# The Evolution of the CAS Standards
## Forty-Five Years of Collaboration and Consensus

Jennifer B. Wells, Ph.D.
*Kennesaw State University*
Associate Professor of Higher Education
jwells42@kennesaw.edu | LinkedIn

Laura A. Dean, Ph.D.
*University of Georgia*
Professor Emeritus
ladean@uga.edu | LinkedIn

**Abstract**: This article traces the evolution of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) over its forty-five-year history, emphasizing its pivotal role in promulgating professional standards for student-focused programs and services in higher education. Founded in 1979, CAS has grown from 13 to 43 member associations, expanded its portfolio from 17 to 51 functional area standards, and released 11 editions of the *CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education* (commonly known as the "CAS Blue Book"). The article examines CAS's unwavering commitment to collaboration, consensus, and self-assessment, underscoring its enduring mission to enhance professional practice while addressing the evolving needs, challenges, and opportunities in the field.

**Keywords**: professional standards, self-assessment, CAS standards, collaboration, consensus, assessment, higher education, student affairs, student services, program review

Established in 1979, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) emerged from a conversation among professional associations to address a pressing need within the expanding student affairs profession. This article explores the evolution of the CAS standards, examining how the organization has upheld its foundational values while adapting to changes in the field. From its inception with 13 member associations, CAS has grown significantly, now comprising 43 associations. The first edition of the "CAS Blue Book" featured 17 functional areas, including preparation standards. Today, the 11th version (2024) encompasses 51 functional area standards, with additional cross-functional materials available, reflecting the organization's ongoing commitment to guiding and enhancing the quality of student-focused practice in higher education.

### The Origins and the Case for the CAS Standards

The 1950s-60s saw rapid expansion in U.S. higher education as factors including the GI Bill, the women's movement, and Civil Rights legislation led to larger enrollments and increasing diversity on college campuses. Student services and student affairs programs were expanded to meet the growing needs, and a number of graduate programs were established to prepare entry-level professionals to enter the field of student affairs. Although the field was growing, there was no agreed-upon curriculum or standards reflecting consensus about what graduates should be expected to know or be able to do. An initial effort had begun in the late 1960s when the Council of Student Personnel Associations in Higher Education (COSPA), comprising ten student affairs associations,

drafted the first *Guidelines for Graduate Programs in the Preparation of Student Personnel Workers in Higher Education*, dated March 5, 1967 (CAS, 2023). Despite this initial work to establish standards for graduate education, COSPA dissolved in 1976, leaving these early discussions with only preliminary standards. As Sandeen (1982) noted, scholars at that time were actively discussing the importance and role of standards in student affairs. A key strength of the evolving student affairs field was the ability to identify needs on campus and exert collaborative leadership in developing and implementing services to address them (Sandeen, 1982). A noted challenge at that time was that student affairs programs were often evaluated during the accreditation process by individuals unfamiliar with the field and its standards. According to Sandeen (1982), this was partly due to a lack of advocacy for involvement in the accreditation process by student affairs professionals, as well as the failure to develop and implement comprehensive professional standards within the field. Miller (1984) asserted that the quality of a student's educational experience is closely tied to the effectiveness of the student services and developmental programs available, which are essential resources for student success. It follows that professional standards, when properly developed, can serve as critical benchmarks for excellence, guiding both program development and institutional accreditation in student affairs (Miller, 1984). Therefore, a key group of professional organizations and professionals at the time realized that it was vital for the profession to continue the work of COSPA to establish and maintain its own standards to ensure that student services could be evaluated, both by campus professionals and by accreditation teams and by criteria that reflected the values and goals of the field, rather than having external forces dictate these measures.

During the 1960s-1970s, others concerned with the graduate education of counselors and other helping professionals established counselor education standards and explored the possibilities for accrediting graduate academic programs (CACREP, 2019). A moving force in this effort was the Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors (ACES), a division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA), now called the American Counseling Association (ACA). In 1978, ACES published a set of professional standards to accredit counseling and personnel services education programs. APGA recognized ACES as its official counselor education accrediting body and moved to establish an inter-association committee to guide counselor education program accreditation activity and the review and revision of the ACES/APGA preparation standards. In response to this initiative, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) established an ad hoc Preparation Standards Drafting Committee to create a set of standards designed to focus on the special concerns of student affairs graduate education (CAS, 2023, p. 3).

### The Beginning (1979-1986)

In March of 1979, the ACPA Executive Council charged this Professional Standards Drafting Committee to involve as many other professional associations as possible to collaborate in the development and dissemination of professional standards (ACPA, 1986). NASPA and ACPA, as the two primary associations for student affairs, decided to co-sponsor a meeting of professional association representatives. At this meeting in June 1979, Ted Miller (ACPA) and Katherine Hunter (NASPA) were asked to co-chair an interassociational Conference on

Student Development and Services Accreditation Issues in October 1979. The focus was to discuss a profession-wide response to the need for standards, with operational practice and professional preparation standards as the two most important areas for future consideration.

Thirteen professional associations were in attendance: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), American College Personnel Association (ACPA), American Association of Counseling and Development (AACD), College Placement Council (CPC), National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), Association of College Unions-International (ACU-I), National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), National Association of Personnel Workers (NAPW), National Association for Women Deans, Administrations and Counselors (NAWDAC), National Council on Student Development (NCSD), National Entertainment and Campus Activities Association (NECAA), National Orientation Directors Association (NODA), and the Southern College Personnel Association (SCPA, now SACSA). The Council on Post-Secondary Accreditation (COPA) and The American Council on Education (ACE) sent observers. The participants of the Interassociational Conference agreed on the need for the creation of comprehensive, profession-wide statements of professional standards. The representatives invited all student affairs-related professional associations to establish a Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs (CAS), which would pursue the development of professional standards in a collaborative manner, potentially for accreditation purposes (ACPA, 1986). From these initial conversations, two important initiatives emerged. One was the development of specialized accreditation for counseling and related preparation programs; this became the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), created in 1981 to accredit graduate programs in counseling and related fields, including student development/college counseling. The other initiative adopted the philosophy of self-assessment, based on the belief that campus professionals themselves were best equipped to assess their programs and services, provided they had good tools to do so.

With Ted Miller as the Acting Chairperson of the Council, "In 1980, CAS was chartered as a non-profit corporation for the purpose of developing written professional standards, disseminating those standards to the profession at-large, and aiding in the implementation of the standards" (ACPA, 1986, p. 1). The expectation was that student services/student development opportunities for students in higher education would be enhanced. CAS pursued three goals: 1) establish, adopt, and disseminate two types of standards and guidelines – programs/services and professional preparation; 2) assist professionals and institutions in their utilization and implementation; and 3) establish a system of regular evaluation (CAS, 1986). CAS was a "direct outgrowth of the awareness on the part of many professionals and their associations that the field of student affairs lacked both a clear and consistent definition of its function and a set of definitive guidelines for its practice" (ACPA, 1986, p. 2).

From the beginning, the CAS approach was characterized by an intentional, deliberate process, designed to ensure input from both experts and practitioners from a broad array of functional areas. The goal was to create standards that emphasized collaboration and

that reflected an understanding of working relationships across campus units and functions. As CAS began its work, the initial process for developing the standards involved multiple steps (ACPA, 1986):

1. Identify needed functional areas for standards.
2. Collect existing standards statements from member associations.
3. Unify the statements and submit to the executive committee.
4. Review and comment on the statements by the Council Directors.
5. Final editing by the Executive Committee.
6. Widely circulate to member associations for review and comment.
7. Vote on each statement by the Council.
8. Submit to nationally recognized experts for further evaluation.
9. Amend as needed and present for adoption.

In 1981, the CAS Executive Committee appointed draft managers to begin unifying written statements that had been submitted by each of the individual associations. CAS leadership learned that this was a complex process requiring considerable time and patience. "The collaborative approach used to create these standards and guidelines reflects a profession-wide determination to establish criteria to guide the professional practice and preparation of student services, student affairs, and student development program personnel in post-secondary institutions of higher learning" (CAS, 1986, p. ix). CAS received reviews and recommendations from at least 1000 practitioners who read drafts and provided comments at various points in the process (CAS, 1986). CAS also recognized the importance of keeping member associations updated and informed throughout the development process. "The development of the CAS Standards and Guidelines [was], indeed, a profession-wide collaboration" (CAS, 1986, p. ix).

As a result of those collaborative efforts, in July of 1985, CAS adopted its first set of General Standards, comprised of 13 parts: Mission; Program; Leadership and Management; Organization and Administration; Human Resources; Funding; Facilities; Legal Responsibilities; Equal Opportunity, Access, and Affirmative Action; Campus and Community Relations; Multicultural Programs and Services; Ethics; and Evaluation (CAS, 1986). These General Standards formed the framework on which standards for functional areas were then built. They subsequently developed 16 sets of functional area standards and guidelines as well as preparation program standards (see the Appendix). The American College Testing Program (ACT) agreed to publish the *CAS Standards and Guidelines for Student Services/Development Programs* and disseminate two copies to every college and university in the United States. In the Foreword, Jim Vickery, President of the University of Montevallo, stated: "Thereby might *all* college and university presidents come to appreciate even more than many of them now do the 'extras' inherent in the cocurricular activities of student services/student development personnel!" (CAS, 1986, p. vii).

### The CAS Standards

From the outset, CAS identified fundamental beliefs about the role and application of the Standards, and these principles continue to be relevant today. The CAS standards outline

the minimum essential elements expected of institutions and their student services/student development programs. These standards describe the indispensable aspects of practice, but they are not designed to represent ideal or best practices; instead, by employing a collaborative approach gathering a wide range of perspectives, CAS's intent was to codify and articulate existing good practice. "The CAS Standards were constructed to represent the minimum criteria that every institution and its programs should, with the application of adequate effort, be expected to meet over time" (CAS, 1997, p. 3). They are designed to be applicable to all institutions, regardless of size, character, location, or student type, but must be interpreted in the context of each institution's unique characteristics.

The CAS standards consist of both general standards that apply across all functional areas and specialty standards tailored to specific functional areas. A functional area is defined as a "distinct grouping of activities, programs, and services within higher education that can be differentiated from other groups by its focus, mission, purpose, policies, practices, budget, body of literature, professional interests and backgrounds of its practitioners" (CAS, 2023, p. 18). To distinguish between essential and recommended practices, the standards use bold print for requirements (using "must") and lighter type for guidelines (using "should" or "may"). Guidelines are supplementary, offering additional criteria, examples, amplifications, and interpretations that clarify and elaborate on the standards to enhance program quality. By providing this dual structure of standards and guidelines, CAS ensures that the framework can be used effectively by programs at various scales or stages of development, accommodating both newer and more established institutions. From the outset, the standards have undergone regular review to maintain relevance and reflect current professional consensus, thus supporting consistency and quality across the higher education landscape.

### Integration of the Standards in Practice (1987-1999)

The 1980s-90s marked a period of significant transformation in U.S. higher education, characterized by growing demands for accountability and calls for improvement from the government and the public (Mann et al., 1991). During this time, CAS became well-established, emerging as a key framework for guiding and enhancing student affairs practices. Researchers began to investigate the utility and use of the CAS Standards (e.g., Bryan & Mullendore, 1991; Mann et al., 1991). While chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) may not have always directly attributed institutional changes to CAS, the underlying principles of the standards significantly shaped practices across campuses (Mann et al., 1991). Institutions utilized the standards to implement staff development initiatives, improve programs, emphasize the role of student affairs professionals as educators, and expand services such as student volunteer and (as they were called at the time) minority programs. These examples illustrate how the CAS standards played a role in institutional initiatives, self-study, and evaluation, providing a structured approach to assess and improve student affairs programs (Bryan & Mullendore, 1991).

The development and continued refinement of the CAS standards were seen as driven by input from various higher education institutions and professional associations, ensuring that they remained relevant and practical. This collaborative process contributed to the

recognition of CAS as "one of the greatest achievements of our profession [representing] an excellent set of tools to develop, expand, explain, and defend important campus services" (Bryan & Mullendore, 1991, p. 30). The standards also served as a valuable resource for institutional planning by providing a framework for justifying programmatic needs and driving improvements. Departments used CAS to support necessary changes and to justify proposed enhancements to their programs (Bryan & Mullendore, 1991). In addition, the standards played an educational role, helping student affairs staff communicate the value and impact of their programs to faculty, administrators, trustees, and students. When institutions actively operationalized the CAS standards, they benefited from improved program development, accreditation preparation, staff development, and increased budgetary and political leverage. Not implementing the standards was seen as a disservice to the institution and its student affairs division, as it overlooked the opportunities for enhancing the quality and credibility of campus programs (Bryan & Mullendore, 1991).

In 1988, CAS released the Self-Assessment Guides (SAGs) and an accompanying training manual for using them. Recognizing a need to assist practitioners in using the standards in self-assessment, CAS translated the functional area standards and guidelines into a self-study format so programs could more readily assess compliance with the standards, gauge their strengths and weaknesses, plan for improvement, and prepare for external review (CAS, 1988). These materials identified eight recommended steps in the self-study process:

1. Staff members must determine the type of self-study and who will be involved.
2. Staff members need to determine if any of the guidelines will be used to function as standards for the self-study.
3. Carefully examine the standards collectively before making individual or group judgments.
4. Identify and summarize evaluative evidence.
5. Describe discrepancies between assessment criteria and program practice.
6. Delineate required corrective action.
7. Recommend special actions for program enhancement.
8. Prepare a statement of overall action.

Users were encouraged to create committees with representation from within and outside the area being assessed, to develop consensus throughout the process, and to engage in discussion to determine a group perspective.

By 1992, it became clear that the CAS approach was valued by student-oriented areas beyond those traditionally considered to be "student services/development" programs. In recognition of the broader scope of member associations, CAS changed its name to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (still using the CAS abbreviation).

**The Value of CAS**

In 1997, the second edition of *The Book of Professional Standards for Higher Education*, commonly called the "CAS Blue Book" was released by CAS, marking a significant update

aimed at better serving as an educational tool and resource. In the "President's Letter to the Profession," Phyllis Mable reiterated key points regarding the value of the CAS standards, highlighting their role in guiding program effectiveness, supporting program development and assessment, facilitating self-studies, preparing for accreditation, advancing staff development, enhancing student learning, and fostering accountability (CAS, 1997). Mable emphasized that "the CAS Standards clearly challenge practitioners and provide support for their efforts both to enhance institutional missions and to serve students by providing systematic opportunities for growth that require creative and critical thinking, along with smart working, and yield slow, steady, and stable progress" (CAS, 1997, p. v).

In the "Prologue," Publications Editor Ted Miller emphasized the mission and impact of CAS, which was guided by six foundational mission-drive purpose statements reflected by profession-wide consensus:

1. To establish, adopt, and disseminate unified and timely professional standards for student services, student development programs, academic support services, and related higher education programs and services.
2. To promote the assessment and improvement of higher education services and programs through self-study, evaluation, and the use of CAS standards.
3. To establish, adopt, and disseminate unified and timely professional preparation standards for the education of student affairs practitioners.
4. To promote the assessment and improvement of professional preparation programs for student affairs practitioners through self-study, evaluation, and the use of CAS standards.
5. To advance the use and importance of standards among professional practitioners and educators in higher education.
6. To promote inter-association efforts to address the issues of quality assurance, student learning, and professional integrity in higher education. (CAS, 1997, pp. 1-2)

Miller reiterated CAS's role in establishing profession-wide standards that might not have been achieved otherwise, underscoring the importance of involvement from professional organizations to represent the values and interests of practitioners in student affairs and other areas focused on student support and success. He also highlighted the utility of CAS for program development, self-study, and staff development, and affirmed the organization's stance on self-regulation as the preferred approach to ensuring program quality and effectiveness. Miller clarified that CAS's goal was not to "accredit, certify, or otherwise sanction professional student support service practices or programs" (CAS, 1997, p. 4), but rather to provide a framework for continuous improvement through the adoption of its standards.

**Second Edition Revisions and Enhancements**
This 1997 second edition not only reaffirmed the mission, purpose, and utility of CAS but also significantly expanded its content. This update included revisions to all existing functional area standards and guidelines, the introduction of seven new functional areas, and the renaming of five areas to better reflect evolving practices (see the Appendix). The

General Standards retained their 14-part structure, but each part underwent changes in terminology and content to reflect advancements in the field:

- "Leadership and Management" became "Leadership"
- "Organization and Administration" was renamed "Organization and Management"
- "Funding" shifted to "Financial Resources"
- "Facilities" expanded to "Facilities, Technology, and Equipment"
- "Multicultural Programs and Services" was updated to "Diversity"
- "Evaluation" evolved into "Assessment and Evaluation"

These updates mirrored the growth in student affairs practice, particularly in assessment. For instance, *Assessment in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners* by Upcraft and Schuh (1996) became a foundational text in the field, providing a practical guide for implementing assessment. In the second edition, the CAS General Standards responded to this development by broadening the assessment-related statements. Reflecting CAS's emergence in the field, Upcraft and Schuh's chapter on measuring program effectiveness using professional standards offered details on the CAS standards and guidelines and the self-study process (Henning & Bentrim, 2022).

The 1997 second edition also introduced significant enhancements, including new contextual statements for each set of functional area standards; intended especially for those new to a functional area, these provided historical context, an overview of current practice, and resources for each area. A glossary of terms was also added to the book to enhance clarity. Perhaps the most important addition, though, was the articulation of guiding principles for the work of CAS. They "were derived from the theories and conceptual models in human development, learning, and administrators, student development educators, and student support service providers" (CAS, 1997, p. 7) and articulated the assumptions underlying the standards. These principles addressed students and their institutions; diversity and multiculturalism; organization, leadership, and human resources; health engendering environments; and ethical considerations. Foundational to these principles is a consistent set of values that guide the standards across various functional areas, ensuring coherence over time despite periodic reviews and revisions. The CAS standards, inherently value-driven, reflect these principles by integrating insights from historical documents and theoretical frameworks that have shaped the field (CAS, 1997). However, it should be noted that these principles primarily reflected American cultural values, which can impede their relevance and applicability in non-Western contexts.

### Growth and Development (2000-2014)

This period of CAS history saw a proliferation of research on the standards, calls to action, and a new focus on student learning outcomes. Five new editions of the CAS Blue Book were released and the number of functional area standards grew to 43, with 25 revised sets of standards (see the Appendix). This was a remarkable accomplishment, given that the first two editions took nearly 10 years each to produce. Additionally, the consortium expanded to comprise 42 member associations. The CAS portfolio expanded as well,

continuing to broaden beyond traditional student affairs areas to include, for example, health promotion, auxiliary services, and campus police and security programs.

Each edition of the Blue Book began with letters from the President and from the Editor; a review of those messages reflects both the consistent focus of the work of CAS and the continuously evolving landscape of higher education. In the 2001 "CAS President's Letter to the Profession," Don Creamer wrote:

> The story of CAS is told in this book. It is a story of love and pride of professionals for their work and their commitment to ensuring that maximum student learning and personal development is available to every student of American and Canadian higher education. It is a story of extraordinary collaboration among individuals who represent their professional associations and educational specialties to produce usable yardsticks by which professional programs and services can be judged. It is also a story of a remarkable alternative to external accreditation known as the CAS Approach. (p. v).

In the "Editor's Note," Miller (2001) reiterated his assertion that the CAS standards represented one of the most significant projects in the history of student affairs. He further described how CAS has played a significant role in advancing professional practice by providing standards that guide the development of student affairs programs, complementing the expanding body of professional knowledge and helping unify the efforts of higher education associations (CAS, 2001). In the following edition, in 2003, Miller reiterated that the CAS standards are living documents and will shift over time as student affairs programs and services evolve (CAS, 2003). Both Arminio in "CAS President's Letter to the Profession" and Dean in the "Editor's Note," reminded users in the 6th edition (2006) about the tedious yet important process of approving standards through a consensus model, which sometimes meant examining each standard line by line until all representatives agreed (CAS, 2006).

Key changes were introduced to the *CAS Blue Book* in 2006 and 2009, significantly expanding its scope. The 2006 edition added two important documents. The first, *CAS Characteristics of Individual Excellence for Professional Practice in Higher Education*, aimed to establish clear and agreed-upon traits expected of student affairs professionals, serving as a guide for both new and seasoned practitioners (CAS, 2006). The second addition was the *CAS Statement of Shared Ethical Principles*, which outlined the ethical standards shared across member associations. Both documents were developed by project committees within CAS, reflecting CAS's commitment to providing materials to help inform and broaden understanding of what constitutes good professional practice. In 2009, the General Standards expanded to 14 parts, with the addition of a new stand-alone section, Technology. This change acknowledged the growing impact of digital innovations on higher education, especially as the Millennial generation—accustomed to the internet, mobile phones, and social media—began to enroll in colleges and universities (Oblinger, 2003). Coleman et al. (2006) emphasized the need for further discussions on how technology would influence student affairs' foundational principles and the role of practitioners in effectively integrating these advancements.

**Research on CAS**

The establishment of CAS standards was crucial in the context of rising demands for accountability in higher education during the late 20th century. As government agencies and the public increasingly sought proof of educational quality, standards for student affairs became a timely tool to guide assessment and accreditation efforts. The core goal of CAS was to promote quality practices through consensus-based standards and guidelines, representing excellence in various functional areas in student affairs.

At the heart of CAS is the belief that quality educational practices can be achieved through self-assessment and self-regulation. This philosophy has informed the use of standards in diverse ways, including program and staff development, continuous improvement efforts, and self-studies to prepare for institutional accreditation. CAS standards provide a structured approach to planning, evaluating programs, advocating for institutional support, and offering a framework for ethical practice (Arminio & Gochenauer, 2004).

However, for these standards to be truly effective, two conditions must be met: practitioners must recognize them as key indicators of professional practice and professionals must possess the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the activities mandated by the standards (Cooper & Saunders, 2000). Arminio & Gochenauer (2004) highlighted the need for stronger advocacy for data-driven decision-making to enhance educational quality. Komives & Arminio (2011) believed that the greatest challenge for CAS was the promulgation of standards as they were still not fully integrated into preparation programs or practice.

Creamer (2003) argued that despite evidence of widespread use of the CAS standards, there was still inconclusive evidence that CAS standards led to improved educational practices or quality. He offered several CAS-related research questions that he challenged practitioners and graduate students to explore:

1. What is the level and use of CAS standards and guidelines by functional area, institutional type, and geographical region?
2. What is the type and frequency of use of CAS standards and guidelines by educational practitioners in student and academic affairs?
3. How does the use of CAS standards and guidelines shape professional practice?
4. What is the role of CAS standards and guidelines in shaping educational programs and services?
5. How does professional behavior influence student learning and development? (Creamer, 2003)

Some researchers responded to the call and investigated these questions. Arminio & Gochenauer (2004) explored who used CAS, how and why the standards were used, and whether they helped enhance student learning. Functional areas such as student conduct programs (Tschepikow et al., 2010), collegiate recreation programs (Young et al., 2014), academic advising (Keeling, 2010; Miller, 2012); assessment (Dean, 2013), and career services (Barbour, 2010) have been explored. Research has been conducted on professional practice (Dean & Jones, 2014), integrity (Komives & Arminio 2011), and preparation programs (Liddell et al., 2014; Wilson & Meyer, 2011; Young & Dean, 2015;

Young & Janosik, 2007). These studies vary in focus and design, and although some research has found positive effects of using CAS, Creamer's (2003) assertion that there is still insufficient evidence remains true.

**Student Learning and Development Outcomes**

As a new generation of students began their higher education journeys, colleges and universities faced increasing accountability demands, particularly regarding graduates' skills and knowledge to become engaged citizens. *Learning Reconsidered* (2004) advocated for an integrated approach to learning, emphasizing the development of the whole student and supporting a holistic learning process that extended beyond the classroom. Schuh and Gansemer-Topf (2010) noted that "student learning is not the result of discrete experiences but rather the product of many different kinds of experiences in and outside the classroom over an extended period of time" (p. 8).

In response to the growing emphasis on measuring learning outcomes in student affairs, CAS incorporated a stronger focus on student learning and development outcomes in 2003. The General Standards were expanded to include 16 outcome domains: Intellectual Growth, Effective Communication, Enhanced Self-Esteem, Realistic Self-Appraisal, Clarified Values, Career Choices, Leadership Development, Healthy Behavior, Meaningful Interpersonal Relationships, Independence, Collaboration, Social Responsibility, Satisfying and Productive Lifestyles, Appreciating Diversity, Spiritual Awareness, and Personal and Educational Goals (CAS, 2003). To further support these efforts, CAS introduced *Frameworks for Assessing Learning and Development Outcomes* (FALDOs) in 2006. This companion to the 6th edition of the CAS Blue Book provided strategies for assessing student outcomes based on the 16 domains, offering "insight into the theoretical constructs of each domain, relevant variables, assessment examples, and information about assessment, evaluation, and research tools, as well as additional resources" (CAS, 2006, p. 5).

Around CAS's 30th anniversary, a collaborative effort involving CAS directors, authors of *Learning Reconsidered 2*, practitioners, and student affairs faculty led to a revision of the student learning outcomes. This group reviewed multiple outcomes statements being used in the field and considered the CAS standards and guiding principles. The result was a revised framework that included six domains: Knowledge Acquisition, Construction, Integration, and Application; Cognitive Complexity; Intrapersonal Development; Interpersonal Competence; Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement; and Practical Competence (CAS, 2009). The 7th edition (2009) introduced a contextual statement on student learning and development, along with a detailed chart outlining domains, dimensions, and sample outcomes. The General Standards were updated to clearly emphasize student learning, stating:

- The formal education of students, consisting of the curriculum and the co-curriculum, must promote student learning and development outcomes that are purposeful and holistic that prepare students for satisfying and productive lifestyles, work, and civic participation.

- Programs and services must assess relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes and provide evidence of their impact on student learning and development. (CAS, 2009, p. 31)

**Maturation and Transformation (2015-2024)**

After 35 years, CAS continued not only to grow but also to mature and transform. The number of functional area standards expanded to 51, with 16 standards renamed and nearly all standards (48) undergoing significant revisions (see the Appendix). References to CAS could be found in nearly every major student affairs assessment text (e.g., Henning et al., 2023; Henning & Roberts, 2023; Schuh et al., 2016; Wise & Davenport, 2016) and in key resources such as National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and Student Affairs Assessment Leaders. The release of *Using the CAS Professional Standards: Diverse Examples of Practice* (Gulley et al., 2017) marked a significant milestone by dedicating an entire text to practical examples demonstrating the application of CAS standards. CAS also significantly expanded its resources beyond the CAS Blue Book, with the goals of increasing awareness of CAS and assisting practitioners in using the materials. Though not discussed in detail here, these resources include the second edition of the FALDOs, cross-functional and multi-functional frameworks, resource papers on CAS in practice, and graduate student and faculty resource packets. Further information is available at https://www.cas.edu.

The CAS Blue Book greatly expanded its content as well. The General Standards underwent several significant revisions, reflected in the 9th, 10th, and 11th versions. It should be noted that the revision schedule for the General Standards ramped up considerably during this period, with updates occurring every three to four years, significantly more frequently than in the first decades of CAS. Changes addressed the growth in online learning, issues of access and accountability, budget planning (CAS, 2015); expanded learning, development, and success outcomes standards and alignment with the assessment cycle (CAS, 2019); and offered an increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as indigenous and international perspectives (CAS, 2023). Increased numbers of external subject-area experts were involved in the revision processes, further honing the necessary standards for each part (CAS, 2019). The *CAS Student Learning and Development Outcomes Contextual Statement* was enhanced with a chart demonstrating the alignment with other nationally recognized outcome frameworks (CAS, 2015). The introductory information of the CAS Blue Book was revised and included two new chapters: *The Case for CAS*, including fundamental information about the standards, review of the guiding principles, characteristics of CAS work, and current issues, and *Putting CAS to Work*, a detailed review of how to use CAS, including the steps in the self-assessment process (CAS, 2015).

In both 2015 and 2023, the self-assessment process steps were revised and refined to better support ongoing improvement and align with evolving assessment practices. The 2015 revisions to the self-assessment process introduced additional preparatory steps focused on planning, which included ensuring stakeholder buy-in and support, as well as explicitly identifying the intended outcomes of the study. Furthermore, in 2023, greater

emphasis was placed on the importance of continuous improvement, reflecting the evolving field of assessment. The updated steps are as follows: plan the process; assemble and educate the self-assessment team; identify, collect, and organize evidence; conduct and interpret ratings using evaluative evidence; develop an action plan; prepare a report; and implement improvements. The Self-Assessment Guides were updated to better mirror current accreditation processes, in which criteria had shifted from a focus on discrete inputs (e.g., number of programs, residence hall capacity) to a focus on outcomes, locally defined and assessed (CAS, 2023).

**Guiding Principles and CAS General Standards Format**

In addition to updating the guidance for implementing self-assessments, CAS also reviewed and reconsidered some of its fundamental elements. For instance, CAS's guiding principles, initially articulated in 1997, encompassed sixteen statements across five principles that were developed based on foundational theories and conceptual frameworks in human development and the practices of student affairs educators and professionals (CAS, 1997). These principles primarily referenced seminal documents, including the *Student Personnel Point of View* (1938 & 1949) and the *Student Learning Imperative* (1996), and they were intended to demonstrate the core philosophical beliefs that informed the development of the standards. In 2019, CAS updated these principles to incorporate more recent student development research (Table 1). At the same time, the General Standards were reorganized into twelve parts, reordered, and grouped to reflect their alignment with these foundational principles (Table 1).

In the CAS 2019 Blue Book, a *CAS Standards Parts Definitions* document was added, providing definitions and descriptions for each of the twelve parts, intended to help users understand the focus and purpose of each part. This document also included an outline of the subsections within each part, reflecting a major revision to the organization of the General Standards and helping to streamline and clarify their structure (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**. *Excerpt from CAS Standards and Guidelines Parts Definitions* (CAS, 2019, p. 20)



**Part 1. Mission**
This section identifies the purpose and essential characteristics of the functional area. It may also provide guidance on themes that are important to include in a mission statement for the functional area. Guidelines in this section may provide insight into how the functional area's scope varies depending on institutional type or context. This section does not include details of specific program elements and/or services provided by the functional area.

*1.1 Programs and Services Mission*

*1.2 Mission Statement*

**Part 2. Program and Services**
This section explains how the functional area is structured and what it does. It further outlines programs, services, and/or resources provided by the functional area, including pivotal aspects of the function's performance.

*2.1 Program and Services Goals*

*2.2 Program Information and Services*
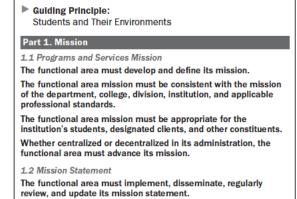
*2.3 Program Structure and Framework*

*2.4 Program Design*

**Table 1**. *Overview of the Updated Guiding Principles (CAS, 2019)*

| Guiding Principle | Rationale | Research Support | Alignment of General Standards with Guiding Principles |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students and Their Environments | "The whole student is shaped by environments that provide learning opportunities reflective of society and diversity, with students having ultimate responsibility for learning" (CAS, 2019, p. 4) | Abes et al. (2007) Astin (1993) Miller & Prince (1976) Strange & Banning (2015) Tinto (1987) | Part 1. Mission Part 2. Programs and Services Part 3. Student Learning, Development, and Success Part 4. Assessment |
| Advocating for Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Communities | "Institutions embracing diversity, equity, inclusion and eliminating barriers with respect for differences and focused on culturally responsible communities" (CAS, 2019, p. 4). | ACPA & NASPA (2015) Jenkins & Walton (2008) Jones (2008) Kinzie & Mulholland (2008) Museus & Smith (2016) Quaye et al. (2008) Strayhorn (2012) | Part 5. Access, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice |
| Organization, Leadership, and Human Resources | "Quality leaders continuously challenge themselves for the betterment of the organization, with success directly correlated to clarity of mission and willingness to see through multiple lenses" (CAS, 2019, p. 4) | ACPA & NASPA (2015) Bolman & Deal (2017) Cross (1981) Manning (2013) | Part 6. Leadership Part 7. Human Resources Part 8. Collaboration and Communication |
| Ethical Considerations | "Educators exhibit impeccable ethical behavior in professional and personal life" (CAS, 2019, p. 4) | ACPA & NASPA (2015) CAS (2006) | Part 9. Ethics, Law, and Policy |
| Learning-Conducive Structures, Resources, and Systems | "Student learning and development flourish when structures, resources, and systems are employed intentionally to create environments that provide students with appropriate challenge and necessary support" (CAS, 2019, p. 4). | ACPA (1996) Strange & Banning (2015) | Part 10. Financial Resources Part 11. Technology Part 12. Facilities and Infrastructure |

Figure 2 illustrates how the outlines introduced in the Parts Definitions section (shown above in Figure 1) are utilized as headings in the General Standards, followed by the related standards statements. As noted earlier, these General Standards appear verbatim in and form the framework for all functional area standards. Additional standards specific to the functional area are then added to detail good practice in that area (Figure 3). Figure 3 expands on this by demonstrating how the structure is applied in functional areas, using the Assessment Services Standards as an example.

**Figure 2**
*Excerpt from the CAS General Standards* (CAS, 2019, p. 26)

> ▶ **Guiding Principle:**
> Students and Their Environments
>
> **Part 1. Mission**
>
> *1.1 Programs and Services Mission*
> The functional area must develop and define its mission.
>
> The functional area mission must be consistent with the mission of the department, college, division, institution, and applicable professional standards.
>
> The functional area mission must be appropriate for the institution's students, designated clients, and other constituents.
>
> Whether centralized or decentralized in its administration, the functional area must advance its mission.
>
> *1.2 Mission Statement*
> The functional area must implement, disseminate, regularly review, and update its mission statement.
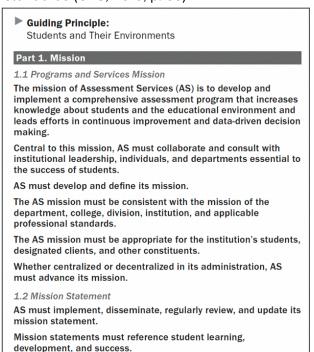>
> Mission statements must reference student learning, development, and success.

**Figure 3**
*Excerpt from the Assessment Services Standards* (CAS, 2019, p. 53)

> ▶ **Guiding Principle:**
> Students and Their Environments
>
> **Part 1. Mission**
>
> *1.1 Programs and Services Mission*
> The mission of Assessment Services (AS) is to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment program that increases knowledge about students and the educational environment and leads efforts in continuous improvement and data-driven decision making.
>
> Central to this mission, AS must collaborate and consult with institutional leadership, individuals, and departments essential to the success of students.
>
> AS must develop and define its mission.
>
> The AS mission must be consistent with the mission of the department, college, division, institution, and applicable professional standards.
>
> The AS mission must be appropriate for the institution's students, designated clients, and other constituents.
>
> Whether centralized or decentralized in its administration, AS must advance its mission.
>
> *1.2 Mission Statement*
> AS must implement, disseminate, regularly review, and update its mission statement.
>
> Mission statements must reference student learning, development, and success.

This structure—highlighting the relevant Guiding Principle and incorporating the parts and section headings from the General Standards—ensures consistency across all functional area standards. This uniform approach aids users in comprehending and effectively applying the standards in various contexts.

**Legacy, Change, and the Current CAS Standards**

Reflecting on the original General Standards, it is remarkable to see the legacy and impact of the initial framework. Although some wording has evolved, most parts' names remain unchanged, with the major additions being Student Learning, Development, and Success and Technology (both of which received attention in the original document, but were contained in other sections), reflecting areas of significant growth in student affairs. This consistency demonstrates the thoughtful and intentional work of the original CAS Council. The Standards continue to be hallmarks of good practice in higher education, with their enduring structure underscoring the depth, breadth, and quality of CAS's contributions to the field.

Additionally, in a recent review of the Student Learning and Development Domains and Dimensions, expert practitioners, scholars, and faculty in higher education and student affairs contributed to updating the dimensions within these domains. The revisions include new focus areas such as adaptability, identity exploration and development, teamwork, understanding and embracing intercultural and human differences, career readiness, and maintaining health and well-being (CAS, 2023). Although the changes to the learning and development outcomes were not drastic, they underscore CAS's commitment to continuously gathering collective expertise and ensuring that its standards remain grounded in and reflective of current practices in the field.

Significant changes were introduced in the 2023 edition of the CAS Blue Book; a major modification is that successive revisions are now referred to as 'versions' to reflect the shift to a fully digital format. With the rapid evolution of CAS and the adoption of new technology, the organization can now update the publication more frequently rather than waiting several years to produce a new publication. This change allows for timely inclusion of new standards, such as the recently introduced 'Campus Stores' and 'Basic Needs,' which brings the total number of functional area standards to 52 (CAS News & Notes, 2024).

## The Future

As CAS approaches its 50th anniversary, it is an opportune time to write about its history, mission, and purpose, and consider how its practices have remained aligned with these foundations. When CAS was first established, it addressed a significant gap in student affairs by providing much-needed standards for practice, based on consensus from professional organizations representing a wide range of functional areas. Over time, the General Standards have expanded significantly—from around 30 original "must" statements to approximately 250 in the current version. The latest publication, while now digital, spans over 1,100 pages compared to the original 109 pages.

The field of student affairs has certainly evolved, and student support services have expanded throughout higher education; CAS has continually adapted in response. Nonetheless, there remain areas for further exploration, particularly the questions posed by Creamer (2003), which continue to be largely unaddressed in the literature. In 2004, Arminio and Gochenauer identified the need to better market and disseminate the CAS standards to a wider audience of professionals. This observation remains relevant today, as CAS works to expand training opportunities, explore additional ways to support users, and enhance its online and social media presence to increase visibility and accessibility (CAS, 2023).

CAS has survived and served higher education for nearly a half-century. It has done so through the commitment of professional associations to the idea of collaboration and the value of shared standards and through the dedication of representatives from those organizations to accomplish the work of coming to consensus about what good practice means in our work. As this important milestone approaches, it is evident that the impact of CAS on student affairs and higher education is profound. CAS (2023) aptly states that "the

articulation and application of these standards have empowered professionals to create quality programs and services that support and ultimately lead to student learning, success, and development" (p. 13). The organization's ongoing focus on the promulgation of standards and quality assurance demonstrates its commitment to continuous growth and adaptation in an ever-changing landscape. The CAS founders had a vision and a belief that given the right materials, professionals would employ them to conduct rigorous self-assessment to improve programs and services and, ultimately, to foster positive outcomes for students. While the work is never done, nearly 50 years of facilitating collaboration, conversation, and consensus across professional perspectives has resulted in a valuable professional resource that is solidly grounded, regularly updated, and intentionally reflective of what it looks like to engage in good practice for the benefit of our students, our colleagues, and our institutions.

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**Appendix**
**Timeline and Overview of Changes to the *CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education***

This table complements the article *The Evolution of the CAS Standards: Forty-Five Years of Collaboration and Consensus* by providing an at-a-glance summary of changes to the CAS standards over the last forty-five years. It outlines the number of standards in each edition, when new functional area standards were introduced, name changes to existing standards, and highlights of key revisions. Further context and detailed explanations of these updates can be found in the main article.

| Year and Edition* | Number of Standards | New Functional Area Standards | Name Changes (*with former name*) | Key Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1986 | 16 | 1. Academic Advising<br>2. Career Planning and Placement<br>3. College Unions<br>4. Commuter Student Programs<br>5. Counseling Services<br>6. Disabled Student Services<br>7. Fraternity and Sorority Advising<br>8. Housing and Residential Life Programs<br>9. Judicial Programs and Services<br>10. Learning Assistance Programs<br>11. Minority Student Programs and<br>12. Recreational Sports<br>13. Religious Programs and Services<br>14. Research and Evaluation<br>15. Student Activities<br>16. Student Orientation<br>17. Preparation Standards and Guidelines at the Master's Degree Level for Student Services/Development Professional in Postsecondary Education | | |

| Year and Edition* | Number of Standards | New Functional Area Standards | Name Changes (*with former name*) | Key Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1997 | 24 | 1. Admission Programs<br>2. Alcohol and Other Drug Programs<br>3. Financial Aid Programs<br>4. International Student Programs and Services<br>5. Registrar Programs and Services<br>6. Student Leadership Programs<br>7. Women Student Programs and Services | • Campus Activities<br> o *Student Activities*<br>• Counseling Programs<br> o *Counseling Services*<br>• Disability Support Services<br> o *Disabled Student Services*<br>• Outcomes Assessment and Program Evaluation<br> o *Research and Evaluation*<br>• Masters Level Student Affairs Administration Preparation Programs<br> o *Preparation Standards and Guidelines at the Master's Degree Level for Student Services/Development Professional in Postsecondary Education* | • All previous functional area standards and guidelines were revised and updated<br>• *The Context* was written to describe the fundamental principles of the CAS Standards, the steps of a self-study process, and the history, role, and function of CAS.<br>• This marked the first time *Contextual Statements* introduced the functional area standards and guidelines<br>• Added *Glossary of Terms* |
| 1999 | 25 | 1. TRIO and Other Educational Opportunity Programs | | • 2 revised standards |
| 2001 (2nd revised ed.) | 29 | 1. Campus Information and Visitor Services<br>2. College Health Programs<br>3. Educational Services for Distance Learners<br>4. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Programs and Services | • Career Services<br> o *Career Planning and Placement* | • 1 revised standard |

| Year and Edition* | Number of Standards | New Functional Area Standards | Name Changes (*with former name*) | Key Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2003 (3rd ed.) | 30 | 1. Conference and Event Programs | • Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Programs<br>  o *Alcohol and Other Drug Programs*<br>• Orientation Programs<br>  o *Student Orientation Programs*<br>• Leadership Programs<br>  o *Student Leadership Programs* | • 3 revised standards<br>• General Standards revision included new emphasis on student learning and development; Program section included 16 student learning and development outcome domains.<br>• The *CAS General Standards* were again included; they were excluded from the printed book in 1997 & 1999. |
| 2006 (6th ed.) | 35 | 1. College Honor Societies<br>2. Education Abroad<br>3. Health Promotion<br>4. Internships<br>5. Service-Learning | • Campus Religious and/or Spiritual Programs<br>  o *Religious Programs*<br>• Clinical Health<br>  o *College Health Programs*<br>• Distance Education Programs<br>  o *Educational Services for Distance Learners*<br>• Multicultural Student Programs<br>  o *Minority Student Programs and Services*<br>• Student Conduct<br>  o *Judicial Programs and Services* | • 9 revised standards<br>• Two new documents were introduced – *CAS Characteristics of Individual Excellence* and the *CAS Statement of Shared Ethical Principles*.<br>• Since this was the 6th iteration of the "CAS Blue Book" – the edition count was updated to reflect that. |

| Year and Edition* | Number of Standards | New Functional Area Standards | Name Changes (*with former name*) | Key Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2009 (7th ed.) | 40 | 1. Adult Learner Programs<br>2. Auxiliary Services<br>3. Dining Services<br>4. Graduate and Professional Student Programs<br>5. Undergraduate Research Programs | ● Assessment Services<br>  ○ *Outcome Assessment and Program Evaluation* | ● 9 revised standards<br>● The 16-student learning and development outcomes, with slight wording revisions, were grouped into six broad categories called domains.<br>● *CAS Learning and Development Outcomes* added as a chapter with a contextual statement and detailed chart that included domains, dimensions, and examples of outcomes.<br>● The number of General Standards parts expanded to 14, with Technology as a new standalone part. |
| 2012 (8th ed.) | 43 | 1. Campus Police and Security Programs<br>2. Parent and Family Programs<br>3. Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Prevention Programs<br>4. Transfer Student Programs<br>5. Veterans and Military Programs and Services | ● Undergraduate Admissions<br>  ○ *Admission Programs and Services* | ● 7 revised standards<br>● The General Standards were revised to align with ACPA/NASPA competencies.<br>● Distance Education as a stand-alone functional area was removed and embedded into the General Standards.<br>● The General Standards sections were reduced to 12 by combining parts where common or related items existed (Equity and Access and Diversity combined into one part; Organization and Management and Leadership combined into Organization and Leadership) |

| Year and Edition* | Number of Standards | New Functional Area Standards | Name Changes (*with former name*) | Key Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2015 (9th ed.) | 44 | | • Alcohol and Other Drug Programs<br>  o *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Programs*<br>• Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Programs<br>  o *Service-Learning*<br>• Sexual Violence-Related Programs and Services<br>  o *Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Prevention Programs*<br>• Women's and Gender Programs and Services<br>  o *Women Student Programs & Services* | • 12 revised standards<br>• Financial Aid was added back; it was omitted from the 2012 edition as it had not been revised in many years<br>• Introductory chapters were revised and included two new chapters, *The Case for CAS* and *Putting CAS to Work*<br>• Updated the *CAS Learning and Development Outcomes Contextual Statement* to include a chart demonstrating alignment with other national recognized outcome frameworks.<br>• General Standards revisions addressed growth in online learning, issues of access and accountability, and budget planning.<br>• The steps in the self-assessment process introduced additional preparatory steps focused on planning, ensuring stakeholder buy-in, and explicitly identifying the intended outcomes of the study.<br>• *CAS Blue Book* available both in print and as an eBook |

| Year and Edition* | Number of Standards | New Functional Area Standards | Name Changes (*with former name*) | Key Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 (10th ed.) | 46 | 1. Case Management Services<br>2. Student Media Programs<br>3. Testing Programs and Services | ● Campus Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Programs<br>　○ *Campus Religious and/or Spiritual Programs*<br>● Collegiate Recreation Programs<br>　○ *Recreational Sports*<br>● Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ Programs and Services<br>　○ *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Programs and Services*<br>● Post-Traditional and Commuter Student Programs and Services<br>　○ *Transfer Student Programs; Adult Learner Programs*<br>● TRIO and College Access Programs<br>　○ *TRIO and Other Educational Opportunity Programs*<br>● Veterans and Military-Connected Programs and Services<br>　○ *Veterans and Military Programs and Services* | ● 21 revised standards<br>● Updated the Underlying Fundamental Principles (e.g. students and their environments; advocating for diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities; and learning-conducive structures, resources, and systems.<br>● General Standards revisions addressed expanding learning, development, and success outcomes and alignment with the assessment cycle.<br>● General Standards were reorganized into twelve parts, reordered, and grouped to reflect their alignment with these foundational principles.<br>● *CAS Standards Parts Definition* document was added, providing detailed definitions for each of the twelve parts. This document also included an outline of the subsections within each part, reflecting a major revision to the organization of the General Standards and helping to streamline and clarify their structure.<br>● Student Learning, Development, and Success was added as a standalone part in the General Standards.<br>● *CAS Characteristics of Individual Excellence* and *CAS Statement of Shared Ethical Principles* moved exclusively to the website |

| Year and Edition* | Number of Standards | New Functional Area Standards | Name Changes (*with former name*) | Key Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2023 (Version 11) | 50 | 1. Campus Credential Programs and Services<br>2. eSports Programs<br>3. Indigenous Student Affairs<br>4. Sustainability Programs | • Campus Police and Public Safety<br>  o *Campus Police and Security Programs*<br>• College Unions: Programs, Services, & Community Center<br>  o *College Unions*<br>• Collegiate Information and Visitor Services<br>  o *Campus Information and Visitor Services*<br>• Leadership Education and Development<br>  o *Student Leadership Programs*<br>• Master's Level Higher Education and Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programs<br>  o *Masters Level Student Affairs Administration Preparation Programs*<br>• New Student Orientation Programs<br>  o *Student Orientation Programs* | • 15 revised standards<br>• The CAS Blue Book moved to a fully digital format to allow CAS to update the publication more frequently and to allow for timely inclusion of new standards.<br>• Added *Understanding Aspects of Identity in the CAS Standards* to the front matter of the Book.<br>• General Standards revisions offered an increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion with additions related to international and indigenous voices, as well as program theory and implementation fidelity, culture of assessment, and the difference between learning and program outcomes.<br>• Contributors and expert information included for standards as well as contextual statements.<br>• The self-assessment steps updated as follows: plan the process; assemble and educate the team; identify, collect, and organize evidence; conduct and interpret ratings; develop an action plan; prepare a report; and implement improvements. |
| 2024 (Version 11.1) | 51 | 1. Campus Stores | | |

\* The numbering system has changed over time, and the table reflects the original labeling used at the time of publication.