Miami University: Facing Challenging Times by Creating an Engaged Culture and Embracing Systemic Change through Lean Methodologies

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Abstract

Miami University is a public university located in Oxford, Oh. Miami is distinguished by its attention to undergraduate education. The relationship between faculty and students, its high quality educational experience and the setting has earned it the title “Public Ivy.”

The financial crisis of 2008, coupled with severe cuts in state funding and a frozen tuition structure, required Miami to find ways to continue its high standards and levels of service while simultaneously reducing the budget.

The Division of Finance and Business Services, including Housing, Dining, Recreational and Business Services (HDRBS), Physical Facilities, Human Resources, University Budget Office, Environmental Health and Safety, Miami University Police Department, Finance, Treasury Services, and Internal Audits and Consulting Services, accepted this challenge and embarked on a journey of continuous improvement by utilizing the Lean methodology.

The Division of Finance and Business Services significantly impacted the Miami culture by implementing change using the Lean methodology. The sustainability of this effort was ensured by:

- Identifying “breakthrough goals”
- Creating a training program that reached every new employee and provided options to existing employees up to and including Lean Leader Certification
- Providing a supporting structure of interconnected Steering Committees which approved, monitored and provided resources to the project teams
- Initiating University-wide communications celebrating the success of the project teams.

Before long, other Divisions within the University were seeking training and guidance to implement their own Lean initiatives.

In the three years that Miami has practiced Lean we’ve seen 71 projects completed, 69 currently in process and another 32 slated to start in the near future. In Finance and Business Services alone, our completed projects have increased revenue by $1.8M, avoided $2.1M in costs and reduced costs by over $2.2M. Additionally, over 80% of the projects improve productivity and another 50% of the projects have a “green” or sustainability aspect to them.

These extraordinary results along with their positive cultural impact can be achieved by any College or University that is serious about its mission and wants to provide a systemic and engaging approach to change by using the Lean methodology.
Introduction

Miami University is a public university located in Oxford, Ohio. The University was founded in 1809 and is the 33rd oldest college or university in the nation. Robert Frost once described the Oxford campus as “the most beautiful campus that ever there was.”

Over 16,000 undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled on the Oxford campus in more than 100 majors and pre-professional study programs. Miami is distinguished from other public or large universities by a faculty that loves to teach and mentor students, its vibrant residential and community-based programs, and the large number of undergraduate students who participate with faculty in significant research or other scholarly activities and engage in international and hands-on experiences.

Miami’s commitment to teaching and the personal attention it provides to its students is unusual for a large public university and leads to extraordinary retention and graduation rates that are among the highest in the nation. It is not surprising that Miami has been described as a “Public Ivy” and is routinely listed as one of America’s outstanding undergraduate institutions.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

In 2009 Miami, like most other colleges and universities, faced significant financial challenges that threatened its financial stability and the quality of its students’ educational experiences. The downturn in the national economy resulted in significant investment losses for both the endowment and operating fund and a drop in tuition revenue from a decline in non-resident enrollment. These revenue losses were made worse by a 21% reduction in the University’s state appropriation that followed a few
months later. This reduction in state support was over and above six consecutive years of cuts from FY 2001 – 2007. By fiscal year 2011 the University’s state appropriation had been reduced to an amount that was appropriated over 20 years earlier. Besides the revenue losses, the University continued to face other challenges such as accumulated deferred maintenance for its housing and dining facilities.

While these financial problems were not unique to Miami, the options that were available for addressing them were much more limited than those available to most universities. For decades Miami had been one of, if not, the most expensive public university in the country. Ohio’s long history of low state support and high tuition reached a breaking point in 2007 when for three consecutive years Miami froze its Ohio residents’ tuition while many other public universities around the nation were implementing double digit tuition increases. Even as tuition began to rise again at Miami in 2010, annual increases were held to half of the historic rate with future increases to be reduced even further to no more than 2% per year. Unlike many other public universities, Miami was not able to offset any of its historic revenue loss through increases in student tuition.

Facing both immediate revenue losses and significantly slower revenue growth going forward, Miami needed to reduce its budget immediately while continuing to achieve annual cost savings and productivity improvements. Further complicating the long-term financial outlook was the University’s long standing reputation for high quality programs and services or the value proposition it has had with students and families for decades. This meant that the budget cuts and ongoing cost savings would have to be
accomplished without harming historic service levels or further enrollment losses beyond the likely temporary decline in nonresident enrollment.

A series of budget cuts heavily focused (four times as large) on finance, business and information technology operations were immediately implemented followed by a series of additional cuts over the following three years. The immediate impact for the Finance and Business Services operations was a reduction of about 250 positions or almost 19% of its staff across all operations. And before these operations could recover from the initial staff reductions, an additional 4% staff reduction followed over the next three years. In addition to the staff reductions, employee benefit and energy reductions were also needed and left to the division to implement as it was coping with the staffing cuts.

While the immediate problem was how to reduce staff while maintaining service levels, the more significant challenge was how to continue to improve productivity and achieve additional savings /cost avoidances going forward. One thing was clear as the Finance and Business Service operations began to address these issues, they would need to approach their work very differently. If such a daunting set of challenges were to be successfully addressed, the solution would have to include everyone within the division.

Collaboration between the Finance and Business Services operations and a surprising partner, the Center for Competitive Change at the University of Dayton, would set Miami University on a path of tremendous change in how it operates and delivers service. By fully embracing Lean principles and the “Toyota Way,” Finance and Business Services is conducting business very differently today. This Division is producing substantial improvements in productivity while maintaining or improving service levels. More
importantly, through the leadership and trail blazing provided by Miami’s Finance and Business Services’ staff, the Lean philosophy is spreading to other areas of the University and is gradually being woven into the Miami culture.

**Design**

The Division of Finance and Business Services at Miami includes the following departments:

- Housing, Dining, Business and Recreational Services (HDRBS)
- Physical Facilities
- Human Resources
- Finance
- University Budget
- Internal Audit
- Miami Police
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Treasury

HDRBS adopted the Lean methodology in late 2009 in response to staffing reductions brought about by the 2008 economic crisis. Initially, the following five goals, known as the “Breakthrough Objectives,” were identified:

1. Increase Revenue
2. Lower Costs
3. Avoid unnecessary spending
4. Increase productivity and develop metrics for measuring the improved productivity

5. Adopt sustainable practices that positively impact the environment while leading to improved efficiency

Several successful projects were completed during the first year but Lean was more of a slogan for the improvements that were occurring, rather than a sustainable, continuous improvement philosophy.

At this time a consultant from the Center for Competitive Change at the University of Dayton, Al Ryan, was hired to assist HDRBS in building its Lean culture. Within a matter of months, the employment of Lean within HDRBS was strengthened through staff training and a much improved understanding of the Lean approach and tools. The strategic linking of real projects to the training ensured that several projects were quickly undertaken and completed, multiplying the number of staff involved in Lean. The use of cross-functional staff and “fresh eyes” on the teams helped to quickly spread the understanding of Lean to areas outside of HDRBS and the Finance and Business Services division.

The results from this second adoption of Lean were so immediate and substantial that the consultant’s role was quickly expanded to the Physical Facilities Department and from there to the entire division.

As Lean was expanded throughout the Finance and Business Services division, the initial focus was on improving service levels that were negatively impacted by the deep reductions in staff. There was also the recognition that this philosophy would need to
guide operations well beyond these initial service level improvements. Early in the adoption of Lean there was an additional emphasis placed on building an independent and sustainable Lean culture within the division. This cultural change included the development of in-house trainers and staff development programs, staff recognition and reward programs, leadership opportunities, and strong mentoring programs.

While Lean has many processes and tools associated with it, Lean projects are addressed in work teams. Essentially the Lean methodology can be described as following a particular path that is described below:

1. Identify the current state - This part of the process results in the development of a detailed flow chart that illustrates each step of a work process, documents what is accomplished at each step and determines the value of each step to the whole.

2. Identify the future state - The team then embarks on the creative phase of the process where the team redesigns the process to achieve the work more efficiently or effectively. Accompanying this step are interviews with stakeholders, assessments of the needs of both the organization and the stakeholders, and pilots to determine the best way to proceed. Of particular interest are areas in the current process that represent waste or inefficiency. The end result or future state is a process that should fulfill one or more of the breakthrough objectives, resulting in a more effective and efficient process.

3. Implementation – The team then turns its attention to “making it happen.” Some projects, like streamlining and automating garnishments, can be implemented quickly because they only affect the way a single department does business and
are relatively invisible to the rest of the organization. Other projects, like eliminating shadow systems developed by departments to manage their personnel budgets, are incredibly complex and take up to a year before they are implemented due to the technology requirements, the training needs, and the far reaching systemic change it represents.

**Implementation**

What began as a modest experiment in continuous improvement to address financial stress within HDRBS has grown into a well-defined, well-developed, multi-divisional approach to change. Implementation included several strategies: developing a structure that would sustain Lean efforts, designing appropriate training to accommodate the large number of participants, formalizing the Miami Lean Certification Program, and finally, developing communication structures which simultaneously celebrated success and invited staff to become more engaged in this new culture.

The expansion of Lean throughout Finance and Business Services division began with a two-day training session for groups of about 30 key leaders from the division of Finance and Business Services and a small number of managers and directors from other areas of the University. Each participant was required to identify at least five (5) possible projects in advance of the training and to focus on these projects during the training. Six (6) projects were selected from the initial list, further developed during the training, and immediately undertaken by cross functional teams. Each team had to immediately schedule its first team meeting along with homework assignments as part of the training session.
As expected, these early efforts were perceived by many as another way to identify additional layoffs and were viewed as a threat to an already demoralized workforce. These fears were eventually put to rest by the very nature of the teams. The teams were represented by every level of the organization from entry level custodial and food service personnel to directors and vice presidents. Miami’s mission, an engaged university focused on student success, guided each team’s work.

From this modest beginning, Lean became almost infectious in the way it spread within Finance and Business Services but its continued success required the leadership of the division to organize and prioritize activity, while maintaining enthusiasm for the Lean effort. This was accomplished through the creation of one (1) divisional and three (3) departmental Steering Teams that meet monthly to review and prioritize the projects and support the project teams as issues and problems arise.

The next step to create a permanent foundation for the Lean culture was to ensure that the existing success could be sustained once the consultants were no longer involved. This was accomplished by establishing a Director of Lean Initiatives, developing a series of training sessions, and launching a Lean Certification Program. To date trainings are in place to respond to every level of Lean involvement. A one (1) hour training session on Lean concepts and processes is part of our new employee orientation. A two (2) hour training prepares employees to serve on teams by introducing practical instruction in Lean principles and tools. Those assuming leadership roles on teams are prepared by an in-depth two (2) day seminar, and finally, 40 employees were selected to participate in a 24-30 month Lean Certification Program that is a collaboration between the Center for Competitive Change at the University of
Dayton and Miami’s Staff Development Department. More information on the certification program can be found at Appendix A.

Beyond preparing employees and building expertise, Miami needed to “fit” Lean into the operational structures within the various departments. As mentioned before, Steering Committees directed the work at the divisional Finance and Business Services level and in each of the departments. Pre-existing leadership team meetings were now focused on directing, assessing and promulgating Lean efforts across the division.

Opportunities for employees to assume more responsibility for the change efforts and mentor other staff of the University were realized by the creation of supplemental positions as Department and Divisional Lean Leaders. We opened application for Department Lean Leaders in December, 2012 and now have four (4) Department Lean Leaders devoted to promoting Lean in the Finance and Business Services Division. For more information on Department and Divisional Lean Leaders see Appendix B.

The third effort with respect to implementation has to do with accountability and communication. We use a pre-existing staff development tracking program to document the Lean team participation, workshop attendance, and progress in the Lean Certification Program.

Monthly project status reports record valuable information including Lean project goals, outcomes associated with the project including cost savings and revenue generation, the team members, and the current status of the project. This information is reported to Senior Management on a monthly basis.
Engaging the broader university is accomplished informally through word of mouth and formally through a monthly Lean Newsletter that features various projects and celebrates our successes. See Appendix C for a sample newsletter.

The implementation of Lean practices throughout the University was “institutionalized” by providing a structure, opportunities for staff leadership and recognition of Lean team successes. The three year journey to create this stable approach to continuous improvement and change was done in a way that literally changed the culture of Miami University.

**Benefits**

After three years we can see the proliferation of projects and commitment to the Lean methodology throughout the University. We have undertaken 140 projects and completed 71 of them. (See Appendix D for Project Summary) The Breakthrough Objectives have become realities as demonstrated by the success of some of our completed projects. To date we have increased revenue $1.8M, avoided expenditures of $2.1M and reduced costs by $2.3M. It is not unusual to hear staff in Finance and Business Services using Lean language and practices even when there is not a formal project. The University has moved from an application of Lean processes to thinking Lean.

Other Divisions have taken note of the initial success in the Division of Finance and Business Services. Currently Information Technology, University Advancement, Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, Intercollegiate Athletics and the President’s
Office have all embraced Lean, pursued training and begun project teams. We note with pride that over 500 employees have participated in Lean Training.

In addition to these measurable results we also must mention the impact of Lean on the Miami culture. The buy-in among all levels of employees has been extraordinary. Most of this can be attributed to the broad-based team involvement. To date over 300 employees have participated in a team. We believe that two significant outcomes have resulted from this broad-based participation. Employees identify more with the Miami mission and their participation fosters pride and ownership in the outcomes of the projects.

Further evidence of Lean’s impact on Miami culture is the realization by employees of the relationship they play in fulfilling the mission of the University. The connection made between job function and impact on the University has engaged more employees in the mission of the University and is fostering a culture of loyalty, pride and responsibility that will enhance the Miami experience and standard of excellence. Because Lean teams focus on this relationship, each step involved in decision making is now examined in this context and employees are able to further understand their role in student success. The cultural shift towards actively seeking employee input and involvement has allowed for a positive change to occur, and has motivated employees to work collectively towards fulfilling the mission of the University.

Another benefit is that the teams are almost always cross-functional. As employees from different divisions or departments work together to achieve a common, mutually beneficial goal, silos are broken down and connections are made. Interdependence
replaces independence; mutual success replaces competition; and knowledge and respect replace criticism. The Lean journey provides context for work and makes more explicit the concept of shared success.

Essentially, the employees at Miami have moved from being reactionary and defensive to being proactive and creative. It is not unusual to see small groups of employees applying Lean principles in their daily work. As employees continue to make suggestions for continuous improvement, our future agenda is defined. The introduction of Lean at Miami has resulted in a University renaissance that is extremely gratifying and self-sustaining.

Retrospective

We have undergone several course corrections during the three years we have been working with Lean. Our current experience suggests that we will need to make future course corrections which is a fundamental value associated with Lean. We can never be satisfied because there are always opportunities for further improvement.

Initially, two of our biggest departments on campus, Housing, Dining Business and Recreational Services and Physical Facilities, representing over 1,000 employees, undertook Lean employing a slightly different terminology and approach. While this could have been successful, it would not have united the University in a broad-based change effort. To facilitate a common practice and common language that would set the stage for a systemic change effort, the leadership of the two departments worked to “morph” what they had already started into a standard Lean practice. This
standardization throughout the University was essential if we were to change the Miami
culture to reflect that change was not only necessary but desirable.

The productive interaction between training and experience had to be tested, refined
and tested again. What training is necessary for action? How do we orient new
employees so they get off on the right foot with respect to understanding this essential
process at Miami? How do we ensure that our trainings are rigorous enough and
practical enough to stand up to and be accountable to Lean standards outside of
Miami? How can we assist other organizations with their change processes? All of
these questions, and more, continue to be asked and explored in the context of our
training and practice.

While project team participants are many and often diverse, some university resources
(especially highly technical and knowledgeable staff) are limited. This sometimes
negatively impacts how much can be undertaken and how fast some projects can be
completed. Managing and efficiently employing the time of specialized resources and
staff is an on-going challenge. Team members must deal with the day to day demands
of their regular roles while being fully engaged in a project. They must continue to
perform all of their daily responsibilities ably while arriving at every project meeting with
homework assignments fully completed. This balancing requires the steering teams and
team leaders to pay close attention to the sequencing of projects, the work load of
participants and the way in which change is introduced to the larger Miami community.
This has been, and will continue to be, a challenge going forward.
**Closing Comments**

The introduction of the Lean process at Miami has been a defining event in the evolution of the mission and the work of the University. Miami, as an organization, has changed for the better because of it. The growing body of literature applying Lean methodology and management techniques to the service sector and universities, in particular, continually informs our practice and vision. While this narrative is particular to Miami, it is a story that could be told in any organization that is committed to its mission and is looking for a way to facilitate change within their organization.

On December 11, 2012 Miami University was recognized by U.S. News and World Report as ranking third in the nation for “efficiently spending limited resources in order to produce the highest possible educational quality.” While we have only strived for internal validation that our Lean journey is making a difference, the external validation has further assured us that we are on the right path for today and for tomorrow.
MU-Lean Leader Certification & Development Program

Objective – Establish a program to grow our key Lean Leaders and recognize their efforts to improve Miami University operations through their efforts to lead MU-Lean Teams through continuous improvement projects. These Lean Leaders will become the key cultural change agents for Miami University and represent potential future leaders.

Requirements: In order to become fully certified the Lean Team Leaders must successfully complete the following requirements:

- Complete the MU-Lean 2-Day Formal Training Program
- Complete MU development course “How To Conduct Efficient and Effective meetings”
- Complete a modified “Get Lean” Certification Program, consisting of the following courses:
  - How to Develop New Metrics in a Lean Culture
  - Human Error Reduction 2012/Process Error Elimination 2013
  - Culture and Cultural Changes 2012/Cultural Changes Through Leadership, Employee Development & Engagement 2013
  - Managing Projects in a Lean Environment 2012/Managing Lean Sigma Projects 2013
- Complete the following modules of the Miami University Supervisor Development Series:
  - Myers-Briggs Introduction to Type
  - Communication’s Role in Management
  - Conflict Management
  - Building a Reputation of Integrity
  - Change Management
  - Micro-Inequities Awareness
  - Budget 101
  - Building and Maintaining Your Team
- Successfully participate in 5 process improvement projects, and serve as leader for 3 projects.
- Present a project
- Successfully complete a final exam
- Other requirements per senior management

Lean Certification Levels:

1. **Lean Leader** – Selected as a Team Leader and actively pursuing certification requirements
2. **Senior Lean Leader** – Completed all training requirements listed above
3. **Senior Department Lean Leader** – Senior Lean Manager for Departments; completed all requirements for Senior Lean Leader; assists in Lean training
4. **Senior Divisional Lean Leader** – Lean Manager for Division; completed all requirements for Senior Lean Leader; assists in Lean training
5. **University Lean Champion** – Recognized as University-wide Lean leader who has completed all requirements, and has previously served in Senior Department or Senior Divisional role; assists in Lean training
Senior Lean Leader and other Roles

Presented 11/5/12 to participants in the Sr. Lean Leader Certificate Program


Miami University Lean Leaders play a critical role in the on-going efforts of the University to achieve its strategic objectives.

Current Participants in the Senior Lean Leader certification program are expected to:

• Complete the certification (VOA/UD Courses, Staff Development Courses, Tests and Projects)
• Use their skills to promote and facilitate the Lean efforts of the University
• Provide a professional presence to the University community that contributes to and facilitates a culture shift so we embrace the premise of continuous improvement through an organized and systemic approach to change.
• Participants in the Lean certification program have 24 to 30 months to complete all aspects of the program. All classwork, tests, and demonstration projects should be completed within 24 months. Serving on 5 projects and leading 3 of them must be completed within 30 months (1 project in each of the 6 months following the start of the program.) Participants who do not have projects are required to work with their department head for placements on projects within their department or another department. It is the responsibility of the participant to take responsibility for achieving the project component of the certification process.

Upon completion of the Sr. Lean certification, an individual can apply for a $2000 permanent salary increase. The application for this increase should include documentation that all portions of the certification process have been successfully completed. Staff Development will provide a check list of the requirements for your use. Documentation could include certificates of completion, MyCard records, Process Improvement Team Workbooks, etc. The certification requirements checklist and the Sr. Lean Leader Salary Increase Application can be found on the Staff Development website under “Lean.” Please note, applications should be submitted electronically – Lean is green! Please submit this form electronically to MiamiLean@MiamiOH.edu. After submitting the Salary Increase Application, the applicant will receive an email stating whether the application has been approved or denied. If the application has been denied, the outstanding requirements will be listed. If the application is approved, the pay date of the increase will be provided.

Future Participants in the Senior Lean Leader certification program will be accepted into the program based on the following:

• A letter of application to your unit director/VP that includes:
  o A statement about why you want to participate in the program
  o A statement about what you hope to accomplish through participation in the program
  o A statement indicating your commitment to devote the necessary time and energy to the program should you be selected
• A history of participation and support of existing Lean projects
Applicants must have participated in at least 2 Lean projects
Applicants must have demonstrated leadership in the projects

- The Sr. Lean Leader application can be found on the Human Resources Staff Development website under “Lean.” Please submit this form electronically to MiamiLean@MiamiOH.edu.
- The Director/VP of the Department will make recommendations to the Vice President of Finance and Business Services.
- Participants in the Lean certification program have 24 to 30 months to complete all aspects of the program. All classwork, tests, and demonstration projects should be completed within 24 months. Serving on 5 projects and leading 3 of them must be completed within 30 months (1 project in each of the 6 months following the start of the program.) Participants who do not have projects are required to work with their department head for placements on projects within their department or another department. It is the responsibility of the participant to take responsibility for achieving the project component of the certification process.

Each year, the University will determine how many people can be admitted into the certification program and take into consideration how many other people in the department are certified or in the process of becoming certified.

**Senior Department Lean Leader**

Senior Department Lean Leaders will have received the Senior Lean Leader Certification. (For CY 2013, we will consider individuals who have completed a substantial part of the certification since no one has finished all of it.) These leaders must be either unclassified staff or faculty.

Senior Department Lean Leaders are expected to fulfill the following roles in addition to their currently held position:

1. Attend the first 3-5 meetings of a new project, then regularly work with the team leader (weekly or bi-weekly meetings), and go to team meetings as requested or at key points.
   - Be resource/coach to team leader
   - Guide the teams through each project and assist in project documentation
   - Educate team members as needed
   - Familiarize self with project progress and ensure team stays on task and on time.
2. Advise department head of progress for each team.
   - Highlight progress of team
   - Identify issues or outcomes in jeopardy
   - Identify high potential team members
3. Establish mentoring relationship with Al Ryan. Fully participate and incorporate feedback.
4. Take responsibility for the production of the quarterly department report.
5. Update department steering team on a regular basis.

Senior Lean Leader Department Leaders will be selected from an applicant pool. The number of Department Leaders will be determined by the number of projects in a given area. For calendar year 2013 we will select four Department Lean Leaders:

- HDRBS
- PFD
- Finance
- HR/Budgets/Police/Environmental Health and Safety/Internal Audits/Treasury
Individuals currently in the certification program who have completed the majority of the requirements for certification may apply for this role. Individuals will be selected to fulfill one of the four roles listed above by the following criteria:

- A letter of application to Carol Hauser who will accept it for Dr. Creamer’s Sr. Leadership Team:
  - A statement about why you want to be chosen for this role
  - A statement about what you hope to accomplish through this role
  - A statement indicating your commitment to devote the necessary time and energy to the role should you be selected
- A certificate of completion of the Sr. Lean Leader program.
- *(For 2013 only in lieu of Sr. Lean Leader Certification)*
  - A history of participation and support of existing Lean projects.
  - Participation in at least 3 Lean projects and chair of at least one of them.
- Demonstrated leadership in the Lean efforts of the department(s) in which they apply.
- In the event that multiple qualified candidates apply, there may be interviews.
- The appointments will be announced via e-mail to all Sr. Lean Leaders

Senior Lean Department Leaders will receive a stipend of $3000 for any year they are actively engaged in the role. The stipend will be awarded in 12 equal payments. To be eligible for the stipend, you must be an active employee and be fulfilling the Sr. Department Lean Leader role.

**The Senior Divisional Lean Leader and University Lean Champion are roles that are under development.**

**Senior Divisional Lean Leader**

As the University continues to embrace the Lean philosophy and practice a Divisional Vice President may elect to appoint one individual as Senior Divisional Lean Leader. These leaders must be either unclassified staff or faculty. The role of this individual is to:

Individuals who are appointed to this role are appointed for a two year period of service and receive a $4000 stipend for any year they are actively engaged in the role.

**University Lean Champion**

As more Divisions become active in using the Lean methodology, the University may find it necessary to devote a full time or part time salaried position to manage the change efforts across the University. In this role, the individual will:

- Support the President and Senior Management to achieve the vision and mission of the University through the growth, sustainment and utilization of the MU-Lean Program.
- Have the primary responsibility to ensure that the program continues to grow and is sustainable through mentoring, coaching, training and continuous improvement.
- Report to the President and serve on the President’s Senior Lean Steering Team.
- Maintain the performance metrics for the MU-Lean Program
Lean-Inspired Project Leads to “Mulch” Better Ways to Work

As you might imagine, keeping the lawns, flower beds, and shrubs looking nice on campus is a very labor intensive and important task. Many prospective students and families report that the appearance of a campus is one of the most important factors in deciding where to attend college. An important element of the appearance of the campus is nicely mulched flower beds and shrubs. While the staff has strived to maintain freshly mulched beds across campus, this has been challenging the last few years due to the fact that the number of persons assigned to the grounds has decreased.

A Lean team comprised of Greg Vaughn, Jeff Prater, and Danny Bertsch explored a number of ideas for how to reduce the amount of time it takes to distribute the mulch to the many beds across campus. Their solution was a trailer mounted piece of equipment manufactured locally in Fairfield, Ohio that blows the mulch directly into the area to be covered. This equipment, known as the FINN Bark Blower, has increased the amount of mulch that can be distributed in the same amount of time by 500%.

The new equipment also provides other savings and benefits. Because the mulch is delivered through a 150’ long hose, the truck hauling the mulch no longer has to drive on nearby lawns thus avoiding the tire damage that often accompanied the delivery of the mulch. The process is not just faster but it uses less mulch to cover each bed. It is estimated that 25% less mulch is needed to cover a bed when delivered through the Bark Blower. The staff also believes that the new process will cut down on work-related accidents that accompanied the old process. The real benefit of the new approach is that an already gorgeous and well-maintained campus will be an even more beautiful campus for the next set of campus tours.

Rec Center Merges Customer Service and Fitness Student Staff

A Miami Recreation Lean team was recently formed to merge the Rec Center’s customer service and fitness student staff. Currently, 85% of the Rec Center’s daily customers utilize facilities and services supervised by students. The Lean team was led by Ron Siljko and included Tara Britton, Mindy Stephens, Seth Crenpaker, Jeff Molter and Kate Remmke. The team was formed to address several Lean goals: improve quality, reduce costs, and deliver continuous improvement.

As a result of this project, cross-training was implemented to provide more knowledgeable service to the customers regarding information, sales, risk management and instruction. The project has also resulted in more efficient use of training dollars and led to a 35% reduction in student staff, primarily due to the added staff flexibility. Other accomplishments include improved communication between program areas, better opportunities for student staff development, improved customer service, and a $12,000 savings since the last fiscal year.

Lean Certification Program

The fall 2012 semester of the University of Dayton Voice of America Learning Center Lean Leader program recently concluded on November 13th. The following individuals have now completed courses and are in the process of taking the final exam for the UD/VOA Lean portion of the Lean Leader program: Emily Berry, Melanie Brunner, Jeremy Davis, Brad Farr, Lindsay Fenton, Jeff Johnson, Rosanne Gulley, Cindy Lewis, Mandy Long, George Macdonald, Linda Mankey, Deb Muleckey, Melissa Oldfield, Sarah Persinger, Chris Pirzby, Cody Powell, Jeff Raatz, Andy Rosenberger, Kate Stoss, Greg Vaughn, Anne Wheeler and Brian Woodruff. Becky Dysart, Kerri Dabbs and Jeff Pickwick have already passed the exam. Congratulations to all on their progress toward Lean Leader certification!
Lean Project Summary List as of 1/17/2013

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*Project owned by multiple departments.