

Background:

Fleming College strives to offer a culture where innovation is embraced, efficiencies are gained and success is attained by students and employees alike. As trends change, maintaining an efficient culture without losing effectiveness can be a difficult task, so in 2011 Fleming introduced the principles of “Lean”. “Lean” principles are simple yet are quite effective and can be utilized in any organization; the end result is to provide excellence while being cost and time efficient. This methodology has been developed and applied to many industries, most notably manufacturing, but can also be found in the public sector, healthcare, federal government and higher education. By adopting the “Lean” principles, inefficient processes will be eliminated and more time will be spent on strengthening strategic work and supporting innovation in how Fleming delivers programs and services to its students, thereby offering an

“What I appreciate about it most is that it is going to help the student and our biggest concern is student success!” - Scott Fleming, Program Coordinator, Skilled Trades and Technology

excellent overall experience from admission to graduation.

“It has been quite enjoyable to work on the Lean project in two ways. First of all, certain aspects of our jobs naturally become routine and it is good to go back and analyze the processes to see how they can be improved. It was quite surprising to see the wait times and the error rates that arose. Secondly, it was nice to work with such a multi-faceted team and discuss a “problem” from many different angles and get the various viewpoints. Looking for these process efficiencies is very important.” – Russell Turner, Program Coordinator, Justice and Business Studies

Current Project Updates:

Lean 1 – The Pilot: Fleming’s first Lean process was the review of our workload and timetabling systems where we looked at how we use the systems to eliminate the need to create a new timetable and workload each year. Essentially, we decided to roll over the previous year’s work and focus on only the variables that change, such as the introduction of a new course or a faculty change. By doing so, the collective time spent on the manual entry of data and rework by workload officers, timetablers and Chairs is projected to be reduced significantly. This saved time can be focused on more strategic work, such as responding to innovations in changing curriculum. In the fall 2012, these new tools are being piloted for use by academic operations and the school staff. This Lean also identified improvements in how curriculum changes are communicated from the schools to academic operation and how the enrollment plans can be used more strategically to plan ahead for each academic year and better align with the budget cycle. These items are currently in the initial implementation phase.

Lean 2: During the summer of 2012, two more Lean projects were started. The first dealt with how we develop Individual education plans for students with disabilities. During the review of the

“current state”, It was discovered that the process for developing Education Plans was cumbersome and did not yield a good result for students. Specifically, education plans take an average of 40 days to develop and have a 75 percent error rate when first drafted. The newly proposed process, which we call the “future state”, is much more streamlined as counselors, students and coordinators work collaboratively to develop the plan with a target of 11 days to completion. This will mean both faster results and greater accuracy in getting these students the timetable and supports they need. To facilitate this new process, a draft standard template has already been developed for piloting this fall. In total, over 20 people met over 4.5 days to improve this process, and this included three counseling staff, a Dean, two chairs, 13

“Designing a new template for use across multiple programs is a tough task-daunting because of the variety of needs for individual programs...working through established ED plans and deciding what worked or what was lacking of each helped us shape the current template!” - Thom Luloff, Faculty, SENRS

coordinators, as well three academic operations/Registrar/IT staff. Using Lean for rapid improvement processes meant that many minds made for great solutions that could be implemented right away!

Lean 3: The third Lean is reviewing our “Add Drop Swap” student self-serve process in Evolve. The Registrar’s office brought this forward because this self service process could be greatly improved to target the students who should be using it for flexibility in selecting general education courses, accounting for transfer credits and/or changing their timetable to accommodate work and family priorities. During the four days that the registrar’s group and representatives from academic operations and IT spent together, it was discovered that there are some quick wins in terms of this process that can be started immediately to improve add/drop/swap functionality. Other improvements may require some changes within the Evolve system but will yield considerable efficiencies in dealing with transfer credits, getting students their timetables quicker and streaming the right students to use this function. This will eliminate frustration for students and unnecessary visits to the Registrar’s office, thus allowing staff to more efficiently focus on students who truly require the personal attention.

“It was really great to work with fellow colleagues on positive solutions, to some of the cumbersome processes we complain about but never seem to have the time to fix. I found the current mapping a real eye opener” – Sheila McGrath, Records Specialist, Registrar’s Office

Going Forward – Communication, Structure and Reporting:

Now that three projects are underway and we have a better sense of how Lean can work in our organization, we will start looking for more opportunities to introduce new projects. What we have learned is that we can conduct Lean rapid improvement workshops in less time than anticipated if we have all the right people in the room. We have also learned that staff is very engaged and ready to contribute to improving processes using Lean when given the opportunity. The best ideas for creating efficiencies come from those who do the work, collaborating with others in the organization who benefit from their work. Therefore, over the past year College staff has spent valuable time working on these three projects and this has included over 200 person days of effort. We feel that this was time well invested as we have identified processes that can save over 400 of person days annually over the next three years and significantly reduce the time it takes for students to get their timetables and education plans. During this time, we have also developed in-house expertise and knowledge around Lean to enable us to take it to the next level in both formal and informal ways.

The Lean Project Lead has started to communicate to the college community about our progress with the Lean work completed to date. As we do this, we are hearing suggestions for more processes that would benefit from redesign – processes that have a significant impact on students. Therefore, going forward we will establish a cross-functional review team which will consider each Lean proposal to determine the best ones to focus on to make the most impact. To support this cross-functional review team, and to build knowledge about Lean across the college, we will also implement standard processes, tools and knowledge transfer initiatives as well as benchmark with other industry leaders. These knowledge transfer initiatives will entail ongoing communication as well as workshops led by those in the organization that have already developed a sound knowledge of Lean. To support this, we will implement standard templates for 1) Lean proposals -that clearly articulate the scope and benefits of each proposed process review; 2) Lean implementation project plans, and 3) reports on Lean efficiencies including clear metrics. The tools will support clear communication and transparency regarding our investments and efficiencies from the Lean processes that can be reported in business plans, annual reports to the Board and to the Ministry.

*“Lean allows you to see what you really are doing day to day, not just what you think you are doing. We do so much of our work by rote or in idiosyncratic ways we tend to blur what is working and what is not” –
Maxine Mann, Director of
Counseling Services*

If you have any questions about the Lean initiative at Fleming, please contact

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