



Continuous Improvement Using Lean Principles

April 2013 Update

External Lean Training for University Staff

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service grant ended on March 31, 2013. During the last month of the grant period, three University employees utilized grant funds to expand their Lean learning:

- Heidi Reid, Lean Facilitator from the Memorial Union, attended “Toyota Kata” at the University of Michigan, learning about making routine (kata) improvements based on short plan, do, check, act (PDCA) cycles.
- Wendy Jones, Lean Implementation Leader from the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science, attended “Developing People with Capability for Lean” and “Coaching Skills for Lean Implementation Leaders” from Lean Enterprise Institute.
- Wendy Davis, Manager of Process Improvement, is currently working on a capstone project that will complete her “Lean Office Certificate” from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Each employee will be presenting a “teach back” on their training for the Lean Facilitators and Lean Implementation Leaders in May.

Lean Outreach and Connections

Lean practices at Michigan Tech continue to be recognized, demonstrating a positive image for the University. Here are a few examples:

- The Manager of Process Improvement has participated in two interviews about Michigan Tech’s experience with and success through Lean practice for the Educational Advisory Board (EAB). The EAB is a best practices research firm serving the nation’s leading hospitals, colleges, and universities. Both interviews focused on building a Lean practice in a university setting; the EAB was hired to do this research for two other universities.
- The “Local Lean Group” of Houghton, Keweenaw and Baraga County businesses continues to meet and grow. The group has expanded to include representation from 16 businesses.
- Through ongoing networking with the Michigan Lean Consortium, connections have been made with representatives from the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City and the regional office in Marquette. This connection is focused on identifying and partnering to bring more Lean training opportunities to the Upper Peninsula.
- Emails gradually flow in from posts on the Michigan Tech Continuous Improvement Blog ([Michigan Tech Improvement Website](#)). A recent email was received from a Michigan Tech Alumni, Patrick Downey ‘01 Chemical Engineering. Patrick emailed with enthusiasm after reading about Michigan Tech’s use of Lean practice and shared how the practice has influenced his career.
- Theresa Coleman-Kaiser, Assistant Vice President for Administration and Lean Facilitator and Implementation Leader, was interviewed and showcased on “The Leaning Edge” radio show on Michigan Business Networks website last fall: [Michigan Business Network Radio Show page](#)

Improvement Event List

Event Name	Event Description
Dining Services Red Tag Room	Available space was running short due to the storage of outdated equipment, tools, machines, and utensils. Phase one of a large "5S" inventory organization project is underway to tackle this problem. In March, smaller unneeded items were sold to local restaurateurs with a total of \$750 raised. Larger, unneeded items will be auctioned this month on Public Surplus page for unneeded items . Future phases on this project will be to manage the retained inventory.
Graduate School Application Workflow	As graduate applications continue to rise, the Graduate School is implementing improvements to optimize their workflow to reduce processing time of applications. This will reduce system bottlenecks, improve customer service, and allow Michigan Tech to remain competitive with other schools.
TechFit Request Process	Improvements are being implemented to reduce the number of errors that the Benefits office receives for TechFit benefit payments. The current state data collected showed that 38% of invoices have errors.