

Project Details

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| Title | Enhancing Student Experiences by Applying Lean Principles | Status | REVIEWED |
| Category | 6-Supporting Institutional Operations | Updated | 11-06-2013 |
| Timeline | | Reviewed | 04-03-2014 |
| Planned Project Kickoff | | Created | 09-25-2013 |
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| Target Completion | | Last Modified | 04-03-2014 |
| 08-15-2014 | | | |

- **1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY**

- **VU Answer:** For the most part, great progress has been made on this Action Project. Staff representatives from the different administrative offices on both the Vincennes and Jasper campuses have attended a workshop on “Lean Fundamentals for Office Processes.” The workshop introduced principles related to adding value by evaluating inputs, processes, outputs and customers. A second day workshop was held for specific staff members who are responsible for processing student applications and corresponding documentation for admission at the Jasper Campus. This group participated in a value stream mapping activity which began with the creation of a current state map to identify areas for improvement. This was used as a foundation for the formation of a future state map of the application life cycle at that campus. Action plans were established and individuals were assigned specific tasks within the new process to incorporate the changes. The new admissions process template was developed to help guide staff in standardizing work flow to reduce delay times, errors, and unclear expectations.
- **Reviewer Response:** This is such an exciting time for Vincennes as it continues to embrace quality through this action project that has the potential to enhance relationships with incoming students, improve processes and related teamwork, and reduce waste! This action project also aligns well with Category 3 - Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs, Category 4 - Valuing People, Category 7 - Measuring Effectiveness, and Category 8 - Planning Continuous Improvement. The university has a good foundation for moving forward due to the training and baseline state map. There are no data provided that address whether lead time for more current terms has been decreased. Old habits are sometimes difficult to overcome so there might be value in celebrating key milestones and successes as well as recognize accomplishments of individuals who are involved.

- **2: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

- **VU Answer:** The institution has had many opportunities to involve faculty, staff, and administrators in this Action Project:
 - Twenty one staff and administrators participated in the initial workshop. Seven individuals participated in the value stream mapping work session on the following day. A survey was administered following both group activities; all participants had an opportunity to evaluate the activity and comment on possible additional implementation of the principles in their offices.

- The President and Provost showed support by visiting the workshop.
- At the Jasper Campus, administrative process discussions now typically allude to lean, 5S and six sigma principles.
- The Dean of the Jasper Campus readily shows his support for innovation in office processes.
- Staff in the Admissions and Student Services Office at the Jasper Campus have established current operations as a foundation for incremental improvements and recommendations for future procedures.
- Staff at the Jasper Campus are researching the issues that contribute to long delay times and incomplete student files and are planning a report and recommendations.
- Office staff at the Jasper Campus are considering dedicating time to improve office and work flow by considering the 5S principles of sort, set in order, shine, standardize and sustain.
- Student Services staff are drafting proposals to present findings to the Indiana State Student Affairs Association to gauge peer interest in like initiatives.
- Staff at the Jasper Campus are redefining job descriptions and adding structure to daily expectations of responsibilities to increase productivity.
- Jasper Campus staff have expanded daily job responsibilities resulting in more robust and complete processing of student applications and supporting documentation.
- **Reviewer Response:** It looks like the university has involved a range of administrators, staff and faculty. There might be an opportunity to follow up with students who would have been impacted by these new processes to obtain their perceptions.
- **3: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE**
- **VU Answer:** The next steps for this project will include the following:
 - Identify more institutional processes that can be improved using the value stream map method.
 - Report on changes, improvements and goals of the improved admissions process at the Jasper Campus to the CQI Committee and to all VU staff during January professional development activities.
 - Continue to modify the process to best serve students and maximize outputs in terms of the goals identified.
 - Implement communication plans to improve and increase engagement of prospective and applied students to increase complete files and encourage enrollment.
 - Identify physical renovations of administrative office work spaces to maximize work flow and leverage staff skills to promote productivity and morale.
 - Advocate for the addition of sites (Jasper, ATC, Gibson County, Indiana School for the Deaf and Blind) to recruitment, communication, and admissions software already utilized by the Vincennes Campus and the BANNER system.
 - Adapt electronic communications to applicants to reflect campus choice.
- **Reviewer Response:** Vincennes has an itemized plan for moving forward with key activities. If not already in place, the university might want to ensure that there are

deadlines assigned to each deliverable as well as specific individual(s) who are responsible for the deliverable.

- **4: BEST PRACTICES**

- **VU Answer:** Several practices have added value to VU Jasper's administrative processes making them more effective in serving students:

- A step-by-step process of the application life cycle and admissions system has been developed; it has kept the process manageable rather than overwhelming staff who develop the student files and communication pieces.
- The Dean of the Jasper Campus has shown commitment to lean principles by giving words of support, advocating for staff attendance at professional development opportunities related to lean thinking, and promoting an environment where creativity and innovation are encouraged and valued.
- A survey was used to determine the impact of the Lean workshop on other staff and to determine their interest in bringing these operational principles to work in their offices.

- **Reviewer Response:** The university has an opportunity to share with other institutions how it applied Lean principles to an academic environment! In particular, sharing what worked well, what was challenging, and how the institution might approach future Lean initiatives due to lessons learned would be valuable.

- **5: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS**

- **VU Answer:** There do not appear to be any insurmountable challenges for completion of this project, but in order to make sure the institution receives the greatest benefit from it, the following issues need to be addressed.

- Cultivating a culture of continuous quality improvement based upon objective, incremental improvements that surmount into scalable opportunities for positive change.
- Explaining what lean fundamentals are and how they can be applied to administrative processes to benefit continuous quality improvement.
- Moving away from a system of antiquated forms, processes and procedures.
- Creating clear operational and institutional definitions of metrics to measure improvements related to recruitment and retention.
- Diffusing concerns of staff that the streamlining of processes does not result in elimination of job securities.
- Establishing a clear requirement for follow through and measurement.
- Prioritizing the addition of site campuses to recruitment and communication software and reporting.

- **Reviewer Response:** Change can be difficult even when individuals can rationalize the positive things associated with it. Creating a common language regarding institutional processes will help folks talk the talk while developing process manuals and so forth can help individuals walk the talk. Establishing clear expectations and deadlines can reduce uncertainty. Highlight the positive aspects of the changes and ensure staff (if appropriate) that it doesn't reduce their value or their future employment. Rather, these initiatives create opportunities for individual growth. Building in routine feedback loops can help identify potential issues with the process or staff concerns. Try to focus on

individuals - focus on the processes. Create a sense of community by identifying key milestones and celebrating those milestones!