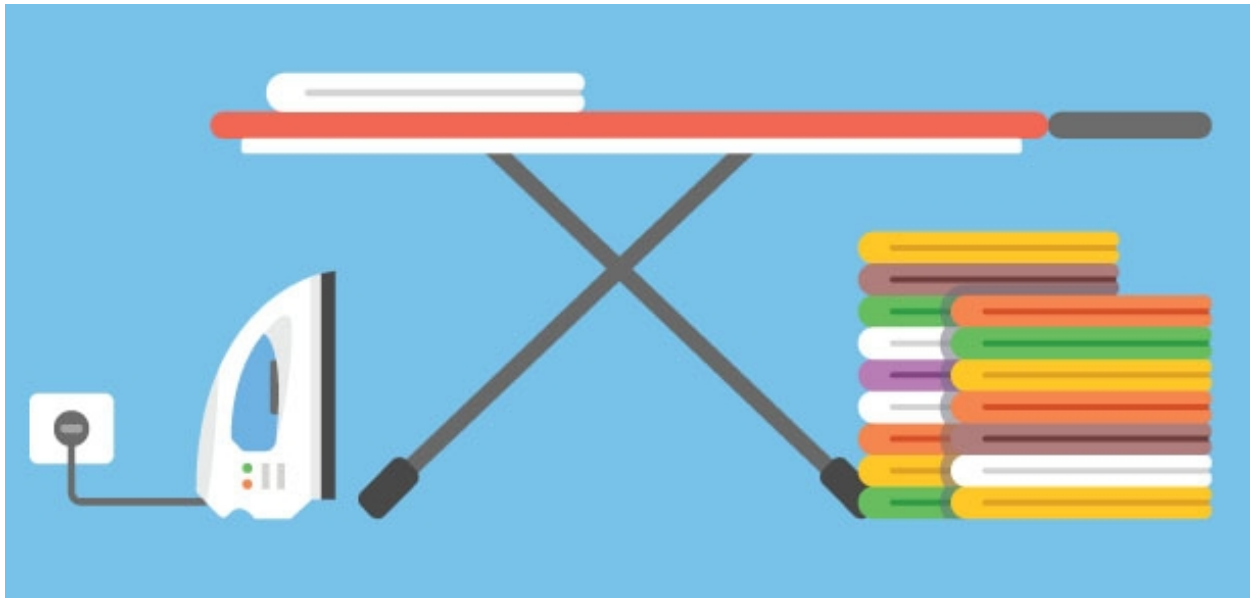


The Campus Laundry

Is It Time ... For a KISS?



Written by
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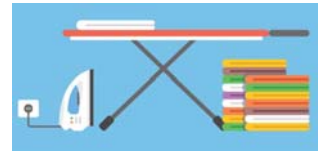
Interview with
Robert C. Huber, CMC, CPCM
Campus Card Business Consultant

While laundry isn't typically seen as a life-saving service, it does – like any superhero – have an origin story. Campus Card Industry Consultant, **Robert C. Huber**, has seen the campus laundry evolve to reflect changing college life.

“At the onset of campus laundry, most campuses used coins, re-usable or single-use tokens, and rechargeable or throw away cards,” Huber says.

The days of coin payment are for the most part behind us – and for good reason. “At that time, institutions deployed labor-intensive change machines either in each laundry room or for security reasons in the residence hall lobby,” Huber recalls. “This meant that front desks had to keep lots of change handy – again, a security risk and a labor intensive process.”

Whether done by the university, a laundry machine contractor, or a third-party coin



collector, the single greatest problem with coin-based devices is the collection process.

“Reconciliation of coins has always been laborious and requires auditing and verification that the cash retrieved matches the transactions,” explains Huber. And, of course, pilferage was a concern and vandalism of coin-laden machines was not uncommon.

As an alternative, many campuses opted to add a thin magnetic stripe, often called a vending or junk stripe, to their campus card to enable offline stored value payments. This allowed them to utilize the student ID card instead of requiring students to carry a dedicated laundry card, Huber says. “But this strategy necessitated the purchase and secure mounting of cash-to-card machines for the secondary stripe,” he adds.

Most cash-to-card machines required the acceptance of bills and posed an increased security risk of break-ins wherever the machines were located, and carried hefty cash-handling expenses. These eventually were replaced by or complemented with automatic debit machines (ADMs) that facilitated revalue using credit or debit cards.

As another alternative, campuses began incorporating laundry payments into a “flexible spending” account (FLEX) program. This alleviated some of the security concerns and increased profitability, and added another valuable utility to the campus card program.

There were also growing pains in the wiring of laundry machines. “If the patch cord running between the reader and the washer wasn’t engineered properly to the individual machine, then sometimes the water would fail to shut off, causing floods in the laundry room,” says Huber. “In the mid 1980s, many washing machine brands were different and campus personnel had to custom engineer readers for each brand. Subsequently, vendors soon developed and began providing more high-tech laundry controllers.”

In the years since, many campuses have continued to accept both cash and electronic forms of payment. However, as a Best Practice today, Huber sees little reason to maintain antiquated and hold-over technology for tech-savvy Mobile Millennials.

- Campuses should accept ONLY electronic forms of payment (campus card or bank card) - thus eliminating all forms of cash in residence hall laundries, or
- Campuses can simply assess a mandatory resident LAUNDRY FEE - with unlimited laundry machine access.

Huber summarizes, "A Laundry Fee is by far the best **K.I.S.S.** winning strategy (**Keep It Superbly Simple**) for everyone – thereby reducing long-term institution costs, laundry machine vulnerability (theft), and reinforces campus safety priorities ... with a net Win-Win-Win-Win solution for institutions, contractors, parents and students.”



About the author

Robert C. Huber is a certified, vendor independent campus card business consultant, life-long entrepreneur and publisher of the “**Campus Card Industry Business Forecast**” found at www.AllCampusCard.com/forecast.

In 1985, he developed a single multi-application “**All-Campus Card**” designed to last for four years. Huber also promoted campus card offices, marketing them as “one-stop shopping centers,” at a time when institutions were issuing numerous department cards, keys, stickers and punch cards – all valid for less than a year.

Huber has since assisted over 300 academic, healthcare and corporate campuses with the implementation of meal plan, food production, point-of-sale, vending, parking, door access, merchant and multi-application campus card transaction systems.

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