

**Macon State College**  
**Customer Service Improvement Project Accomplishments**  
**2009-2010**

Inspired by the knowledge that Macon State College was chosen to receive the *Silver Award for Customer Service Institution of the Year* for 2009, the third year in a row, the College community re-doubled its campaign to be Faster, Friendlier, and Easier in 2010.

First, a trained team applied the Lean/Six Sigma DMAIC methodology to a Financial Aid process. Specifically, there is a federal regulatory requirement for the College to return certain financial aid funds to the lenders, or the government, in cases where the student received F grades for reason of non-attendance or absence. The old process required extensive manual processing on the part of an experienced professional and was time-consuming because it involved contacting individual faculty members in up to 250 cases each semester to make this determination. The solution was to implement a Failure Absence grade that would be posted at the end of the term by the faculty. The revised process was implemented spring 2010. **This process improvement avoided experienced staff from having to contact 250 faculty members thus saving valuable staff time.**

Second, the current graduation audit is a time-consuming manual process involving staff and faculty determinations. A trained Lean/Six Sigma team evaluated the process in terms of finding quick solutions to reducing the time between an application for graduation and completion of the degree audit. Since audits are completed on Excel file templates, it was decided that the audits could be transmitted electronically to a server for each department or school to review and complete. **The initiative resulted in a reduction of total processing time for Baccalaureate Degree audits by 7 days and Associate Degree audits by 7.2 days. In addition, the initiative resulted in a reduction of transit time for baccalaureate degree audits by an average of 1.5 days.** However, the ultimate solution in ensuring that timely information is available to all students is to implement an automated system. Macon State College will be moving forward in this regard by implementing the DegreeWorks software product. We have purchased this product and are currently planning its deployment.

Third, our 2010 financial aid target enhancement project focused on improving communication between incomplete financial aid applicants and the Macon State College Financial Aid Office. Project goals established for this initiative and corresponding outcomes are as follows: Goal 1: increasing the number of communications delivered to incomplete applicants (**exceeded goal**), Goal 2: increasing the use of electronic messaging (**exceeded goal**), Goal 3: establishing a defined frequency for the delivery of messages (**met goal**) and Goal 4: delivering initial financial aid award letters earlier in the spring of 2010 than they were delivered in previous years (**met goal**). A fifth goal, reducing the length of time a Financial Aid applicant remains incomplete by 20% cannot be fully measured until August 2010.

Fourth, the 2010 Lean White Belt training project was designed to **expand the Lean expertise among staff and faculty at the college.** This past year our Black Belt expert and Georgia Eminent Scholar in Management at the college, Dr. Tony Patti, taught a full day workshop on Lean/Six Sigma fundamentals and tools. **An additional 23 faculty, staff, and administrators attended and received certificates of completion.** One important feature of this year's workshop was a round table discussion wherein ideas were surfaced for possible applications of Lean/Six Sigma throughout the college. One such idea, the faculty hiring process, was included in the final list of projects for 2011.

Fifth, the student advising process continues to be recognized as a critical link in improving student retention and graduation statistics. Projects designed to enhance the advising process therefore add value to our corporate knowledge and provide good data upon which future plans are developed. One such project was conducted in our School of Business this past year to develop and test a survey instrument designed to measure both student and faculty/advisor satisfaction with the advising process. **Results showed a high level of satisfaction among School of Business students (4.8 on a 5.0 scale).** **Results showed an improving level of satisfaction among faculty/advisors (3.1 after fall semester to 3.8 near the end of spring semester on a 5.0 scale).** A modification was made to the process wherein the scheduling process was revised to **make it easier for both faculty/advisors and students to schedule their appointments.** This adjustment contributed to the improving level of satisfaction among faculty. **One major recommendation** from this project was to separate out students who only have an advising hold and encourage them to get advised prior to when registration begins. This allows these students to register early and improves their chances of getting the courses/sections they want.

Sixth, the rationale for our risk management and mitigation project is as follows: There is no campus-wide training system related to safety and accident prevention for Macon State employees. Although appropriate policies and procedures are in place, employees may not be aware of the policies and procedures. Training is sporadic and is not tracked. Proper training would mitigate risks and could decrease costs.

In 2010 the project team **developed training modules for the highest priority campus safety concerns.** These training modules have been uploaded to the web-based delivery platform created by the staff of the Office of Technology Resources. A system has been developed to track employee participation and completion. Training modules will be available to employees July 2010. In FY2010/2011, we will be evaluating the desirability of extending this training program into academic departments such as Nursing. Using Lean methods, we will identify areas of risk such as potential puncture wounds when handling sharp objects and acquire training resources to help mitigate these risks.

Seventh, in order to provide the very best service to the students and other customers of the College and to mitigate risk to the campus community, the training program **"Knowledgeable Response"** was redesigned and will be deployed, for the second

year, by the “Excellence in Customer Service” task force, Academic Affairs, Fiscal Affairs and Student Affairs. The title of the program is taken from two of the Governor’s Office of Customer Service attributes, knowledgeable and responsive. This program is designed specifically for the employees of Macon State College and has the goal of enhancing communication among employees for the benefit of our students and other customers. **Topics in this year’s training program include a refresher course in customer service and information about three new student/customer satisfaction initiatives: the Freshman Year Experience Program, Residence Life and the Department of Public Safety.** Completion of the “Knowledgeable Response” training program is mandatory for all college staff. The dates of the programs are Monday, July 19, Wednesday, July 21, Thursday, July 29.

In conclusion, our progress this year strongly demonstrates the on-going emphasis at Macon State College on leadership in customer service and process improvement initiatives in the best interest of our customers. Our activities indicate a strong commitment by all members of the staff to a Faster, Friendlier and Easier environment. The results of these projects are responsive to the needs of our customers, measurable and can be used by other University System institutions seeking similar outcomes. This year, more than ever before, our staff members embraced their individual roles in process improvement and in the ultimate goal of higher education – to participate in the development of human potential and to transform lives!