OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Our Operational Excellence program is all about achieving outstanding results in Customer Service, Operational Performance, and Employee Satisfaction - by being excellent in delivering the services that we provide to the University.

Early this year, the Facilities Services Leadership Team began to work on developing a Vision for Facilities Services, and a Strategy to achieve that vision. The Strategy focuses on the key drivers of value (the Processes that we use, how those processes are Planned and Synchronized, our People and Culture, and the Information and Technology that supports our work processes).
Combining the methodologies of Six Sigma and the improvement mindset and tools of Lean, the Lean Six Sigma (LSS) approach to improvement enables teams of people to examine a work process in detail in order to develop ways to rapidly and enduringly improve that process.

In the early-1970s, Toyota developed an operational mindset and supporting improvement tools that became known as Lean. This leadership way of thinking encourages everyone in the team to focus on improving everything within the organization.

In the mid-1980s, Motorola Corporation developed a structured methodology for examining and improving work processes that they called Six Sigma.

The beauty of these two approaches is that they focus on improving, streamlining and simplifying work processes, and thereby increasing customer and staff satisfaction.

In the mid-2000s, these two improvement approaches were merged into the world-class improvement methodology known as Lean Six Sigma.

Our vision is to provide exceptional services and facilities. To me, Operational Excellence means that we’ll be passionate stewards of the University’s facilities.

Over the next few weeks, all Facilities Services staff and many of our key contractors will be trained in some of the tools of our Operational Excellence program. Then it’ll be up to all of us to make the difference. My request of each of us is to get engaged. Identify and solve problems. Make your customers’ lives, and your lives easier. Take pride in your work and in making SFU a great University.
A key cornerstone strategy for the improvement effort within Facilities Services is the implementation of Lean Six Sigma - to tackle some of the bigger process improvement opportunities that we face.

A team of Facilities Services staff was selected for training and certification as Lean Six Sigma Green Belts. In order to become certified, the team had to successfully complete the intensive 5 days of the training course, a 3 hour written final exam, and a process improvement project.

Each of the participants had to identify a suitable project, for which a senior Leadership team member was appointed as a sponsor. These projects are well underway, and most are nearing completion. The teams will be presenting their process improvement recommendations to the Senior Leadership Team in mid-June.

We'll be looking for another team of volunteers to take the next session of this same training - which will be held later this fall.

When we developed the overall strategy for our Operational Excellence program, we realized that we'd need to work on several fronts simultaneously.

Beginning at the end of June, all Facilities Services staff and some key contractors will be trained in the Fundamentals of Operational Excellence. This will provide us with a common language for improvement, as well as an overview of the Kaizen Improvement methodologies. We'll learn how to recognize our customers, identify their needs, determine what we do that delivers to those specific needs, and then figure out how to do it better.

Kaizen is a Japanese word that means “change for the better”. It is a continuous improvement methodology that is based on some guiding principles:

• Good processes bring good results.
• Go see for yourself, to understand the issue properly.
• Speak with data, so that you can manage by facts.
• Take actions to contain and correct the root causes of problems.
• Work as a team.

We’ll learn how to make improvements in everything we do, to enhance our daily work lives.

Following this Fundamentals training, we will hold an Idea Generation Event - which is an outstanding opportunity for all staff to identify potential improvements in our work processes.

The Senior Leadership Team will then group all of these improvement ideas into two main categories:

• Ideas that will require the expertise of the Lean Six Sigma Green Belt practitioners (who will facilitate teams through the DMAIC improvement methodology).
• Ideas that will be handled through the use of Kaizen methodologies. Kaizen Events are usually very short duration (half-day) improvement events that are designed to achieve a very rapid improvement in an area that's important to our staff.

The summer is a great time for us to implement many of these improvements, such that we'll be ready in the fall with our new/better processes.

But, improvement won't stop there. This is a permanent change in how we work.
Late last summer, SatiStar's team interviewed many of Facilities Services staff and created process flow diagrams that showed exactly how we work. These process flow diagrams were also used to identify processes that were in need of improvement, as well as gaps between processes.

This kicked off our Operational Excellence transformation. By focusing on the processes, we recognize that it's those processes that need improvement - and that our staff are already doing the best they can with the processes that they've inherited. So, if we want to improve, we need to change the processes. And that's what we're doing. Everything we do is a process, and all processes can be improved, but only by capturing the knowledge of the experts in those processes - the people who touch those processes every day.

These diagrams have been carefully stored, and will be made available as process improvement teams begin their work and need them. Some have already been used by the Lean Six Sigma Green Belt project teams.

Since January 2010, UW's Finance & Facilities (F2) department has been using LEAN as a comprehensive approach to improve management of people and processes, as well as delivering more efficient and effective services to campus customers.

F2's LEAN process involves streamlining day-to-day work activities and processes, engaging the staff and encouraging them to identify and solve problems, and encourages people to continuously improve their work in a hands-on way.

UW's LEAN efforts have not gone unnoticed. They have been recognized by several national magazines for their financial and operational results, which were achieved because of their LEAN process. The University's LEAN initiative has been recognized by The National Consortium for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education (NCCI). NCCI's President Kathy Burkgren said of her visit to UW,

"The University of Washington is change leadership in action and has made tremendous strides since 2009 with the introduction of process improvement which is changing their culture. Through process improvement, they are creating a culture where people feel valued, know their ideas matter, and feel they are empowered. Creativity is valued and celebrated. During our visit, I not only saw engaged staff, but highly engaged staff. I saw recognition among and between colleagues at all levels. I witnessed career development through challenging work. I saw respectful, constructive, and timely feedback happening right before my eyes among employees, managers, and senior leaders. My colleagues and I heard about how staff at all levels, by working together, eliminated backlogs of work, standardized processes, improved customer service, and significantly streamlined processes to save time and dollars. We heard testimonials of collaborations among workgroups. I saw boards with easy-to-update metrics and metrics tracked and updated daily so that monthly and quarterly metrics almost create themselves (or so it seemed). It was truly amazing. Kudos to the University of Washington!"