

Working with Higher Education

A profile on the National Association of College & University Mail Services

By Mike Butts and Mark Goodrich

The National Association of College & University Mail Services (NACUMS) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization formed in 1995, dedicated to serving the interests of college and university mailers.

The networking among college and university mail center professionals is one of its greatest assets. A particularly useful tool is its email listserv called Cunimail (College & University Mail), which allows users to share a wealth of industry knowledge. This free service is open to employees of colleges and universities who are involved in their institutions' mail processing.

When NACUMS formed in 1995, it was with the cooperation and support of several regional college and university mail associations that were already in existence. ACUMS (Association of College and University Mail Services) in the northeast, UMMA (University Mail Managers Association) in the midwest and CUMSA (College & University Mail Services Association) in the southeast, had been meeting locally/individually for a number of years; ACUMS and UMMA since 1979. These regional associations were very active, providing peer-to-peer support, advice and solutions to common problems faced by neighboring schools. They focused on explaining and implementing current postal policies and procedures and informed members of upcoming changes. Local postal officials and vendors could take advantage of these conferences to meet with a number of their customers at the same time.

However, with the postal reorganization in 1995 and the numerous processing changes that were now required to receive discount postage

rates, it soon became apparent that the C&U mailing industry needed a way to present its concerns, input and suggestions to USPS policy makers. Leaders in the C&U mailing industry knew that it wouldn't be practical for individual schools or even regional associations to lobby the USPS separately since the Postal Service preferred working with a single organization that would speak for a particular segment of the mailing industry. And any regional-based solution was only going to get more complex and fragmented since there were four more regional C&U mailing associations in the process of forming: SWACUMS (South West Association of College and University Mail Services), centered in Texas; ARMCUMS (Association of Rocky Mountain College and University Mail Services); WAUCM (Western Association of University and College Mailers); and MARCUMS (Mid-Atlantic Region of College and University Mail Services). Therefore, NACUMS was formed in order to provide a united, national voice to the USPS. Almost immediately, NACUMS applied for and was granted membership to the Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC).



NACUMS is now considered the "voice" to the USPS for the college and university mailing industry, ensuring that policy and educational opportunities are available to its members. In

June 2008, NACUMS representatives were invited to meet with Deputy Postmaster General and COO Pat Donahoe and his direct reports to discuss a number of issues specific to college and university mail processing.

NACUMS is currently working with the USPS on:

- a proposal to integrate student forwarding orders into its National Change of Address database
- allowing C&Us to scan as delivered Delivery Confirmation items

- converting Contract Stations to performance-based contracts
- entering student and department addresses into the national database

The NACUMS board continues to seek ways to work with the USPS and industry vendors to promote solutions and products for college and university needs.

NACUMS also holds a national conference dedicated to the college and university mailing industry. This past July, NACUMS 14th Annual Conference was held in Charleston, South Carolina. Ruth Goldway of the Postal Regulatory Commission (who was recently appointed by President Obama to chair that body) and Tom Day, Senior Vice President of Intelligent Mail and Address Quality for the USPS, were two of the keynote speakers.

Commissioner Goldway, speaking on Monday, and Mr. Day on Tuesday, each provided thoughtful and realistic analysis of the situation currently facing the USPS, the measures that are being taken to address the current short-term crisis, and the structural changes required to ensure the long-term survival of a competitive and universal postal service. Goldway's remarks highlighted the PRC's role as advocate for the rate payer in providing oversight of the USPS service standards while demanding financial transparency in rate setting. Mr. Day focused on the operational processes and service issues of the USPS and how best to approach its current problems while developing solutions acceptable to all stakeholders.

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While each speaker was insightful, candid and engaging, what was of particular note to many conference attendees was that Goldway and Day seemed as interested in receiving feedback from the NACUMS group as they were in presenting their own views. Having worked with NACUMS representatives before, Day was already aware of some of the challenges unique to the college and university mailing environment; he stated again that he was very willing to work with a NACUMS workgroup on delivery solutions specific to college and university needs. For those who worked so hard to build NACUMS into an effective national organization that could gain the attention of the USPS leadership and advocate for this unique mailing niche, it was a truly significant and gratifying moment. ■

Don't miss an opportunity to become a part of the only national association solely devoted to mailing professionals in higher education. For more information about NACUMS and how to join, please visit www.nacums.org.