

NACS Incoming President Mary Ellen Martin, director of Store Services, The University Store, University of Maine at Farmington

Assuming a 'Huge' Responsibility

Mary Ellen Martin, CCR, director of Store Services at the University Store, University of Maine at Farmington (UMF), will soon begin her one-year term as president of the National Association of College Stores (NACS) Board of Trustees.

Martin, who has served as the bookstore's director of Store Services for the past 10 1/2 years, has a wide and varied retail background encompassing both the college scene and regular retail.

EXPERIENCE

Prior to her UMF position, she was the merchandise manager at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst for 10 1/2 years beginning in late 1989, her first college bookstore job.

Her retail career started with management positions at two HobbyTown hobby and craft stores for four years. This was followed by an eight-year tenure at the May Department Stores Co. chain, serving as an area sales manager and assistant operations manager.

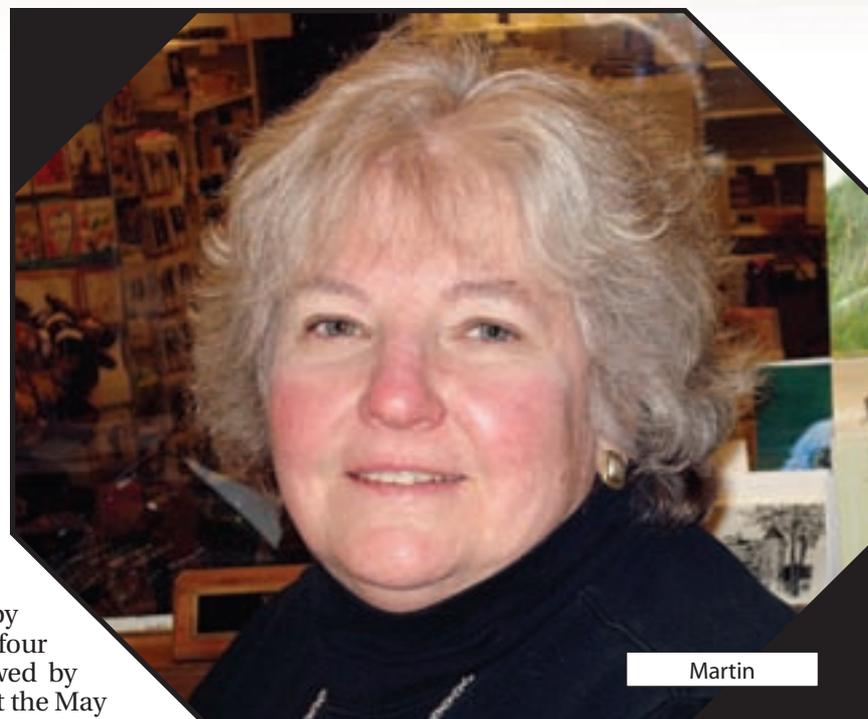
Although the major portion of her career has been devoted to retail, Martin graduated from UMass with a B.S. in Animal Science. Her first job after graduation was with the Animal Science department at the university, where she taught riding and stable management. She eventually left the workforce to raise her daughter, then started her retail career and has never looked back.

"I am about to assume a huge responsibility, and I am grateful that I have had so many opportunities to learn about the association and the industry," she said. "I have the unique background ... small store and large store in both the college store industry and the 'outside retail' stores.

"It does give me a very broad background and varied experiences, which helps me see the common industry issues, and those that may be more specific to a store demographic. Many industry issues are common to all member stores. Others are specific, based on store or vendor, volume, size and resources."

LEADERSHIP BACKGROUND

In addition to her retail qualifications, Martin has a significant leadership background within the college store organizational framework, having served on the NACS Board of Trustees; NACS Education Committee; Small Stores Committee; Marketing and Branding Committee; Nominating Committee; Membership/Bylaws Committee; Campus Market Expo (CA-



Martin

MEX) Education Committee; Core Curriculum Development Group; and several other groups.

Martin is also a Certified Collegiate Retailer (CCR) question writer, and has facilitated education sessions for NACS at its summer programs and at several regional meetings.

"As you can see by my past involvement, not just with NACS, but in the past serving on the boards for College Stores of New England (CSNE) — my regional college association, where I served on the board for 13 years in various positions including president — and the New England Buying Consortium (NEBC) — where I served three terms as president — I am very committed to the industry," she said. "I think that experience is helpful.

"I also feel that dedicated volunteers helped me as I joined the college industry and learned. Volunteers keep so many of our wonderful associations running, and I felt it was my turn to help out. Volunteering and getting involved is so rewarding. You get back so much more than you can imagine, both personally and professionally."

Martin also credits the support she has received from her campus administration to be able to participate in the various NACS volunteer activities.

"I am very fortunate that my administration backs me 100 percent for all the NACS volunteer work that I do," she said.

PLANS, GOALS, PRIORITIES

Martin has many plans and goals as NACS board president. "The college store industry is changing rapidly, and we all need to accept that," she explained. "Change is very difficult, and at times, a bit scary, but it is the only



Martin stands by the merchandise she carries in her store.

way we can grow and continue to be successful. Merchandise assortments, textbooks and course material delivery mechanisms, and the expectations of our core customers are all going to have an impact on how we do business. This will affect stores and associates, and we need to be nimble enough to respond to the challenges.

"I am sure the coming year will be challenging, and I expect all incoming presidents felt the same way. We face changes, new ways of doing business, new opportunities. I hope to work with the various NACS boards, NACS staff and store and associate members to continue to keep NACS the premier association that it is today."

Martin told *College Store Executive* that NACS's strategic priorities would drive the direction that the organization will take during her time as president.

"This is reviewed and updated as needed to ensure that we are focusing on the correct things for our industry," she explained. "These priorities are that NACS will provide resources to help stores embrace a retail mindset, promoting retailing best practices that position college stores for success; NACS will advocate for its college members and will take a proactive leadership role in addressing issues impacting the college store industry; and NACS will invest the necessary resources to position college stores as the provider of choice for course materials and their delivery mechanisms."

INITIATIVES

Among the many initiatives Martin will support during her term as president are "The Store of 2015," and she said that "NACS will continue to push the new visions for the campus stores as the place to be on campus, the destination or hub."

National Student Day (NSD) is another initiative that will be fully supported. "This past fall, NACS sponsored its first National Student



Martin has served as the University Store's director of Store Services for more than 10 years.

Day," she noted. "Our second annual NSD will be on Oct. 4, 2012. It is our members' opportunity to recognize and thank our students for their social responsibility and good works. We expect 2012 to be even bigger and better than 2011."

CHALLENGES

Martin looks forward to the challenges she will face as president. "I have a number of friends who have served on the board and as officers," she said. "A few of the past presidents have told me that this coming year will be absolutely wonderful and goes by very quickly. All of my service with NACS has been a posi-

tive experience, so I cannot imagine that this will be any different ... more responsibility, but still positive.

"My fellow officers, the various boards and the outstanding, dedicated NACS staff all make it enjoyable. The hard-working folks in this industry, both in the stores and with our vendor members, are also a big part of the journey.

She concluded, "I don't know that my ideas are that unique, but we will work very hard to provide the best possible experience for our customers, whether they are students, staff, faculty or visitors."