Nursing Application LEAN Event

Facilitator: Lisa Snowden (Judy Thomas as Mentor)

Leadership Team: Kathy Watson

Participants: Wendi Merkle, Dawn Richards, Shelby Eggert, Bonnie January, Sara Damp

The Nursing Application LEAN Team was tasked with reviewing the administrative tasks required by staff, faculty, and students beginning when a student attends a nursing application information session and ending when the student is either admitted, disqualified, or placed on a waitlist for the nursing program. More important, the team was tasked with setting the stage to change this manual process into an electronic process. The LEAN Event commenced on June 24, the leadership (Kathy Watson) was present to officially sign the charter and assure the team members that she would support the LEAN outcomes. The goals were discussed and it was clear a few revisions would be made and the team would address the goals that were pertinent to the process.

Like most campus program applications, this process is done with paper applications, paper files, manual calculations, Excel Spreadsheets, and an Access Database. Students have become frustrated because the entry requirements are unclear, they are receiving inconsistent advice from staff and faculty and they are unable to easily track their progress. Faculty and staff are frustrated because the demands of the current application procedure are tedious and redundant and they hinder their ability to provide quality customer service to their students. The Process Experts, Wendi Merkle and Dawn Richards, were able to walk the team through each step of the current state process. Once it was mapped it out, the team calculated the metrics and determined that in its current state, the process takes 15.21 weeks to complete each year.

Since the project solution would rely heavily on the IT department, the team had arranged for IT to come in for a consultation during a team meeting. When IT came to the LEAN session they articulated what was possible and were able to provide a reasonable time line for how long it would take once the final parameters were set for an electronic process to replace the current paper process.

The Team was excited because they felt they were on the right track after the IT meeting. Taking the information that was presented from IT, the team created a future state map that reduced the administrative time from 15.21 weeks to 2.3 weeks. The most exciting part about this solution is they are hoping it will be the spring board for all other campus programs. The Solution is titled PAM (Program Application Manager) and it reduces manual data entry, manual notifications, and manual tracking significantly.

Being sensitive to how long an electronic system will take to create the Team determined what could be changed immediately to lessen the time spent and confusion surrounding the Nursing Application process.   In the LEAN process, this is called "Low Hanging Fruit". The low hanging fruit ended up saving the process 2 weeks of time. Not a significant savings, however, the most significant change was to immediately involve the IT department to capture students who had applied to the program vs. manually going through a list. A major low hanging fruit that was accomplished is the team requested Judy Thomas to create a Nursing Pre-Requisite choice in the current on-line Degree Audit Program. By creating the Nursing Pre-Requisite choice in Degree Audit, students are able to view which classes they still need to complete before applying to the nursing program. There were other changes the Team suggested, but they determined that too many changes upfront would further frustrate students, staff, and faculty so they decided to lessen the impact of change to their audience and create an environment of excitement and buy-in for the new program.

This was just the beginning of the process. Now a Kaizen Team needs to form and articulate exactly what the electronic forms will look like and how they will interact with staff, students, and faculty. Again, once this electronic form is up and running there is nothing stopping every other program on campus to take advantage of this technology and make a link for their programs.