

# CCR Certification

## Ensuring Professionalism in Your College Store

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**H**igher education is facing a number of economic and legal challenges. The recent economic slowdown and a tumultuous stock market have combined to constrict budgets, and increase the need for every campus operation to operate in a self-sustaining manner.

In addition, the heightened level of government scrutiny caused by last year's preferred lender scandals has campus administrators reviewing ethics policies and tightening the reins of administrative oversight.

Add to this the heightened expectations of service demanded by both students and parents, and it is readily apparent that each campus operating unit must:

1. operate at peak efficiency
2. offer cutting edge service, and
3. accomplish the above in a way that doesn't make the institution's legal counsel nervous.

Many campus administrators have concluded that the best way to ensure these challenges are met is to require that all staff be up to date on the latest practices and trends in their respective industries and exhibit high levels of professionalism. And one of the best ways to accomplish this is to invest in professional certifications.



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### The Gold Standard

In the college store arena, the best measure of a knowledgeable professional is the Certified Collegiate Retailer designation. The CCR was developed by the National Association of College Stores (NACS), the national trade association of the collegiate retailing industry, in 2004.

One of the goals of NACS in creating the CCR was to have a certification program that was perceived as credible by ALL industry stakeholders. To ensure this, certification is based solely on experience and successful passage of a comprehensive, 200-question, four-hour exam that tests college store professionals in six core competency domains:


- College store operations
- Course materials and intellectual property
- Leadership and human resources
- Marketing and campus relations
- Retailing
- Business stewardship

Based on these critical competency areas, the CCR exam was developed using generally accepted industry practices. It assumes a basic understanding of applicable business and retail laws and regulations. The exam is not based on memorization, but asks questions that require candidates to demonstrate practical application of knowledge to situations. From its inception, the certification examination was developed and validated under the supervision of a certification consultant and in accordance with the established standards of the National Organization of Competency Assurance. The result – a true test of knowledge of college store professionals.

But the exam's scope doesn't stop at the doors to the college store! Questions also require applicants to exhibit an understanding of how their operations fit into the environment and operating cycles of the institutions they serve.

To help CCR aspirants prepare for the exam, NACS offers educational programs and resources that include a suggested reading list and a comprehensive study guide. The reading list represents a structured program of self study organized around the industry's competency model.

And the learning never stops. In order to maintain the CCR designation, individuals must recertify every four years by completing 60 credits of continuing education and professional development. This renewal requirement ensures that the designees update their knowledge about the college store industry, industry developments and current retailing methods. They also are introduced to leadership roles in organizations at the state, regional and/or national level.

By supporting your college store professionals in achieving the CCR designation, auxiliary service administrators can ensure that staff in this important business unit possess the knowledge necessary to successfully manage a college store and effectively provide expertise on collegiate retailing issues, as well as adapt to changing market conditions. Attaining the CCR demonstrates that your people are among those setting the tone and direction for the college store industry. 

For more information on the CCR designation, please contact the NACS Certification Program Manager Pat Krivonak, at [certification@nacs.org](mailto:certification@nacs.org), or go to [www.NACS.org](http://www.NACS.org) and click on Professional Development.

### Prerequisites to Sit for the Certified Collegiate Retailer Examination

Each CCR applicant must have:

- Three years college store management experience plus a bachelor's degree or higher in any discipline

OR

- Five years college store management experience without a degree

In addition, the applicant must:

- Agree to and sign the Standards of Conduct for Certified Collegiate Retailer Designees
- Submit a current job description and be currently employed in the industry
- Pay the examination fee of \$200 for NACS members, \$400 for non-NACS members.

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