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# College Services

Journal of the National Association of College Auxiliary Services



**Meet Your New NACAS President – Peter Fraser**



## New York Institutions Form Unique Organization to Advance Campus Auxiliary Services

by  
**Tom Ryder**  
&  
**Scott Gorgas**



New York State is unique and known for its *bigness*. New York City boasts the largest stock exchange, a towering skyline and the biggest payroll in baseball. Outside of the Big Apple, New York has Adirondack Park, (the largest publicly protected park in the contiguous United States), the Catskills, Hudson Valley, Niagra Falls, and the State University of New York (SUNY), the nation's largest comprehensive system of public higher education.

Big is not always better (the Yankees don't always win) and sometimes small can serve better. The New York university system is comprised of both large universities and small colleges to educate over 400,000 unique students. In the 1970s, a group of administrators created an organization called SUNY Auxiliary Services Association (SASA) to better serve students through unique campus-based auxiliary service operations from yesterday... to today... and into the future.

### Yesterday

In the 1950s, State University of New York campuses organized and chartered nonprofit corporations to administer a fairly small set of campus enterprise activities. This was done to help insulate the State from services with high liability exposure, and because state agency requirements and systems for accounting, reporting, and budgeting could not effectively accommodate retail and consumer service enterprises. These

# SUNY Auxiliary Services Association

*It's all about the mission and being unique!*

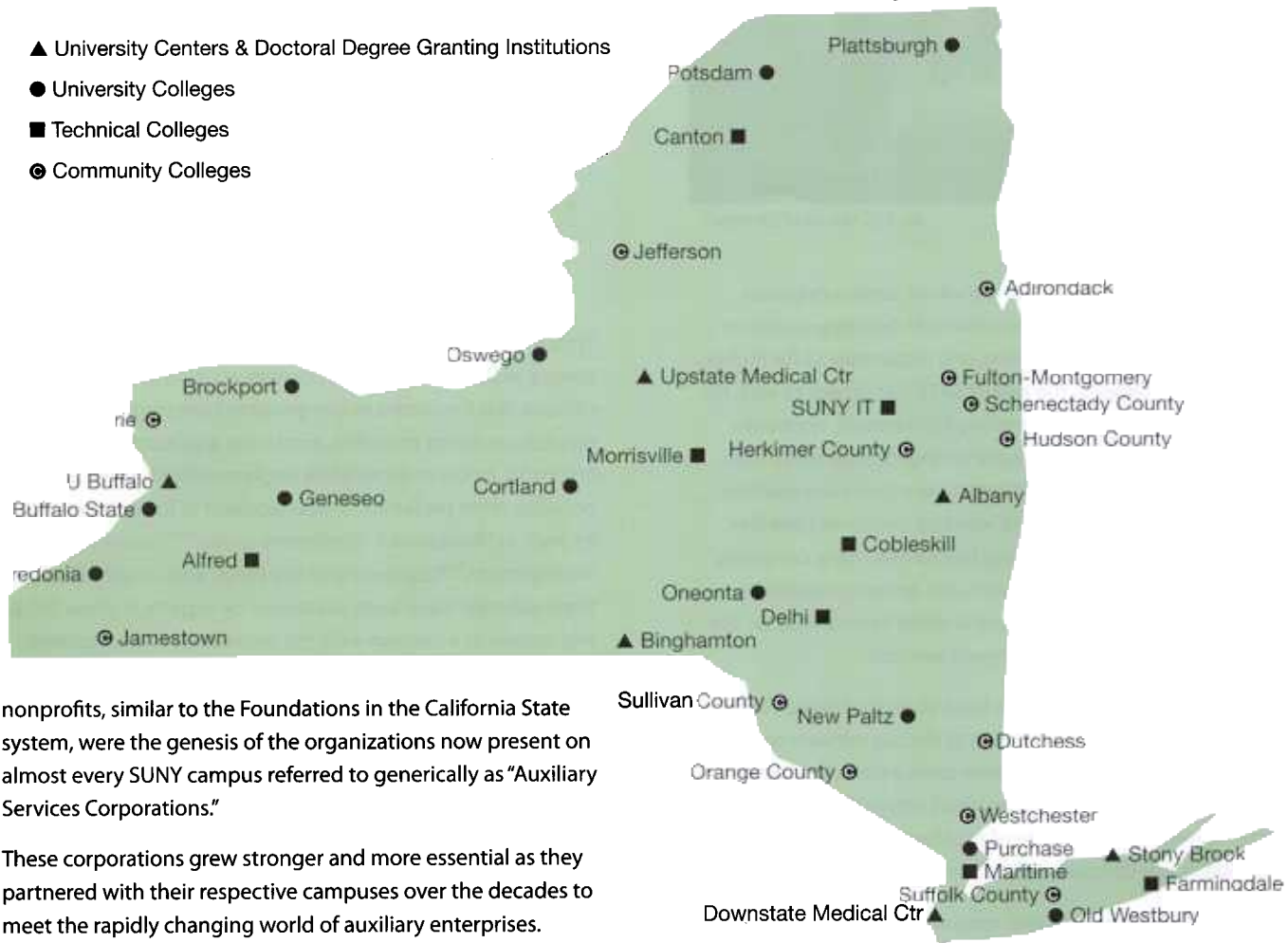
**It's all about being unique...**

**Unique Campuses = Unique Missions**

**Unique Missions = Unique Students**

**Unique Students = Unique Services**

**Unique Services = Unique Auxiliary Operations**



nonprofits, similar to the Foundations in the California State system, were the genesis of the organizations now present on almost every SUNY campus referred to generically as "Auxiliary Services Corporations."

These corporations grew stronger and more essential as they partnered with their respective campuses over the decades to meet the rapidly changing world of auxiliary enterprises.

The original organizations of the 1950s handled basic food service, bookstores, and limited vending programs. They were called "Faculty Student Associations." Soon a rapid influx of students, faculty, and staff entering a rapidly growing SUNY system, placed new demands on the services and products offered by these associations.

By the mid 1960s, the associations were thriving businesses with sizable payrolls, extending a broadening array of services across their campuses and generating modest profits to be shared with their campus communities. Governance for these organizations remained primarily in the hands of campus administrators.

In 1967, after a statewide review of the scope of the auxiliary organizations, SUNY adopted a standardized comprehensive contract for the benefit of each campus and the local auxiliary corporation. Under the auspices of the SUNY Board of Trustees, those contracts and guidelines permitted certain basic

services, instituted new system-wide financial reporting and accountability procedures, and required a more balanced representation among faculty, staff and students on each Board of Directors. The result was the more structured membership corporation we have today, collectively referred to as "Auxiliary Services Corporations" (ASCs).

Early in the 1970s, a grassroots group consisting of the principal auxiliary service professional from each campus was organized to conduct a collaborative review of the standard contract format and represent all the corporations in the system. That group evolved into the SUNY Auxiliary Services Association. SASA worked with administrators in SUNY Central Administration whenever a legal, contractual, financial or organizational problem arose. SASA, since its inception, has been an effective spokes-group, advocate, and resource for the University's ASCs.



An ASC Board of Directors

### Today

Along with the rapid national growth of auxiliary services in terms of diversification, investment in facilities, customer service expectations, marketing, and requirements for higher returns to the campus, the role of SASA has grown as well. No longer are auxiliaries just handling food service, textbooks, and limited vending, things have changed... cafeterias have become dining facilities, textbook operations have become full-service college stores, and vending machines have become mini-markets. Technology has turned many campuses "cashless," while the list of services has grown considerably. It has been the campus' auxiliary in many cases that is on the leading edge of new and improved services.

SASA has met the challenge to keep abreast of these changes. Its members have an open forum to discuss relevant services because SASA is collegial and non-competitive. The experience and expertise of SASA members within this unique SUNY system covers a wide variety of excellent services tailored to each individual campus, with a focus on the customer.

In 2000, SASA developed and executed a comprehensive strategic plan to sharpen its focus as a professional organization for the benefit of its membership. The plan's key elements are:

*Mission Statement – Our mission is to provide a forum for Auxiliary Service professionals to share information, promote professional development of its members and develop entrepre-*

*neurial opportunities in a way that strengthens organizational and individual effectiveness so that value is added to campuses. We will be an advocate for Auxiliary Services by providing information to other constituencies in support of the mission of the University system.*

*Vision – To become a model management resource for excellence and leadership in higher education auxiliary services.*

### Goals:

- Professional Development
- Membership Growth
- Enhance SASA's stature within the State & SUNY Systems
- Create More Entrepreneurial Opportunities for the ASCs

Typical SASA meetings are in a two-day format occurring 4-5 times a year, and as often as possible are held at a member's campus. It is important to the group to have meetings where services are being provided, and to see and learn about them first hand. In this manner SASA implemented the goal of incorporating more professional development at its meetings. Topics such as "Bookstore E-Commerce Issues," "Disaster and Risk Management," "Responding to the Press," and "Legal Issues in the Auxiliaries" have been presented by experts in those fields, and usually at a campus with the experience in the concepts/ topics being discussed. Through this process we also provide opportunities for entrepreneurial growth. We never leave a meeting without broadening our own vision and having some new ideas to bring back to our own campus.

A very unique feature of how ASCs within the SUNY system deliver services is that each exists by virtue of a "state contract" with its home campus. Although ASCs have been operating as nonprofit corporations under such agreements for decades, a separate entity of the state government, the Office of the State Comptroller, questioned various aspects of the ASC/Campus contract template. The typical five-year contract was reduced to a series of one-year extensions. SASA stepped up to this challenge and worked with a task force designed to educate



the Comptroller's office regarding the nature and importance of auxiliary services provided to each campus. The theme of our effort was that "One size does NOT fit all," in terms of auxiliary operations. Each campus has different students and different missions, and each ASC must adapt to and serve that unique customer base. A year after a meeting between that task force and the State Comptroller's staff, a new model contract was granted for a five year period.

During the last five years, SASA developed/reinvented functional area "work groups." Some of these were in existence for years and served the organization well. Others needed encouragement and organizational support to blossom. Communication between the work groups and the directors has been reinforced. New groups have been added in the last two years. Currently we have the following in addition to the Executive Directors' core group:

- Bookstore
- Card Administrators
- Controllers
- Dining Services
- Human Resources
- Marketing

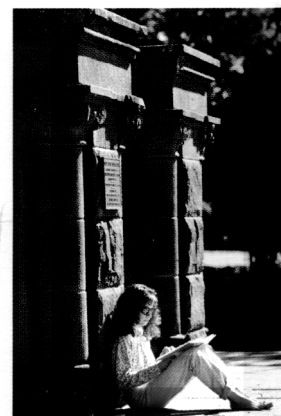
Each group elects its own chair, decides on meeting dates and topics, is provided with funding for meetings, and has its own email discussion list. Various Work Groups are invited to join with the Executive Directors on a parallel agenda during our periodic meetings, reserving time at the end for a combined session. This format allows for more networking, direct sharing of ideas, and ultimately more collaboration both at the state-wide and campus levels. Consequently, attendance at meetings has grown significantly in the last few years. For example, attendance at the meeting at SUNY Geneseo last fall was the largest regular meeting in the history of SASA.

A very significant accomplishment of SASA in 2006 was an expanded annual meeting that included all of the Work Groups. It was held in January at the Saratoga Hotel & Conference Center in Saratoga Springs. Over 100 attendees enjoyed several major speakers, including Dr. Bob Hassmiller of NACAS, a great presentation on "The Millennial Student," a selection from twelve educational presentations in three blocks, organizational and Work Group meetings, and time for networking and social interaction. Those attending rated it very high.

Of course, in addition to inter-campus communication, and professional development being provided by SASA within New York State, our members enjoy the national and regional level resources all auxiliaries can draw upon for professional advice and assistance. NACAS and its regional organizations provide professional development on a wide range of topics,

including the recently developed Institute for Managers, as well as many other resources and opportunities for participation ([www.nacas.org](http://www.nacas.org)). There are other national organizations that serve our functional areas (e.g. dining services, bookstores, card operations, and housing operations). Many of our members are very active at this higher level, and bring that knowledge back to SASA.

The experience and expertise of SASA professionals is very deep, with a support system that exists far beyond what the average customer can imagine. SASA is pleased to be able to help provide that support.



### Into the Future

SASA is strong because of its past, and is growing stronger as it stands to serve its unique members. In turn, each auxiliary becomes stronger in satisfying its unique campus mission. Further and most importantly, whether we are a big or small campus, we seek to serve our share of the unique 400,000 students in SUNY. ♦



Tom Ryder is Executive Director for Oneonta Auxiliary Services at SUNY College at Oneonta, where he has been for 39 years. During the time he served as Director of Student Accounts, he was one of the founders of the New York State Organization of Bursars and Business Administrators (NYSOBBA).

In 2000, Tom accepted the position of Executive Director of Oneonta Auxiliary Services. He is currently SASA President, and also serves on the NACAS Professional Development Committee.

Tom is married and father to five daughters, and grandfather to six children. He and his wife Linda live in Otego, New York.

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Scott Gorgas is the new Director of Finance for the University Auxiliary Services at the University at Albany, SUNY. Prior to joining Albany, he served as the Executive Director of the College Association at SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome. He currently serves as Past President of SASA.

Scott is married, father of four beautiful children and lives in Deerfield, NY.

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**Our next Annual Meeting will be held January 7-9, 2007, at the Saratoga Hotel & Conference Center in Saratoga Springs, NY. We're adding a motivational speaker to kick off our events, and the very strong agenda will be out to SASA members soon.**

**Contact Tom Ryder for more information.**