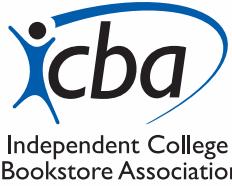


# college services

WINTER 2024

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LANIECE TYREE,  
CASP, PLANS  
TO TAKE LEAD  
ON TECH**





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# college services



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# Guiding the Tech-Driven Evolution of Campus Services

LANIECE R. TYREE, MPA, CASP, OFFERS VISIONARY LEADERSHIP FOR THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF AUXILIARY SERVICES

BY THE NACAS COMMUNICATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

**TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES** to revolutionize the very structure of the higher education system.

The many technological advances of today—and tomorrow—are shaping how students learn, what their professional outcomes after graduation will be, and how colleges and universities can support them on their academic journeys.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is helping to identify students who are at risk of falling behind so faculty and staff members can coordinate appropriate and timely interventions to improve retention and graduation rates. For example, Georgia State University in Atlanta employs prediction analytics using AI and has experienced a 22% increase in its graduation rate.

Hybrid learning, an intentional blend of online and traditional face-to-face instruction, has been integral to the seismic shift in where instruction can take place and who can lead it. For example, Google partnered with several colleges and universities to offer students its suite of online courses, including classes for industry-recognized certificates.

Because technology promises to play an increasingly central role in student success, it is fundamental to the overall mission of the NACAS president, LaNiece R. Tyree, MPA, CASP, who expects to “bring innovative solutions and collaborative leadership to address the evolving needs of higher education institutions,” she explains.

She recognizes that auxiliary services’ most significant challenge is “adapting to the rapidly changing technological landscape and meeting the evolving expectations of students.”

“However, this also presents an opportunity to innovate and enhance service delivery by adopting new technologies and improved customer service practices,” she says.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOWARD UNIVERSITY

# cover feature



LaNiece Tyree, MPA, CASP, is flanked by Sabrina Butler, key account and customer service manager of Sabrina Hodge, and Butler's husband at an event.

It is this enterprising transformation of campus services that inspires Tyree, who assumed the role of NACAS' 53rd president during the 2024 C3X Conference & Expo. To pilot NACAS toward this goal, she points to her "strong leadership skills, a visionary mindset, and the ability to foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders."

In her current position at Howard University, a private institution in Washington, D.C., Tyree says she has "implemented comprehensive policies and procedures, enhanced service delivery, and aligned auxiliary enterprises with the university's strategic priorities."

Before committing to auxiliary services at higher education institutions, she "led high-profile events and managed significant budgets, demonstrating [her] ability to handle complex operations and drive financial performance."

Her extensive professional background spanning more than two decades has equipped her with the effective communication, strategic planning, and operational management skills necessary to advance NACAS as "a pivotal resource" for its members.

And Tyree is prepared to start immediately.

Her first action as NACAS president is "to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of targeted initiatives and programs designed to address the most pressing challenges faced by auxiliary services across campuses," she says.

Based on this evaluation, Tyree plans to develop a strategy in partnership with NACAS CEO Rich Steele, CASP, that focuses on "leveraging technology, fostering partnerships, and developing training programs for future leaders in auxiliary services," all of



LaNiece Tyree, MPA, CASP, and Dr. Tashni-Ann Dubroy, executive vice president and chief operating officer at Howard University in Washington, D.C., attend the grand opening of Howard University's Chick-fil-A.

which aim to support innovation in auxiliary services and increase operational efficiency.

Even when her term ends at the 2025 C3X Conference & Expo, Tyree says she intends "to remain active in NACAS, mentoring new leaders and ensuring continuity in strategic initiatives."

## DECades of Professional Distinction

Tyree has been an active member of NACAS for six years. Drawing on her substantial experience in large-scale event planning, she was chair of the Association's National Conference from 2020 to 2021. Her professional accomplishments in innovating auxiliary services earned her NACAS' East Region Rising Star Award in 2022.

She rose to even more significant distinction and prominence in NACAS when she became a member of the board of directors in 2022 as the sole representative from a historically Black college and university (HBCU). As a member of the NACAS executive leadership team, she was appointed to vice president of the Association in 2022 and is now serving as its president for the upcoming year.

Tyree's career began with producing and managing large-scale events worldwide for iconic celebrity entertainers, which dovetailed into her confident leadership in the auxiliary services space.

"My diverse roles in event management, security operations, and auxiliary services have given me a broad perspective and a deep understanding of the field," she says.

Tyree earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Florida in Gainesville in 2002 and a master of public



LaNiece Tyree, MPA, CASP, celebrates Howard University's success in winning the International Collegiate Licensing Association's Synergy and Subcategory Award for Revenue Generation in the 2022–2023 academic year at an award ceremony in 2024. Joining her are Brittany Wright, assistant director of trademark and licensing at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Dexter LaMont, assistant vice president at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, FL.

administration degree in human resources and nonprofit management from the University of West Florida in Pensacola in 2005.

Tyree is an accomplished leader with extensive experience in managing large-scale operations across corporate and educational settings.

As director of security at the Barclays Center, she oversaw security operations for a 2.5 million square foot facility, managing a 400-person team and a \$3.9 million budget. The Barclays Center is an indoor arena in Brooklyn, NY, home to the National Basketball Association's Brooklyn Nets and the Women's National Basketball Association's New York Liberty.

Her expertise in event management was further developed at Laura's Leo LLC, where she handled vendor contracts, coordinated high-profile events for up to 30,000 attendees, and managed budgets of up to \$3.2 million.

She also built relationships and collaborated with promoters and artist representatives to ensure artists had a first-class experience.

These skills laid the foundation for her eventual pivot into higher education.

"I pursued a career in auxiliary services driven by my passion for improving campus life and my interest in the operational aspects of higher education," she says.

## TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2017, Tyree became director of auxiliary services and event management for Prince George's Community College in Largo, MD. At the

public college, she oversaw and directed campuswide events and various auxiliary services, including the Culinary Arts Center, the Center for Performing Arts, the natatorium, and printing and mail services.

Over two years, Tyree drove a 35% increase in business operations. She was responsible for financial oversight; contract negotiations; and financial reports and budget analyses for college administrators, state representatives, and staff management, ensuring operational efficiency and service excellence.

Since 2022, she has served as assistant vice president in the Office of Auxiliary Enterprises at Howard University, an HBCU, which comprises 14 schools and colleges offering 143 degree paths and serves around 13,500 students as of its enrollment in 2023.

Tyree provides leadership and financial oversight for a wide range of campus services, including bookstores, trademark licensing, laundry services, and the One Card program, all of which generate revenue for the university.

Her responsibilities may be varied and extensive, but her commitment to auxiliary services is very simply rooted in the students' success and, consequently, the higher education institutions that serve to elevate them.

"I enjoy the dynamic nature of the work, the opportunities for innovation, and the satisfaction of seeing positive outcomes from my efforts," she says. ■

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Therese Umerlik, senior editor of *College Services*, contributed to this article.

# feature



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HUGHES FIORETTI PHOTOGRAPHY

NACAS members and Business Partners from throughout North America join their colleagues to exchange ideas, network, and learn strategies for the future of auxiliary services at 2024 C3X in October at Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Kissimmee, FL.



# REIMAGINING the CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE BASED ON LESSONS FROM THE PAST ARE SPOTLIGHTED AT THE 2024 C3X CONFERENCE & EXPO

BY THERESE UMERLIK

**EVERY YEAR**, students weigh several factors when deciding which college or university they will attend. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic during which student life opportunities were reduced, students are now increasingly seeking a rich on-campus experience, according to the 2024 National Admitted Student Survey by market researcher Hanover Research.

Colleges and universities understand that ensuring their enrollment pipeline is robust means attuning to students' evolving needs, particularly by providing resilient and relevant auxiliary services supported by dedicated teams.

NACAS explored these motivations through the lens of campus services and the people who make them possible at the 2024 C3X Conference & Expo from October 26 to 30 at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Kissimmee, FL.

The theme for this year's annual conference was "Leading Back to Our Future," which referred to the lessons learned from the past few years, particularly during the height of the pandemic, that are expected to shape the outlook of higher education institutions well into the future.

The Business Partners in the expo hall as well as the speakers, panelists, and the more than 40 educational sessions in the convention center explored this motif, providing ingenious products and services, uplifting leadership, and professional insights that attendees could, in turn, share with their own departments at their colleges and universities.

Because students continue to prioritize sustainability and environmental responsibility in their campus services, NACAS introduced the Climate Action Lab, a daylong summit that positioned food service as a transformational force for achieving net-zero or carbon-positive operations. (To learn more about the summit, see p. 11.)

Following are summaries of four educational sessions that spotlight developments in employee retention and recruitment, food service, architecture, and service bundling.

## BOOST MORALE THROUGH A CULTURE OF BELONGING

Building a resolute team of employees in auxiliary services requires the assiduousness of leadership. Each meeting, each retreat, each outreach—no matter how big or small—can stimulate a culture of belonging where

# feature

people know and believe they are valued, included, and free to grow and evolve.

Jonathan Kukta, MBA, CASP, shared how Pennsylvania State University's Finance and Business (F&B) service organization demonstrates its commitment to its employees in the session titled "Inspired to Impactful: Enhancing Employee Engagement and Morale."

Through numerous events and activities year-round, F&B reinforces the value it places on its 6,700 employees—who span more than 10 units—ensuring they know their contributions matter.

As the university's largest administrative institution, it has stewardship over auxiliary and business services, the commonwealth's 24 campuses statewide, budget and finance, internal audits, physical plants, procurement, sustainability, real estate, investment management, and public safety.

"We often say, 'We are,' not 'I am,' because we know the effort and how important it is to be a team," said Kukta, who is senior director of regional campus relations for commonwealth campuses and director of strategic initiatives for the Office of the Senior Vice President for F&B/Treasurer.

Following are some of the ways F&B engages and motivates its staff members to be their best selves in and out of work:

- **All staff meeting:** Held at the beginning of each academic year, this annual event informs employees across all auxiliary service units about the developments for the upcoming year.
- **New employee reception:** This gathering allows new employees to meet each other and members of various units. To foster this engagement, a version of bingo is played.

- **Military service appreciation breakfast:** Veterans and active-duty members are specifically recognized for their contributions to the U.S. armed services.

- **Mentorship program:** Mentors and mentees are paired from different units and different locations to encourage camaraderie and professional development.

- **Diversity, equity, and inclusion speaker series:** These speakers focus on various aspects of diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and social justice issues.

- **Various employee recognition events:** Among these are ice cream socials, networking opportunities, and appreciation luncheons.

Averaging one event every three days, this effort overall not only celebrates the accomplishments and potential of F&B staff, but it also breaks down the silos among the units and fortifies cohesiveness.

## ATTRACT STUDENTS WITH DYNAMIC FOOD SERVICE

An integral aspect of the overall campus experience is food service, which not only attracts students to a particular institution but also generates necessary revenue. But how do students rank this campus experience?

For a 12-month period, nearly 9,000 students from eight colleges and universities were surveyed by fsSTRATEGY Inc., a consulting firm for the hospitality industry, including food service at higher education institutions.

"We do a lot of surveying of students about food service, and we always ask about the importance of attributes and satisfaction with those attributes. It helps you find gaps, so if you are looking



Attendance at the educational sessions was robust at 2024 C3X in October in Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Kissimmee, FL.

# FUTURE OF FOOD SERVICES

## Sustainability Meets the Plate at the Climate Action Lab

Students are calling on colleges and universities to reimagine their roles in society and serve as catalysts for transformative change to a climate-positive economy. Food services, in particular, are at the forefront of this transition.

Recognizing that higher education institutions are in a position to be leaders in sustainable consumption, NACAS organized its first Climate Action Lab on October 29, 2024, at the C3X Conference & Expo in the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Kissimmee, FL.

The daylong summit featured speakers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the meat and plant-based protein industries, and Business Partners promoting eco-friendly products, including assorted reusable items and food waste solutions using artificial intelligence.

Launching the summit was CDC Community Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Chief Dr. Heidi Blanck in the session titled "Opening Fireside Chat: Innovations to Support Human and Planetary Health."

She discussed the U.S. government's role in promoting optimal nutrition and food safety through best practices outlined in *Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities*, which can be adapted for dining programs at colleges and universities.

In addition, she explained the environmentally responsible U.S. national food waste strategy that seeks to reduce food loss and waste and encourage recycling, repurposing, composting, and using energy- and water-efficient equipment.

Because animal agriculture has been under increasing scrutiny, the Climate Action Lab featured speakers from this industry to bridge the gap between animal husbandry and sustainable food systems in the session titled "The Meat of the Matter: Animal-Sourced Foods, Nutrition, and Sustainability for On-Campus Dining."

Eric Mittenthal, chief strategy officer of the Meat Institute, introduced the Protein PACT (People, Animals, and Climate of Tomorrow), a sustainability strategy through which data is being gathered from beef, poultry, bison, lamb, veal, and pork producers on various metrics, including labor and human rights, animal welfare, worker safety, and nutrition, and will be shared with consumers.

From the National Pork Board, Chris Hostetler, director of animal science, explained We Care, which represents pig farmers and the promotion of environmentally sustainable practices in the hog industry. We Care is committed to informing consumers about the

eco-friendly accomplishments in this sector of animal agriculture, including reductions in carbon emissions through better technology and regimented food rations with added vitamins and minerals.

A growing number of students in higher education are coping with their anxiety over climate change through their food choices, resulting in an increasing consumption of plant-based proteins. In response, the Climate Action Lab held the session titled "Plant-Powered Campus Dining: Shifting Diets for Climate and Community Health," featuring leaders in the plant-based ecosystem who discussed how colleges and universities can transition to plant-forward dining.

Jennifer Channin, executive director of the Better Food Foundation, a nonprofit organization that develops transformative strategies for plant-centered eating, delved into the Scope 3 emissions associated with animal agriculture. In this context, they refer to the greenhouse gas emissions released outside of the farm but still related to the production of meat from farm to table. An example is the pollution from vehicles transporting the animals to slaughterhouses and grocery stores.

More affordable alternatives to animal-sourced proteins already exist such as beans, legumes, and plant-based products from companies including Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat that have less of an environmental impact, added Marika Azoff, corporate engagement lead at the Good Food Institute, a nonprofit organization that promotes plant- and cell-based alternatives to animal products.

Incorporating plant-based foods into college and university menus requires buy-in not only from the students but the chefs. The Humane Society of the United States offers training in preparing and presenting these dishes so chefs understand and appreciate how to cook the food, said Paige Haringa, manager of culinary innovation at the Humane Society.

The Climate Action Lab is a testament to the power of collaboration and innovation in addressing the challenges of climate change and food choices. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, colleges and universities can develop solutions that are effective and equitable.

Moving forward, it is essential to maintain this momentum and continue to work toward a sustainable future. By embracing sustainable practices, investing in research and development, and empowering communities, colleges and universities can build a food system that nourishes people and protects the planet.

—Therese Umerlik



Between educational sessions, attendees enjoy a break outside at 2024 C3X in October at the convention center.

to improve your food service program, you can take a look at the satisfaction [rating] of something important and do something about it," said Jeff Dover, MBA, ISHC, CMC, FSCL, a principal of fsSTRATEGY Inc. and member of the NACAS Communication Services Committee.

Dover joined Travis Traini, also an fsSTRATEGY Inc. principal, in sharing the survey results during the session titled "Student Satisfaction With Food Service by Type of Meal Plan."

Students ranked 14 attributes based on the type of meal plan they participated in: declining balance or all access. A declining balance plan gives students a set amount of money to spend on food and beverages at on-campus dining locations. An all-access plan offers students unlimited access to all on-campus dining locations during specific mealtimes.

The three attributes that rated the highest for respondents of both meal plans were the taste and quality of food, cleanliness, and value for price paid. The remaining features ranked in this order for satisfaction and importance:

- Menu variety
- Fresh made items
- Hours
- Healthy options
- Speed of service
- Customer service
- Dietary information
- Sustainable operations
- Seating availability
- Sustainable ingredients
- Atmosphere

Overall, students with a declining balance plan were less satisfied with their dining experience than students with an all-access meal plan. Declining balance plan holders valued hours of operation and all-access plan holders, atmosphere. Both groups ranked customer service, speed of service, and seating availability as very high in satisfaction and importance.

Dover and Traini added that a dining experience that positively affects the overall well-being of students can help institutions respond to the enrollment cliff, an anticipated decline in traditional-aged students from 2025 to 2029 because of declining birth rates during the Great Recession and fewer individuals being prepared for or interested in higher education.

## DESIGN WITH STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH IN MIND

As a first-generation freshman at Illinois State University, Dr. Jeremy Schenk, Ed.D., worked on campus as the "morning milk guy," filling bags of milk in the dining center at 6 a.m.

"In Week 2 at the university, I wasn't sure if being a student there was going to work out for me. When I went to put milk in one of those bags one morning, it caught the edge of the machine—and 20 gallons of milk spilled all over me! I looked so deflated. One of the full-time staff working there looked at me and said, 'Honey, it's gonna all be OK,'" he said during the session titled "Where We Eat Matters: The Importance of Space Design in Building Belonging on Campus."

"I still remember that quote, and I still feel that sense of belonging in the dining centers, working in the dining centers, and eating in the dining centers."

Schenk's personal story epitomized the importance of dining locations as not only creating a sense of community but also being suited to the trend of placemaking.

Placemaking is the process of designing, constructing, and maintaining public spaces at colleges and universities that involves students, staff members, and architects. Its goal is to create an environment that promotes the physical, social, and emotional well-being of the student community.

Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, intended to update its housing master plan in the late 2010s, but the COVID-19 pandemic and funding issues halted the project. As students began returning to campus in the wake of the pandemic, they wanted places where they could socialize after months of enduring loneliness and isolation because of lockdowns and remote instruction.

The university revisited its plan and mapped the mobility patterns of its student population. They learned that students crisscrossed campus daily to go to classes and dining centers. The mapping revealed the location of on-campus food deserts and popular dining locations.

Northwestern realized that the dining places needed to be modified to create an impactful environment where students could interact, free from the competition associated with the university's academic rigor.

To create a dining space customized to the university's identity and culture, Northwestern is currently working on a housing and dining master plan with Workshop Architects, an architecture and planning firm that specializes in designing and planning for higher education institutions.

Jan van den Kieboom, founder and architect of Workshop Architects, described the architecture of belonging, which uses the design of space to create and reinforce a person's sense of inclusion, safety, and acceptance. He shared the various ways his firm implements this concept in its designs. For example, a small group seeking a place for camaraderie and focus may choose a booth. Or individuals who want to engage in larger groups for a shared experience might join a larger table.

This kind of intentional design can help colleges and universities build a strong sense of community where students grow as individuals and can prepare for life and careers after graduation.

## BUNDLE SERVICES TO CONNECT COMMUTERS TO CAMPUS

Colleges and universities constantly seek innovative and fun ways to engage students in campus life. As indicated earlier, the dining experience on campus can encourage a sense of community and belonging—as long as students know about it and can access it.

For higher education institutions with a substantial commuter population, connecting individuals with campus life presents a unique challenge.

George Mason University in Fairfax, VA, bundled two popular services—parking and food—that targeted commuters, which comprise 85% of the student population. In this group, 44% are first-generation students.

In fall 2022, the university launched its Park + Dine program that allows commuters to select a parking permit at one of the university's lots and a meal plan for a reduced rate. Park + Dine has two specific goals.

"No. 1 is to keep the students on campus longer so they can engage and utilize additional services. [Students have stated] that they feel lonely, they don't know how to make friends and find their social circle, and they just sit in their car alone between classes. We wanted to create a program ... so they [could] be somewhere where they can feel part of the George Mason community," said Zi Wang, MBA, web and digital content manager at the university, during the session titled "Combining Auxiliary Services



Attendees share insights and network with colleagues at 2024 C3X in October in the convention center.

into a Bundle Program: Leveraging Data to Market Parking and Dining as One Product to Improve Commuter Students' Engagement and Experience."

"The second goal is to create a one-stop shop. Going back to the first-generation students, this is the first time that they and their family are experiencing college. It is overwhelming. It's like going to a new country where they speak a different language and have to choose from among so many parking permits and meal plans. We thought, 'Why don't we make this easy?' So, we created the Park + Dine program, where we paired permits with meal plans."

Communicating the program has been fundamental to its success and acceptance. Nelly Crespo, a marketing and graphic design specialist at the university and a first-generation graduate from George Mason, described the shareable content she has created and used to reach the commuter population. Among the approaches was telling engaging stories of students using the program through videos and then posting them on social media.

Wang then analyzed data from social media and website traffic, surveys, and program enrollment to determine effective marketing strategies and areas in need of improvement. Changes included adding new bundle options and a cash rebate and targeting students at different stages of interest through email marketing.

In these times of rapid change, higher education institutions must be proactive and innovative. By embracing the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and prioritizing the well-being of students and staff, colleges and universities can create a brighter future. Committing to fostering a culture of belonging and excellence ensures higher education institutions can continue to be beacons of hope and opportunity.

THERESE UMERLIK is senior editor of *College Services*.

# NACAS Salutes Movers and Shakers in Auxiliary Services

BY THE NACAS COMMUNICATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

AT THE annual C3X Conference & Expo, NACAS recognizes and celebrates members for their dedication to the Association and advancement of auxiliary services in higher education institutions in the United States and Canada.

The following NACAS members and Business Partner received awards during 2024 C3X in October at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Kissimmee, FL.



NACAS President LaNiece R. Tyree, MPA, CASP, left, stands with Andy Lachman, Ph.D., CASP, at the awards ceremony October 28, 2024, at the convention center.



## DR. WRIGHT L. LASSITER JR. LEGACY AWARD

### LANIECE R. TYREE, MPA, CASP

This legacy award—named in honor of Lassiter, one of NACAS' founders and its first president—recognizes an individual or Business Partner who demonstrates their leadership qualities and dedication to volunteerism and community service.

Tyree, NACAS president, is assistant vice president of auxiliary enterprises at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (See the profile on p. 4 to learn more about her.)



## ROBERT F. NEWTON AWARD

### for Distinguished Service

## NEIL MARKLEY

This most prestigious award recognizes an individual for their extraordinary service to NACAS and to the profession.

Markley, former NACAS president, is associate vice president for administration and finance at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, CA.

## EDWIN R. GOLDEN

### Award for Inclusive Excellence

## FIRST DIAL COHORT

Established in honor of Edwin R. "Bob" Golden who was conscious of the need for attention to cultural diversity in NACAS, this award recognizes exemplary service to cultural awareness in the profession of college auxiliary management and the ongoing promotion of inclusion through leadership in cultural diversity and equality.

NACAS' two-year Diversity in Auxiliary Leadership (DIAL) program, which announced the members of its cohort during C3X 2023 Annual Conference & Expo was created to fortify the future of auxiliary services in higher education through the development and support of historically underrepresented, diverse leaders.

The first DIAL cohort includes Lauren Antoni, associate director of culinary operations at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, CA; Dr. LeVita Y. Bassett, CASP, senior director of auxiliary operations in the Office of Auxiliary Enterprises at Howard University in Washington, D.C.; Keonta Frazier-Johnson, assistant director of auxiliary services at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, LA; Jeremy Leiferman, interim vice chancellor for student life at the University of Minnesota Duluth; Mariah McDaniel, MS, RDN, LD, registered dietitian nutritionist in dining services at the University of Georgia in Athens, GA; Enrico "Rico" Ovalles, associate director of academic resources in bookstore management at California State University, Long Beach; Carolyn Spencer, assistant dining manager at campus auxiliary services at State University of New York Geneseo; Trey Terrio, director of auxiliary services at California College of the Arts in San Francisco; and David Young, operations manager at Saint Louis University in St. Louis. Not shown is Torrie Simmons, web coordinator of auxiliary services in the Division of Business Affairs at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.



Felecia Townsend, left, stands with NACAS President Brett Jackson, CPA, CASP, at the awards ceremony October 28, 2024, at the convention center.

## NACAS PRESIDENTIAL SERVICE AWARD

### FELECIA TOWNSEND

Through this award, the NACAS president recognizes an individual who has made an enduring impact on the organization and has improved the auxiliary services profession.

Townsend is director of business services operations at Florida International University in Miami.



Representatives of Peet's Coffee, left, stand with with Andy Lachman, Ph.D., CASP, at the awards ceremony October 28, 2024, at the convention center.

## OUTSTANDING BUSINESS PARTNER of the Year Award

### PEET'S COFFEE

This award recognizes a Business Partner that has made significant contributions to NACAS member institutions and the auxiliary services profession.

Peet's Coffee is a specialty coffee roaster and retailer based in the San Francisco Bay area in California.



## INNOVATIVE ACHIEVEMENT in Auxiliary Services

### RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN (RISD) FLIPS

This award acknowledges an ingenious product, service, or program that improves customer service, generates revenue, or reduces costs.

RISD FLIPS in Providence, RI, is a sustainability initiative through which gently used items are collected from students during move-out and then redistributed on campus, donated to community groups and schools, and sold at an annual end-of-year yard sale. Proceeds from the yard sale help support the Staff Council Student Award, which offers funds to help seniors purchase materials for their final-year art projects

## SILVER TORCH AWARD

### PHILLIP R. ALLISON

This award is presented to an individual who has served in the auxiliary services field for 10 or more years and is retiring during the 2024 C3X Conference & Expo.

Allison is a project professional at the Naval Academy Business Services Division, the retail services arm of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.



*Rick Moreci*



*Denishea Ortiz, MBA, CASP*



*Daniel Erickson*



*Elysa Doss-Reichert*

## REGIONAL RISING STARS

This award recognizes one individual per NACAS region who has demonstrated the ability and desire to excel in the field of auxiliary services management.

### Rick Moreci

For the Central region, Moreci is associate vice president for auxiliary services and campus life at DePaul University in Chicago.

### Denishea Ortiz, MBA, CASP

For the East region, Ortiz is vice president of marketing and communication at the Rochester Area Community Foundation in Rochester, NY.

### Daniel Erickson

For the South region, Erickson is senior associate vice chancellor for administrative services at Lone Star College in The Woodlands, TX.

### Elysa Doss-Reichert

For the West region, Doss-Reichert is auxiliary services manager at Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA.



*Ron Portwine, MBA, CASP, CEFP*



*Jerry Clemmer, MHRM, CASP, left, stands with Andy Lachman, Ph.D., CASP*

## VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

This award celebrates an individual who has demonstrated exceptional volunteer work at the regional and national levels that advances the NACAS mission.

### Jerry Clemmer, MHRM, CASP

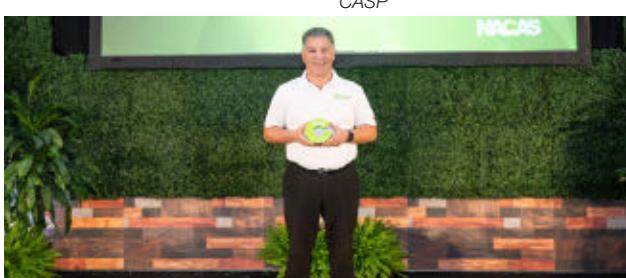
For the national award, Clemmer is executive director of campus business services at the University of Richmond in Virginia.

### Ron Portwine, MBA, CASP, CEFP

For the Central region, Portwine is associate vice president for administration and business affairs/chief business officer at Saginaw Valley State University in University Center, MI.

### Michael Baker

For the East region, Baker is assistant vice president for auxiliary services at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA.



*Michael Baker*

# feature



Megan Henderson



Casey Kelly

## Megan Henderson

For the South region, Henderson is director of conferences at University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

## Casey Kelly

For the West region, Kelly is marketing and events manager at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, CA.



Angela Meldonian



LaNiece Tyree, MPA, CASP

## REGIONAL MENTOR AWARDS

This award recognizes one individual per NACAS region who has welcomed newcomers and promoted the involvement of members.

## Angela Meldonian

For the Central region, Meldonian is executive director of the University Center at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater.

## LaNiece Tyree, MPA, CASP

For the East region, NACAS President Tyree is assistant vice president of auxiliary enterprises at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

## Donna Brice

For the South region, Brice is project coordinator at Louisiana State University Health–Shreveport.

## Mike Ellis

For the West region, Ellis is associate vice president for student affairs and executive director of the Lory Student Center at Colorado State University at Fort Collins, CO. ■



Donna Brice



Mike Ellis



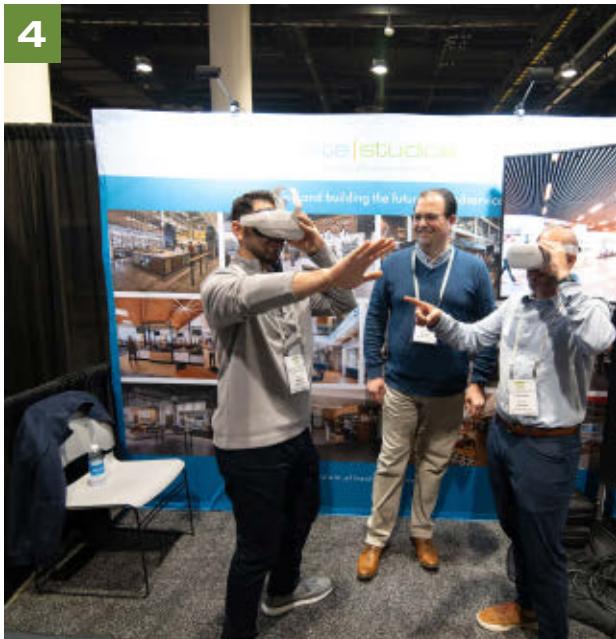
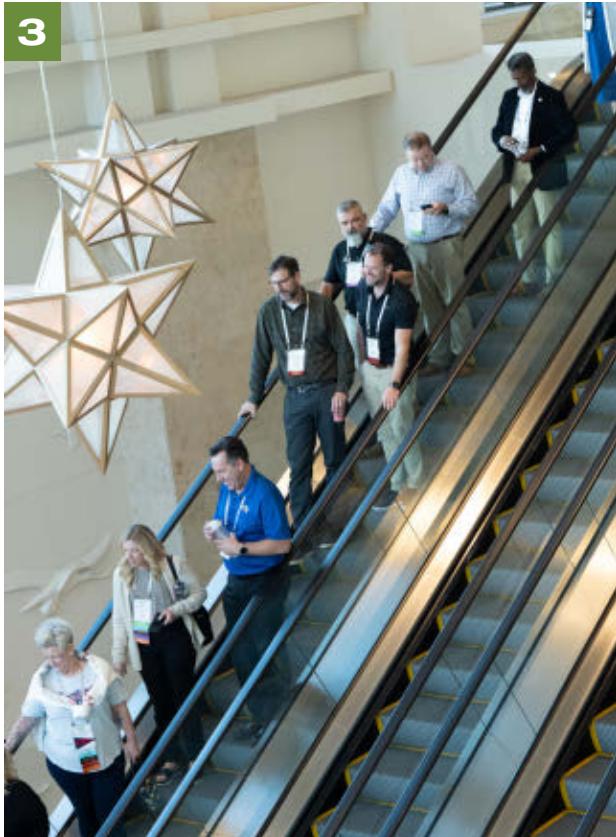
SENIOR EXECUTIVE SUMMIT



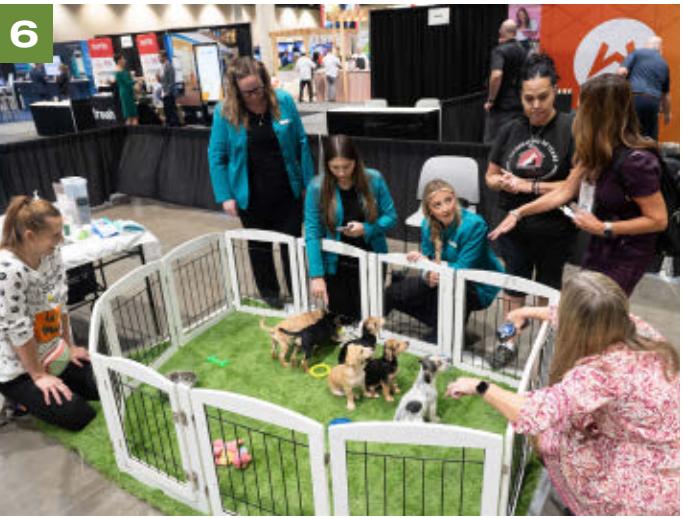
Save the date for the 2025 Senior Executive Summit, April 27-30 at the Wigwam Resort in Litchfield, Arizona, where top leaders in higher education will gather for an exclusive experience.

# Leading Back to Our Future

**M**ORE THAN 1,100 conference attendees and Business Partners explored products and services in the expo hall and congregated in the more than 40 educational sessions during the NACAS 2024 C3X Conference & Expo from October 26 to 30 at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Kissimmee, FL. Keynote speakers inspired the attendees with their messages on being a leader for transformational change and using storytelling to build brand awareness. New this year was the Climate Action Lab, a daylong summit where speakers discussed the future of sustainability in food services and Business Partners shared their innovative eco-friendly products and services.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HUGHES FOREST PHOTOGRAPHY



1. A drumline welcomes attendees at the opening reception on October 27, 2024, at the Mangrove Lawn.
2. Members participate in an early morning yoga session, a wellness activity offered on October 28, 2024, at the Coquina Lawn.
3. Attendees travel among three floors at the convention center to visit Business Partners, join educational sessions, and hear keynote speakers.
4. Attendees explore virtual reality goggles at the elite | studio e booth on October 28, 2024, in the expo hall.
5. Members enjoy camaraderie into the evening at the opening reception on October 27, 2024, at the Mangrove Lawn.
6. The puppy lounge is a popular attraction for attendees on October 28, 2024, in the expo hall.
7. Neil Markley swears in LaNiece Tyree, MPA, CASP, as the new NACAS president on October 29, 2024, at the convention center. Markley was the NACAS president in 2023.
8. A celebration with a local marching band marks the conclusion of C3X at the closing event on October 29, 2024, at the convention center.
9. Attendees gather to dine and network at the opening reception on October 27, 2024, at the Mangrove Lawn.

# member spotlight: Jennifer Paiotti



Jennifer Paiotti, MBA, CASP, Associate Director of Business Systems and Operations for Auxiliary Services, Xavier University

**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 Jennifer Paiotti, MBA, CASP, associate director of business systems and operations for auxiliary services at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

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

**Jennifer Paiotti:** I oversee key operations such as access control, copy and managed print services, parking services, and vending, ensuring they run smoothly day to day. I analyze opportunities for business operations and technology enhancements, create solutions, evaluate proposals, and manage the implementation of new systems and services for units such as the bookstore, food services, and ID services, as well as other internal services and contract partnerships.

Also, as the access control and transact system administrator, I handle software configuration, third-party integrations, mobile ordering, mobile credential technology, and account reconciliations. My focus is on streamlining operations, enhancing service delivery, and identifying revenue-generating opportunities while collaborating with stakeholders to ensure alignment with institutional goals.

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

**JP:** Being a NACAS member allows me to stay connected with a wide network of professionals, providing access to emerging trends and innovative practices across auxiliary services. The collaboration and resources NACAS offers have been instrumental in helping me refine operations and discover new approaches, particularly in areas like parking policy and food service innovations. The shared expertise and benchmarking opportunities have greatly enhanced how we deliver services and meet the needs of the university community.

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

**JP:** One particular NACAS connection introduced me to using data analytics to optimize auxiliary services,

specifically for parking. Their approach helped us implement more efficient, data-driven strategies at Xavier University, improving both operational performance and customer satisfaction. Their willingness to share their insights on managing complex systems played a significant role in helping me adopt a similar approach in our department, benefiting our long-term planning and service delivery.

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

**JP:** Two of my most recent professional milestones have been earning the Certified Auxiliary Services Professional designation. This certification is an essential benchmark within NACAS, validating the advanced competencies required to lead and manage multiple auxiliary services on a university campus. Achieving this designation has helped deepen my understanding of the complexities of auxiliary operations and equipped me to make strategic decisions that enhance the overall campus experience.

In addition, I'm particularly proud of leading the development of an autonomous meal-share program to address campus food insecurity. This innovative program uses auxiliary services technology to connect students with meal resources seamlessly and sustainably. The initiative has garnered recognition for its forward-thinking approach, and I was honored to present it at the NACAS 2024 C3X conference. These experiences have helped shape my commitment to improving student services and operational efficiency.

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

**JP:** I recently binge-watched *Ted Lasso*. The show's balance of humor, heart, and leadership lessons resonated with me, especially its exploration of values-driven leadership and the importance of fostering strong, supportive teams—something I strive to bring to my own work in auxiliary services. ■

*If you would like to contact Paiotti, she can be reached at [paioottij@xavier.edu](mailto:paioottij@xavier.edu).*

# member spotlight: Lynn Ernstring



Lynn Ernstring, CASP, Executive Director of University Services, Seattle Pacific University

**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 Lynn Ernstring, CASP, executive director of university services at Seattle Pacific University (SPU) in Seattle.

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

**Lynn Ernstring:** I've been on campus at SPU for 17 years, currently overseeing nontuition revenue-generating units and a variety of general services.

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

**LE:** Being part of any professional organization is one of the greatest opportunities anyone can have to expand the landscape of their role (and career) beyond the boundary of their own campus. Membership with NACAS has brought me connection, collaboration, and cross-functional education. Now having my Certified Auxiliary Services Professional designation, I can support the auxiliaries of my institution with a broad knowledge base and the respect of an expert on these subjects.

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

**LE:** Jennifer Gray and Joseph Pearson, who are involved in the West region, helped me get connected right from the start. They were welcoming and willing to share their knowledge, experience, and network as I began my role. Their openness helped me navigate changes with our bookstore provider, outsourcing of our mailing services, major contract

reviews, and the pandemic-impacted landscape of higher education auxiliaries as they evolve.

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

**LE:** My greatest professional accomplishment is all about the people I work with. One day, I looked around at the leaders and members of my greater team and saw that everyone was invested, eager to achieve more, supportive of one another, and working together as a cohesive unit out of care and service to our students, staff, faculty, and guests. This was truly an accomplishment for more than just myself. I felt as though I had reached a sacred and rare space in my leadership journey and professional career.

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

**LE:** My favorite genres are workplace action/drama, reality competitions, true crime, stand-up comedy, and sci-fi/fantasy; however, the show that stands out the most to me recently was the *Simone Biles Rising* miniseries on Netflix. Watching a peek into Simone's life while also watching the true greatest gymnast of all time perform at the top of her game through the Summer Olympics reminded me what a whole-self dedication these world-class athletes have and that they feel pressure and struggle all the while. (Not to mention, the utter joy and excitement I watched my 7-year-old daughter experience while watching Simone perform—her No. 1 favorite gymnast!) She's a role model, inspiration, and legend! ■

If you would like to contact Ernstring, she can be reached at [russel@spu.edu](mailto:russel@spu.edu).

# business partner spotlight: Emily Sandow



Emily Sandow, Business Development and Account Management Executive, Touchwork

**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 Emily Sandow, business development and account management executive with Touchwork.

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

**Emily Sandow:** I work closely with campuses to help them gather valuable customer insights, streamline their operations, and improve the overall student and staff experience with real-time feedback and audit/inspection solutions.

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

**ES:** Being a NACAS Business Partner offers fantastic opportunities for education and networking. It gives us direct access to the challenges members are facing, allowing us to better understand their needs and collaborate on solutions that improve their auxiliary operations. The connections we build within the NACAS community help us stay aligned with industry trends and make a meaningful impact.

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

**ES:** I had the pleasure of working with Eddie Mills at Georgia Southern University. He emphasized the importance of relationships and how valuable it is to be able to reach out to colleagues for support. His insights really reinforced the power of the NACAS network, where so many institutions are connected and can lean on each other when facing similar challenges.

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

**ES:** The relationships I've built over the years are definitely my biggest accomplishment. I've had the chance to work with some amazing people who have shaped and guided me, often without even realizing it. These connections have meant a lot to me, both personally and professionally, and they've played a huge part in my growth. For me, success is all about those relationships and the support we give each other along the way.

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

**ES:** *Dark Matter* on AppleTV. It had me on the edge of my seat and looking forward to another season! ■

If you would like to contact Sandow, she can be reached at [emily.sandow@touchwork.com](mailto:emily.sandow@touchwork.com).



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Jared Ceja  
CASP



Anthony Coschignano  
CASP



Dr. Anita Hicks  
Ed.D.



Deborah Huebler  
CASP



Dr. Andy Lachman  
Ph.D., CASP



Dr. Esmeralda Valdez  
Ph.D., CASP

Congratulations to the inaugural winners of the NACAS Cornerstone of the Profession Award.

This peer-nominated group, endorsed by regional leadership and unanimously supported by the NACAS Foundation, exemplifies the highest standards of commitment and service. Each Cornerstone has partnered with their nominator and a NACAS Foundation Board member to raise \$3,500, contributing to a collective goal of \$24,500. This effort directly supports the Foundation's mission to enhance the higher education community through philanthropy and impactful initiatives.

To support these individuals and their fundraising goals, visit <https://nacas.org/member-benefits/awards/> under the Cornerstones of the Profession Award tab.

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