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# Lean Machine

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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Lean Machine

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Tactics to improve efficiency and work quality with roots on shop floors and assembly lines are paying dividends for the University of Dayton on the business side of serving students.

Using Lean Six Sigma activities, the bookstore reduced the number of new textbook returns by 5 percent, freeing staff to focus more on customers. Dining services consolidated salad prep and now is able to serve more locations. Other areas around campus have saved on printing costs by using reusable printer cartridges and consolidating printers and copiers.

"Our students are at the heart of what we do. We want to relentlessly focus on improving their experiences," said Tom Burkhardt, University of Dayton vice president for finance and administrative services. "In the past year, the University has revamped its curriculum and tuition plan to better serve students. Now, we're tackling the way we perform the business of serving students."

Lean Six Sigma is not a program but a never-ending process of improvement activities within an organization, according to Paul Piechota, director of the University of Dayton School of Engineering's Center for Competitive Change and Lean Six Sigma champion and black belt.

"Through Lean Six Sigma activities, organizations adopt a philosophy of engaging employees and using data to solve problems. The entire focus is on customers. It's not just a manufacturing tool. It's been used in banks and hospitals. This can be used in our business operations," Piechota said.

The University rolled out the initiative in the bookstore, dining services and facilities management in July. It hopes to expand the initiative into 40 areas next semester and to eventually reach a total of 200.

University of Dayton students will work with each area. Through their work in the projects and completion of the University's Six Sigma green belt class, they will earn their industry Six Sigma certification.

The overall goal is a 10 percent improvement in the quality of delivering products and services to students.

Piechota said the three pilot areas are doing very well in just a few months, but there are more areas for improvement.

"For example, how can we make better use of our time?," he said. "Can we cut down on the number of forms we can use for hiring? Do we need 18 local access networks for computers systems? If we can use two people for a job, instead of four, how do we better use the other two to be more productive in another area? How do we maintain our larger University footprint efficiently with the same staff?"

Piechota, whose center has led similar projects for Miami University, Wiremold and Liberty Savings Bank, notes the University of Dayton has been using some Lean Six Sigma techniques for years, but "we're stepping it up a notch and centralizing our efforts."

"In our Catholic, Marianist tradition, we're trying to be even better stewards of our resources and adapt to the changing economic times," Burkhardt said. "To remain at the top of our game, we need to exponentially improve our students' experiences."

***For more information, contact Shawn Robinson, associate director of media relations, at 937-229-3391 or [srobinson@udayton.edu](mailto:srobinson@udayton.edu).***