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College Retailer of the Year

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The University of Dayton Bookstore has earned the highest level of collegiate retailing excellence in the United States and Canada as the first-ever Collegiate Retailer of the Year by the National Association of College Stores Foundation.

Judging was based upon six criteria: campus connection, academic support, customer commitment, shopping experience, workplace culture and profitability.

"The University of Dayton Bookstore has held staff accountable to the highest standards possible; developed key relationships with faculty, students and administrators; is creative with merchandising; uses new and emerging technologies; created an exciting and inviting store environment," said DeAnn Hazey, NACS Foundation executive director.

The NACS said the University's application was exceptional and would serve as the model for future applications. The NACS also singled out bookstore director Julie Banks for her work in staff development and creating programs and services to both support the academic mission and make the business profitable.

"I believe the biggest reason we stand out is our level of service; we really do try to make service paramount and grow our relationships on campus and in the community," Banks said.

Such relationships have resulted in student internships at the bookstore ranging from security positions for criminal justice majors to marketing and graphic design positions. The bookstore partners with other University offices to create and support programs such as alumni catalogs, a gift shop for the library's annual Nativity scenes exhibit, book signings, a grad fair for seniors and open houses for prospective students, campus cookouts and family reading events with popular children's book characters. The bookstore has even taken children's reading events into local schools.

"With all the changes in the book industry, with more alternatives available for acquiring textbooks, we strive everyday to make books more affordable," Banks said. "We're going to continue to work hard to save students money. That's one of our responsibilities."

Two recently implemented Web applications highlight these cost-saving measures. The first allows students to use one site to compare University of Dayton bookstore textbook prices against multiple textbook providers and makes it easier to order from any vendor. The second application is a textbook rental program.

Other textbook achievements include the successful implementation of an in-store rental program, increased eTextbooks availability and an online program for ordering, packaging and picking up textbooks. As a direct result of these initiatives, the bookstore saved students more than \$183,000 during the 2009-10 academic year.

"You don't earn this type of recognition without a lot of committed effort," said Ken Soucy, the University's director of purchasing. "It's the staff's openness to new ideas, responsiveness, ability to adapt to change and a focus on customer service."

The bookstore operates four campus retail operations: the main bookstore, the School of Law bookstore, the Tech Shop and Flyer Spirit on Brown Street. It employs 12 full-time staff members and between 65 and 120 students throughout the year, depending on seasonal demand.

The NACS will present the bookstore with the award and \$5,000 on Saturday, Feb. 26, at the Campus Market Expo, the college store industry's largest educational and buying show, held in Houston, Texas.

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