the system's effectiveness and convenience before moving on to full-scale implementation.

Along with outlining immediate plans, engaging actively with higher education leaders can help identify additional ways for intelligent parcel lockers to improve the student, faculty, and staff experience beyond convenience. For example, ideas about how the appearance of the lockers might reinforce the college's or university's marketing of its individual culture and brand, as well as how specific applications of the lockers, including offering a pickup and drop-off point for staff to exchange teaching materials, computers, and more, all contribute to broader goals of efficiency.

Intelligent parcel lockers present campus mail centers of all sizes with a transformative opportunity. From mitigating the effects of

### INTELLIGENT LOCKERS IN ACTION

Here are a few colleges and universities using intelligent parcel lockers in innovative ways:

#### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

After it replaced its electronic lockers with smart lockers, this university created so-called "birthday lockers." Family and friends can send university swag items to students on their birthdays. These items are delivered to a designated locker that when opened plays the "Happy Birthday" song.

#### BUNKER HILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

To ensure students received food pantry and household items, this college in Boston used refrigerated smart lockers. Students can order and schedule a pickup time online, and items from the college's Delivering Information, Sustenance, and Health Food Pantry are delivered to the designated lockers.

#### RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

The move of the student mail center afforded an opportunity for this Troy, NY, institute to introduce smart lockers. The institute used this system to determine peak pickup times so packages would be placed in the lockers during that time frame. It also promoted special deals through a bookstore promo barcode on its delivery notifications to students.

increased package volume, to meeting the changing expectations that surround the college experience, to improving the overall work environment for mail center employees, parcel lockers offer a comprehensive approach to many challenges currently faced under the umbrella of auxiliary services. ■



**ROB ZINSKY** is vice president of higher education for North America at Quadient, helping higher education institutions adopt technology to meet the increasing demands of parcel management and delivery.

**A SEAMLESS TRANSITION TO PARCEL LOCKERS BEGINS WITH DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC ROAD MAP FOR IMPLEMENTATION SO THE PLACEMENT AND FUNCTIONALITY OF THE LOCKERS ALIGN WITH THE INSTITUTION'S OVERALL GOALS.**

## member spotlight: Farah Ally



Farah Ally, Senior Project Manager of Enterprise Shared Services, University of Toronto

**N**ACAS members are leaders who help create hospitable, well-rounded campus communities worldwide through the various campus services they ensure are provided. In this feature, *College Services* hosts a question-and-answer segment in which we introduce our members. For this issue, we interview Farah Ally, senior project manager of enterprise shared services at University of Toronto.

**College Services:** Please introduce yourself and tell us about your role in auxiliary services.

**Farah Ally:** I am a senior project manager in the central information technology (IT) services division at the University of Toronto in Canada. I plan out and lead large-scale, business, and digital transformation initiatives across its complex tri-campus structure of 90,000 students, more than 10,000 faculty and permanent staff, 10,000 hourly staff, 400-plus distinct academic departments, and 20-plus union agreements. Notably, we are currently upgrading our time management system, exploring advanced scheduling, and enhancing our employee self-services for employees in our auxiliary areas.

**CS:** What do you get out of being a NACAS member?

**FA:** For me, being part of NACAS facilitates idea exchange, problem-solving, and access to resources and collaborative opportunities among different postsecondary education institutions. It helps to keep me informed about the latest developments and trends in auxiliary services within the higher education sector.

The membership also brings a strength in numbers that can enable advocacy for better vendor solutions and improvements because of our common needs. This all contributes to the University of Toronto staying competitive, adapting to changes, and bringing innovative solutions for our faculty, staff, students, and employees.

**CS:** What NACAS member did you meet that made an impact on your role and/or your department?

**FA:** Although the University of Toronto has been a longtime and active member of NACAS, I am new to NACAS, having first learned about this organization this past year through a vendor we had been closely working with. I am excited about the opportunities it brings to build valuable relationships and connect with like-minded professionals and industry leaders. I think NACAS will also help me to encourage and foster ongoing professional growth.

**CS:** What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

**FA:** Over the past decade, I have mobilized and successfully led multiple business and technical teams to deliver on an organizational technology vision or strategic objectives for the university.

I led the technical implementation for the University of Toronto's response to COVID-19 with the seamless rollout of the vaccine upload employee portal program in under four weeks across 100,000 users and three geographic locations. I would probably say the ability to deliver that successfully within such a short time in a highly politicized and uncertain climate could be considered one of my [greatest] professional accomplishments to date.

I think the other is having developed [the ability] to identify the appropriate leadership style and project management approach required for a particular client environment—whether it is bringing to the table a tenacity with innovative thinking to drive progress or fostering consensus across varied stakeholders toward a common agenda. I've enjoyed an ability to solve complex challenges and facilitate a seamless delivery of IT ... in any business environment.

**CS:** What show have you recently binged that you would recommend?

**FA:** I recently binged all three seasons of "Upload," which is a science fiction comedy-drama series created by Greg Daniels. He is known for his work on "The Office" and "Parks and Recreation."

The show depicts a futuristic concept where people can upload their consciousness into a virtual afterlife with some impressive visual effects, set design, and cinematography.

Given the recent artificial intelligence focus in my field (and globally), I liked how the series explored, through its clever humor and satire, interesting questions about the impact of technology on human life and ethical implications of digital consciousness and identity.

I would definitely recommend it! ■

*If you would like to contact Ally, she can be reached at [farah.ally@utoronto.ca](mailto:farah.ally@utoronto.ca).*

## volunteer spotlight: Sid Mehta



Sid Mehta, Senior Director of Ancillary Services, Simon Fraser University

**N**ACAS volunteers are truly the lifeblood of the organization, from holding leadership positions on boards and committees, to organizing educational webinars and writing for *College Services*, to helping out at regional events. In this feature, *College Services* is hosting a question-and-answer segment in which we introduce our volunteers. For this issue, we interview Sid Mehta, senior director of ancillary services at Simon Fraser University (SFU).

**College Services:** Please introduce yourself and tell us about your role in auxiliary services.

**Sid Mehta:** I am the senior director of ancillary services at Simon Fraser University, located in metro Vancouver, Canada. SFU has three campuses and a community of over 43,000. We are champions of the student experience, focused on creating a thriving campus culture. From retail stores to gathering spaces, mobility to dining, our job is to navigate and coordinate how the SFU community lives, works, eats, travels, and celebrates. With over \$60 million in annual managed services, we are one of the largest operations in the country. Ancillary services encompass a range of areas, including the Bookstore & Spirit Shop, food, retail, leasing, document solutions, meeting, event and conference services, esports, and parking and sustainable mobility services.

**CS:** What do you get out of being a NACAS member?

**SM:** Being a member of NACAS offers a multitude of benefits that align perfectly with my role as the senior director of ancillary services at Simon Fraser University and my commitment to climate action. Through NACAS, I have the privilege of connecting with peers who share a common passion for sustainability. This network provides an invaluable platform for exchanging insights, ideas, and best practices, allowing me to learn from their diverse experiences and expertise.

Furthermore, NACAS facilitates meaningful engagement with our valued business partners. This engagement extends beyond the conventional boundaries of our industry, fostering innovative collaborations that drive sustainable solutions. It's through these partnerships that we can explore cutting-edge technologies, implement sustainable practices, and contribute to our overarching mission of climate leadership.

Lastly, NACAS has been instrumental in helping me build extensive networks dedicated to climate action. These networks not only encompass

professionals in the field but also influential stakeholders who can effect change on a larger scale. Together, we work toward shaping the future of sustainable living, working, dining, traveling, and celebrating, aligning with my comprehensive approach to climate leadership.

**CS:** What NACAS member did you meet that made an impact on your role and/or your department?

**SM:** In the initial stages of my journey, I had the privilege of learning from Andy Lachman from the University of Hawai'i. His guidance and insights were invaluable in helping me navigate the intricacies of my role and department.

As time has passed, I've had the pleasure of interacting with numerous members of the NACAS West board who have left a lasting impact on me. Individuals such as James Dyer, Neil Markley, Amber Grenhart, Suzie Mize, Andrew Parr, and several others have all played significant roles in shaping my perspective and approach. Their collective wisdom and dedication to our shared mission have enriched my understanding and contributed to the ongoing success of my department.

**CS:** What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

**SM:** My greatest professional achievement at SFU is the remarkable transformation of our team into what I like to call "Climate Avengers." Over the years, our dedicated team has united in a shared mission to champion sustainability and climate action. Together, we have undertaken the task of redefining our business operations and services to prioritize the well-being of both people and the planet.

This achievement fills me with immense pride as it reflects our collective commitment to making a positive impact on the environment and the community we serve. However, we also recognize that our journey is far from complete, and we remain determined to accomplish even more in the realm of sustainability.

**CS:** What show have you recently binged that you would recommend?

**SM:** I am a sports geek and every day watch tennis, NBA, cricket, NFL, and anything else that is on ESPN! ■

*If you would like to contact Mehta, he can be reached at [sidm@sfu.ca](mailto:sidm@sfu.ca).*

## business partner spotlight: William ‘Bill’ Corrigan



William “Bill” Corrigan, President and Co-Founder,  
Collegiate Press Company

**B**usiness Partners offer various unique campus service solutions that meet the needs of NACAS’ higher education members and their school communities. In this feature, *College Services* hosts a question-and-answer segment in which we introduce our Business Partners. For this issue, we interview William “Bill” Corrigan, president and co-founder of Collegiate Press Company.

**College Services:** Please introduce yourself and tell us about your role in auxiliary services.

**William “Bill” Corrigan:** I am the president and co-founder of Collegiate Press Company. We provide on-campus management solutions for copy/print/mail service centers. We have been partnering with colleges and universities since 1988. Our professional team works with the auxiliary services decision-makers to deliver a program that meets the unique needs of their campus. The solutions address the needs of the entire campus community, including faculty, staff, students, and affiliate campus groups. We manage a range of campus services such as graphic design, web to print, wide-format print, printer fleet management, mailrooms, package lockers, and more. It includes trained staff, equipment, inventory, and all with your branding. We focus on service improvements and providing cost benefits to our client partners.

**CS:** What do you get out of being a NACAS Business Partner?

**WBC:** [As a partner, we gain] valuable contact and marketplace information and exposure to the gatekeepers for the services that Collegiate Press provides. NACAS members are on the leading edge for identifying and sharing what the future needs of their campuses will be and how business partners will need to service those needs.

**CS:** What NACAS member did you meet that made an impact on your role and/or your department?

**WBC:** Many NACAS members who are also clients that I have had the pleasure of working with have had an impact on my role and the decisions that I have made with the operation of Collegiate Press.

**CS:** What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

**WBC:** [That accomplishment is] being able to work with colleges and universities from across the country, and across a 35-year span of time, to deliver management solutions that continue to meet their evolving needs.

**CS:** What show have you recently binged that you would recommend?

**WBC:** “Quarterback” and “Yellowstone,” both on Netflix. ■

*If you would like to contact Corrigan, he can be reached at [w.corrigan@collegiatepress.com](mailto:w.corrigan@collegiatepress.com).*

# RICH STEELE TAKES HELM AT NACAS

**N**ACAS welcomes its new CEO, Rich Steele, CASP, who brings 37 years of higher education experience, including 30 years of student auxiliary services expertise, to the position.

"I am honored to support the work of our members and Business Partners as they strive to enrich campus environments and support student success. I am passionate about the positive impact NACAS has on the development of higher education professionals and the resulting benefits for college and university students, faculty, and staff," said Steele in a statement.

Steele served as senior director for auxiliary services at the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) in Atlanta, where he was responsible for the university bookstore, dining services, student center, vending, laundry service, postal service, retail services, child care, and event venues. At other universities, he oversaw golf courses, campus card services, trademark licensing, print and copy, and university banking.

Earlier in his career, Steele held several management positions in the student center at Georgia Tech. During his tenure, he helped plan, develop, and manage the 1996 Summer Olympic Village that housed, fed, and entertained 15,000 athletes, coaches, and trainers on the Georgia Tech campus. He managed the development and operation of major retail storefronts at Technology Square, the now-famous innovation district in Midtown Atlanta.

Recently, Steele served as interim associate vice chancellor for campus enterprises at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC, and associate vice chancellor for business services and associate vice chancellor for facilities management at University of North Carolina in Charlotte.

Steele's expertise in student auxiliary services was recognized by his election in 2016 as president of NACAS South, the regional group representing 12 states and Puerto Rico. He served as a subject matter expert during the development of the certified auxiliary services professional (CASP) examination and was in the first group to become CASP-certified in 2011.

He was elected president of the Association of College Unions International (ACUI) in 2008 and has served as president of multiple nonprofit organizations affiliated with campuses where he worked.

Steele has received several awards. He was honored by NACAS with the Regional Mentor Award in 2018. He received the inaugural Rich Steele Campus Services Award from Georgia Tech upon his retirement in 2017. In 2009, he received the inaugural ACUI Region 6 Richard Steele Distinguished Service Award (now the ACUI Region 3 Smith-Steele Distinguished Service Award).

Steele holds a bachelor's in chemical engineering from Georgia Tech, where he was active in the Student Center Program Council and undergraduate research. As a staff member at Georgia Tech, he was inducted into the Omicron Delta Kappa leadership honorary and the ANAK Society, which is considered to be the highest honor at Georgia Tech.

He has written articles for higher education publications, including *Campus Services*, and co-authored chapters in two books on facility-related topics. ■

*Editor's note: A version of this article was posted Jan. 9, 2024, at [nacas.org/news/rich-steele-named-ceo-of-nacas-brings-30-years-of-student-auxiliary-services-expertise-to-the-role](https://nacas.org/news/rich-steele-named-ceo-of-nacas-brings-30-years-of-student-auxiliary-services-expertise-to-the-role).*



RICH STEELE, CASP | CEO, NACAS

**"I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT THE POSITIVE IMPACT NACAS HAS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS AND THE RESULTING BENEFITS FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF."**

— RICH STEELE, CASP, NEW CEO

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