NACAS

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

SUPPLEMENT 2023

college services

2023 COLLEGE STUDENT CENSUS RESEARCH

Enriching the Campus Experience | **nacas.org**

WASSERMAN
NEXT GEN

As the exclusive research partner of NACAS, we are proud to support member schools in discovering new trends and behaviors to enhance student services programs.

Learn more about Wasserman Next Gen:




college services

features

06

14

COLLEGE SERVICES

PUBLISHED BY: **NACAS**, 435 Merchant Walk Sq., Suite 300-139, Charlottesville, VA 22902, Phone: (434) 245-8425, Email: info@nacas.org, Website: nacas.org

LAYOUT & DESIGN Jaeson Lokatys **COVER PHOTO CREDIT:** stock.adobe.com

PUBLISHED AUGUST 2023

opening remarks
Perspective from the Interim CEO

2023 College Student Census Reveals Key Insights for Enhancing Student Success and Campus Services

BILL REDWINE
INTERIM CEO

I hope you found some time this summer to rest and prepare for a great new academic year ahead! I know you are eager to greet returning students and meet new ones—and help get them, and your institution, ready to succeed.

That's why I am excited you are reading this new 2023 College Student Census Research. This annual research is conducted by Wasserman Next Gen, in collaboration with NACAS, and shared with association members to provide you with valuable insights into factors influencing student success, campus resources, and auxiliary services.

This year's survey garnered responses from students in the U.S. and Canada, 90% of whom are full-time students and 88% of whom are enrolled in four-year undergraduate programs.

We asked them how they:

- Define and achieve success during their college journey
- Evaluate and utilize a university's food and retail options
- Incorporate mobile devices and social media into their daily lives

We also asked them about:

- Their primary mode of transportation
- Whether they are working while in school
- The best ways for a brand to connect with them

I know you are in the midst of reading the full report yourself, but here are a few highlights that stood out to me:

- Students reported that the most critical factor for achieving college success is on-campus employment, followed closely by university housing and food service programs.
- On the flip side, they cited "worrying about basic needs" as a top roadblock to success.
- And, fewer than half of respondents felt that their campus had enough healthy food options.

The report itself is full of much more data and insights, which we hope will help in your ongoing efforts to cater to students' needs and preferences.

We know that auxiliary services can make all the difference in a student's experience and success at college, and you will see that the 2023 College Student Census bears this out yet again.

Thanks for reading and I wish you an academic year filled with a renewed focus on what matters most to your students! ■

C3X

2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO

November 5-8

Metro Convention Centre
Toronto, ON, Canada

REGISTER NOW!

NACAS

Don't forget to renew your passport!

nacas.org/c3x

2023 College Student Census Research

To fuel their work connecting brands with Gen Z and millennial influencers, Wasserman Next Gen executed their annual customized census – designed to gain actionable insights into this crucial demographic.

BY THE NACAS COMMUNICATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

WASSERMAN NEXT GEN

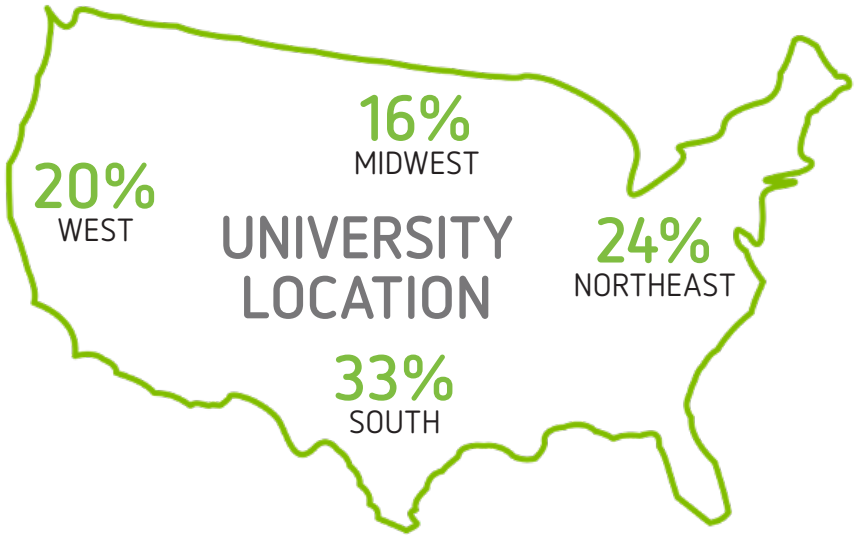
NACAS

IN COLLABORATION WITH NACAS, WASSERMAN NEXT GEN has conducted their annual student census, aimed to unravel the complexities of college students' behaviors and habits providing valuable insights into factors influencing student success, campus resources, and auxiliary services.

This research report dives into the findings of the 2023 College Student Census, which garnered responses from 1,012 college students in the U.S. and Canada.

CONFIDENTIAL

DEMOGRAPHICS

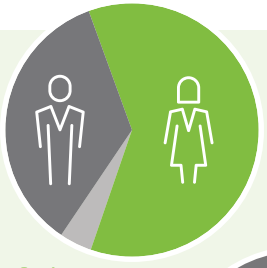


1,012 College Students Surveyed

77% Public University

88% 4-year Undergraduate Program

90% Full-time Student



35% Male

61% Female

4% Other

86% Between the ages of 18-22

39% Living on-campus

9% Living in school-sponsored off-campus housing

28% Living off-campus

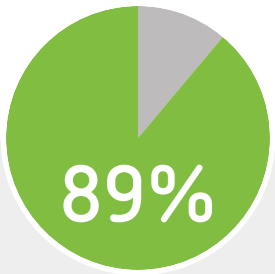
CONFIDENTIAL

COLLEGE SUCCESS

Explore how college students achieve success during their academic journey. Beyond academics, it surveys the various aspects that students consider when measuring their overall satisfaction with the college experience. By understanding these factors, academic institutions can refine their services and enhance student success rates.

Top Response of College Success

Happiness/fulfillment continues to be the top definition of college success, consistent with findings in 2021



believe the **non-academic portion** (housing, dining, student affairs) of their college experience is moderately to extremely important to achieving success

An increase of 4% compared to last year

Most Critical to Achieving College Success

52% On-campus Employment

49% University Housing Programs

47% University Food Service Program

Top Roadblocks to College Success

61% Affordability of course/academic material

51% Worrying about basic needs

48% Feeling prepared for the workforce after college

Followed by 40% feeling unprepared when they arrive at college and 38% lack of service/support

FOOD SERVICES & RETAIL

A significant determining factor of student satisfaction on campus is the quality of food services and retail choices available. This section provides key insights college students use when evaluating their university's food services and retail options. Understanding these considerations can help auxiliary services professionals cater better to students' needs and preferences.

51% Interested in food

52% Interested in fashion

Top 5 Healthy Eating Trends

1. Portion Control (31%)
2. Smaller, more frequent meals (23%)
3. Low Carb (23%)
4. Vegetarian or Vegan Diet (19%)
5. Organic (19%)

45% of students think your campuses have enough healthy food options

Beverages Consumed in the Past Month

68% Bottled Water

54% Soda

48% Juice

36% Energy Drinks

31% Coffee and Specialty Coffee Drinks

44% Consume coffee via order pick up

24% purchase ready-to-drink coffee products in store

FOOD SERVICES & RETAIL

(continued)

54%
Use a credit card when shopping

49%	47%	38%	34%
Cash	Apple Pay	Gift Card	PayPal

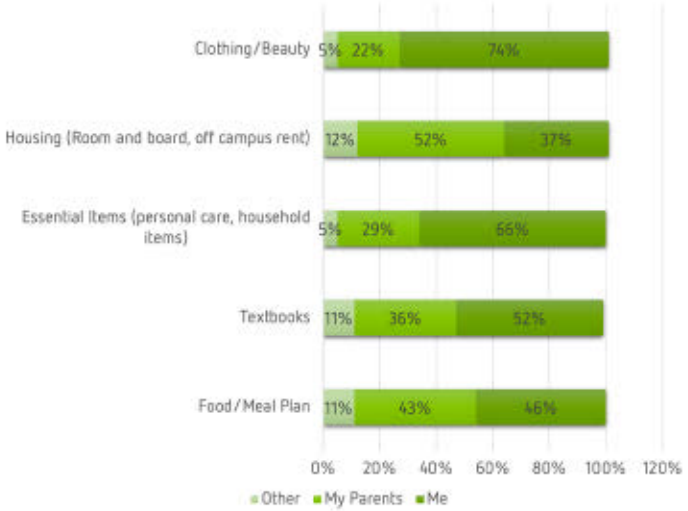
Top 3 Favorite Food & Beverage Delivery Apps

DOORDASH

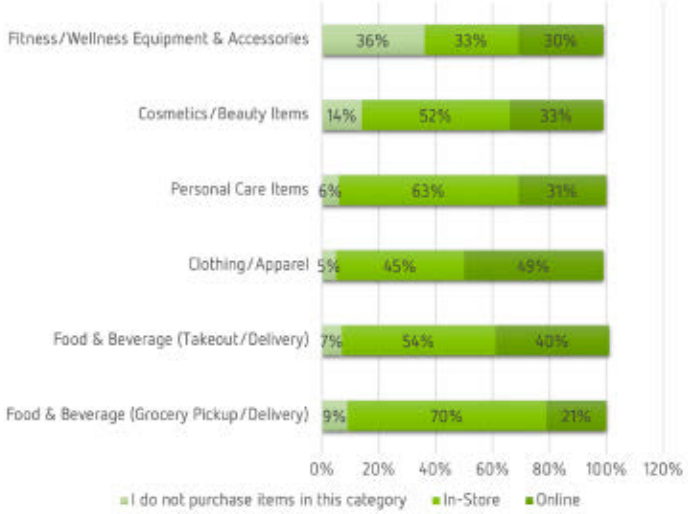
Uber Eats

GRUBHUB

For each of the items below, select who primarily pays for the item:



Do you usually purchase items in the following categories online or in store?



MOBILE & SOCIAL MEDIA

This section highlights how college students incorporate mobile and social media into their daily lives.

Mobile Device Usage

84% of students spend more than **4** hours

39% of students spend more than **7** hours

Social Media Usage

94% of students spend more than **2** hours

63% of students spend more than **4** hours

TRANSPORTATION & WORK

Here is data on college students who work and insights into their preferred means of transportation. Understanding these trends can aid academic institutions in supporting college students who are juggling work and studies, thereby fostering a conducive learning environment.

Primary Transportation

32% Car +8%

25% Walk +7%

compared to last year

71%

of students are working

42% Part-time

6% Full-time

11% Part-time Internship

9% Temporary/ Freelance

3% Co-op Experience

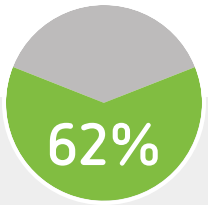
+13% compared to last year

MARKETING TO STUDENTS

If you're looking for valuable insights into the most effective ways to reach and engage with your students, you've come to the right place. Leveraging the census data, academic institutions and businesses can refine their marketing approaches and effectively connect with college students.

Best Ways for Brands to Connect for Sales & Promotions

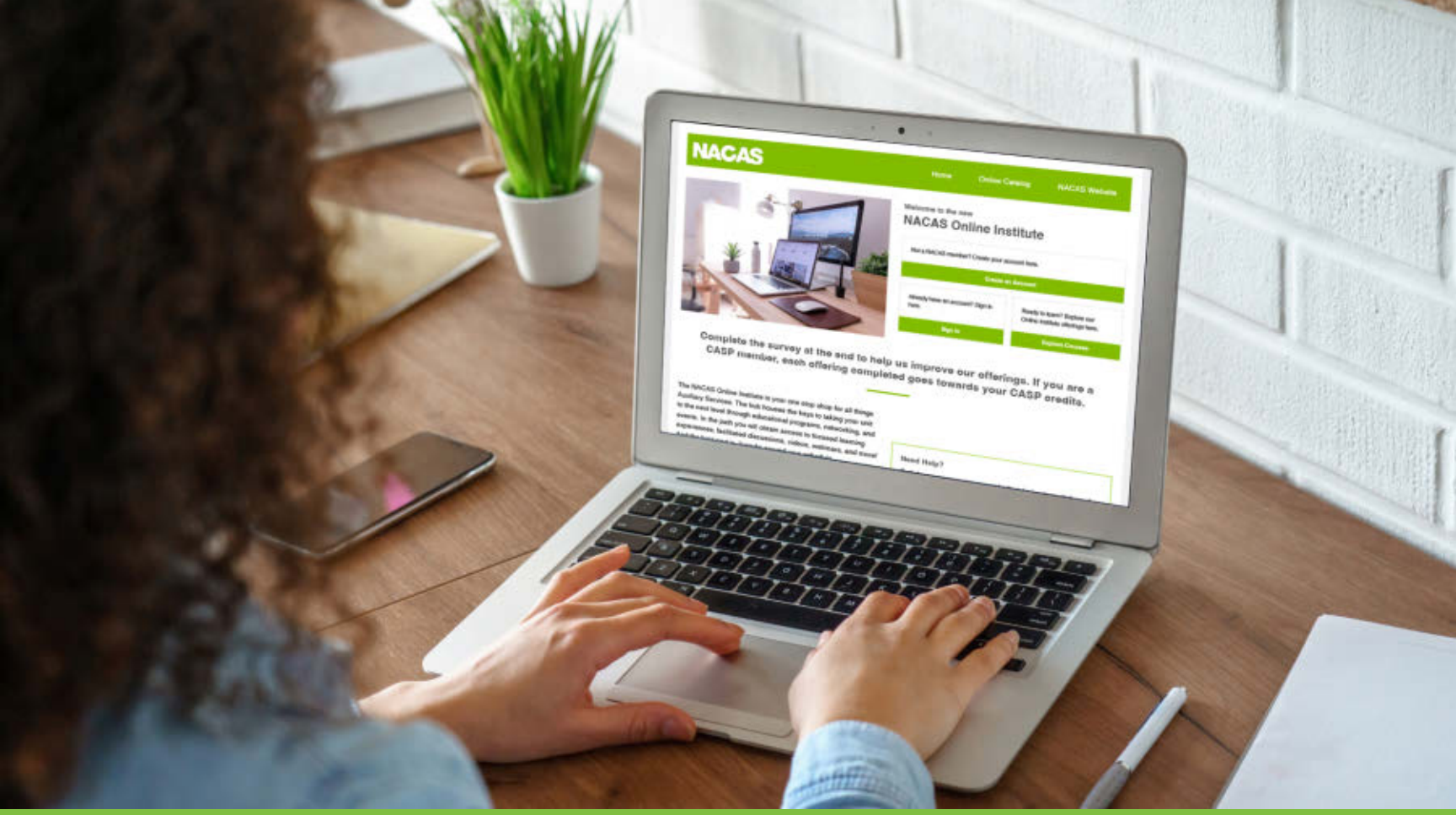
- **53%** Email
- **28%** Social Media
- **16%** Text
- **3%** Mobile App



of students would be **likely or extremely likely** visit an event hosted by a brand on your campus

Most Memorable Marketing & Advertising

- Social Media Posts
- Direct promotion of products and brands by friends or others in my peer groups
- Brand Sponsored Events



NACAS

ONLINE INSTITUTE

Introducing a comprehensive eLearning platform exclusively for Auxiliary Services

CONNECT TO ONLINE CATALOG

The Current & Future State of Auxiliaries

PERSPECTIVES FROM NACAS' VOLUNTEER LEADERS

WITH THE PRESENT BIZARRE STATE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY the economy and dramatic changes in higher education, taking a look at the state of the auxiliary services field only seems prudent. As a result, with the support of NACAS CEO Matthew Marcial, a survey was developed to garner the perspectives of NACAS' volunteer leaders in late spring of 2023. National, Regional and Foundation board members were invited to complete an online survey regarding the current state and future prospects for our industry. Approximately 40% of these leaders responded to the survey. Key issues investigated include: the current state of auxiliary revenue, student expectations, auxiliary career potential, professional development, challenges, opportunities, and strategies to take advantage of the opportunities suggested.

CURRENT STATE (POST-PANDEMIC) OF AUXILIARY REVENUE

The perspectives shared on this issue were interesting as participants reported on the revenue status now as compared with pre-pandemic (2019/20). Thirty-five percent of respondents indicated that revenue was lower now than in previous years; while 40% revealed revenue was higher currently. Responses did not address the cost increases or inflation that have increased cost of goods and services over the past two years.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS TODAY

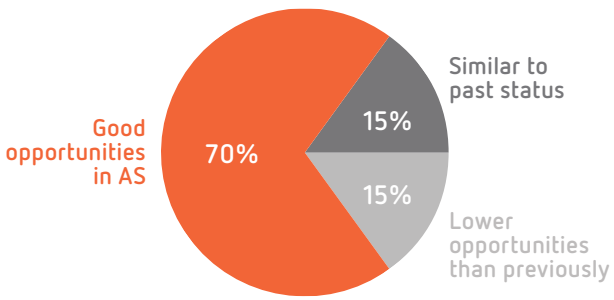
Well over half of the volunteer leader study participants (65%) assert students have higher expectations today than previously. Of particular note were comments addressing student expectations for expanded services in technology, service-levels, and flexibility. One of the Foundation board members suggested, "Students are more focused on the services being available with longer service hours and appear extremely more conscious of the cost. While desiring more service, they are not really ready to cover the increased costs of the extended hours". Other comments suggested students are increasingly expecting Amazon-like or Door-dash options they utilized heavily during COVID.

CAREER POTENTIAL IN AUXILIARIES

Overwhelming (70%), volunteer leaders asserted that working in auxiliaries is a good career choice with numerous opportunities for personal and professional career growth and success. Survey respondents offered, that leadership in the field is challenging and burnout is an issue, as it is in many industries. A leader from the NACAS Foundation board observed a key point regarding career growthand development: "Being an auxiliary services administrator prepares you for senior leadership positions".

AUXILIARY CAREER POTENTIAL

(as Compared to Pre-COVID)



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Two different aspects of staff training and professional development were investigated in the survey. An inquiry was made concerning current professional development budgets. The responses were encouraging with 70% stating that PD budgets were the same now as prior to the pandemic. The balance of responses from other participants indicated an equal split between budgets being lower and higher than before COVID. The second training issue explored involved the types of PD being utilized and funded. Four options were offered for response: online, in-person, certificates, and certification. Not surprisingly, online training led the way with 32% of the responses; while in-person came in a close second at 30%. The table below shows the full results:

Training Method Utilized	% Utilized
Online	32%
In-person	30%
Certificate	21%
Certification	17%

CURRENT & ANTICIPATED FUTURE CHALLENGES

Survey participants put forth numerous challenges. The three issues that clearly rose to the top were labor concerns, declining student enrollment, and increasing cost/inflation. Labor issues were cited by 36% of volunteer leaders. The predominant worries mentioned focused on the difficulty and necessity of hiring, retaining and training qualified staff members. The second concern was declining student enrollment with 25% of responses highlighting this concern. As demographic statisticians and higher education enrollment specialists have warned in the past year or so, we have reached a demographic cliff as far as the number of traditional aged college students (18–24 year olds) in the country. While older students are certainly engaging in higher learning at a high rate, the birth-rate decline that occurred in the early 2000's is reaching its pinnacle now and for the next five – ten years. The availability of fewer traditional students creates a crisis for undergraduate focused colleges, particularly smaller, private, residential institutions. The third major problem suggested was cost increases/inflation in goods and labor. Twenty-two percent of participants made remarks about this challenge and its impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of auxiliaries in meeting student and campus needs.

CURRENT & FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Overwhelmingly, strategies to help attain current and future opportunities dealt with the concepts of innovation and ensuring agile operations with 76% of responses touching on these ideas. Key thoughts involved heightened and wise use of technology and an emphasis on well-conceived and intentional processes and procedures. While few specifics were indicated, there was also mention of the need for greater collaboration with business partners and academic/student affairs units in the future. There was a suggestion from some respondents relating to the need to consider a return to self-operation of some services to better control costs and support customer needs. A couple of respondents pointed out the anticipatedy increasing importance of auxiliary units and its leaders. Since colleges are likely to become even more dependent on auxiliary revenue and expertise in managing flexible operations and adapting new techniques and technology.

STRATEGIES TO OPTIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES

Three specific, although somewhat broad strategies, were recommended by the leaders surveyed. Each of the suggestions clearly point to the need for a renewed focus on areas of traditional auxiliary services' strength. The notion of greater responsiveness to customer needs was highlighted in 38%^of responses. Being attuned to customer desires and finding ways to best meet those student needs and wants is a long-time hallmark of campus services. A second suggestion supported the necessity of frequent assessment and adjustment of services offered and practices and procedures in these service areas. This recommendation hearkened back to the concept of management and operational agility. In today's chaotic environment of societal and higher education transformation, being adept and flexible to adapt to new trends and demands are essential skills for any successful leader in order to ensure ongoing vitality for the units they direct. A final recommended strategy for auxiliary units related to the continued need to partner, as appropriate, with business partners and various campus academic and student affairs departments. Supporting the larger college or university in its mission and efforts to support students is a logical step to enhance auxiliaries' role as an integral part of the broader higher education institution and will likely directly impact revenue generation for auxiliary operations.

SUMMARY

An overall summary of the survey results of perspectives from NACAS' volunteer leaders comes down to one basic idea. Just as with sports teams, team members must focus on the fundamentals in order to build a foundational skill set on which to excel. Likewise, auxiliary service leaders need to ensure they are seeking to properly serve customers and providing the staff training and development required to help their employees support this effort with excellence. Especially in the midst of rapidly changing times and significant shifts in the services desired and clientele to be served, focusing on the fundamentals is critical to auxiliaries serving the campus and campus community and, ultimately, to the financial success of auxiliary units. As noted by one NACAS leader, "Embracing the service aspect of our industry, more and more auxiliary units will need to tell their story through the services provided and not the revenue generated". Another added, auxiliaries "need to be nimble, cost-effective and innovative in serving our customers". Perhaps, going back to the basics seems counter-intuitive. However; by focusing on our core mission and traditional strengths, auxiliary services can position and propel themselves forward to meet the needs of evolving contemporary students and campus environments.

JEFF PITTMAN, PH.D. is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Regent University, where he directs the Higher Education Leadership & Management doctoral program as well as the M.Ed. in Student Affairs. He formerly served as Vice President for Student Services at Regent. He is a long-term NACAS member and was NACAS national president in 2005. Additionally, he previously served on the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) for over a decade.

Ask the Experts

your most pressing challenges...

NACAS

LOUNGE

A social network designed for higher education auxiliary services.

You may feel on an island and unable to tap into others at your institution for the type of sound advice you seek. Fortunately NACAS has you covered.

The NACAS Lounge is an online community designed for you. A social network for leaders operating at your level. The perfect place for you to ask questions, receive feedback, share resources, and find ideas.