

The Union College Excellence Program

Union College is a small undergraduate residential institution in Upstate New York, concentrating in Liberal Arts and Engineering. The College has been in existence since 1795 with an enrollment of 2,100 students, and a campus containing 105 buildings on 130 acres of land, bordered on all sides by the City of Schenectady.

The Problem

The Facilities Services Department at Union College needed a change. Maintaining a campus consisting of buildings which were (on the average) 85 years old, many systems were antiquated, and emergency repairs and failures were common. With the limited funding available for asset renewal, the Facilities group became a reactive organization. Scheduled maintenance was consistently interrupted by another unplanned situation. The work was always completed with a high degree of quality by a talented Facilities staff, but with so many issues, efficiency was not always emphasized, and record keeping was sporadic.

The other challenge on daily operations was the dramatic increase in the number of buildings and square footage that occurred at Union from 1998 on to present day. Very few FTE's were added to the ranks to help maintain the additional 48% more buildings and 33% more square footage that was added to the Union campus. This put a big burden on an already under funded and understaffed Facilities group. However, the staff members in the Facilities Department are a dedicated group of employees with many years of service to the College. The average tenure for all Facilities employees is over 14 years, with the longest single staff tenure being over 44 years.

What could be done to energize the department, gain efficiencies, and engage the staff? After some discussion with the Vice President of Finance and Administration, the management staff decided that a comprehensive program would need to put in place that would identify goals which would in the end, improve the departments efficiency and enable it to manage the challenges it faced. We also decided that in order for the program to be successful, it should not be dictated by management but should have ownership from the bottom up, and many cases be developed by the very same people who where "in the trenches" on a daily basis. We named the initiative the Excellence Program, and realized that improvement would not happen all at once, but it would happen in baby steps, getting a little better each day.

Excellence Program Mission Statement

The basic mission of the Facilities Services Department is to effectively perform all stewardship duties through a planned and thoughtful caretaking of the campus facilities. This responsibility, which is taken very seriously, includes providing a safe, comfortable environment for students in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the Facilities Services Department to maintain the existing campus, and facilitate the creation of new buildings, equipment, and campus areas which can be utilized by the Union College faculty and staff to provide the appropriate support of the College's educational mission.

Emphasis on customer satisfaction is paramount to the Facilities Services daily work philosophy.

To support the department's basic mission, the concept of the Excellence Program was conceived. In the simplest terms, the program is defined through the following goals:

- Strive to become a little better each day
- Improvement each day, now matter small, is a positive direction and even small improvements are cumulative, and over time, provide results that can be measured and built upon to increase the level of stewardship at Union College
- Identify, emphasize and build upon department strengths
- Continuous communication through staff input
- Continuous training
- Positive feedback
- Consistency; Continuous program events
- Change is a good thing

Program Implementation

The program was initiated by holding a number of meetings to introduce the concept to the staff. We thought that we might get more participation in small groups of 25, as many staff members might be intimidated by speaking out in a large crowd. After the introduction of the intent of the program, mandatory meetings were set with groups of staff that were divided in a way that made sure a varied representation from the different departments were part of the group, instead of all staff from the same department.

The meetings were centered on basic themes such as defining excellence, and obstacles to attaining excellence. Each group was asked to give input on the subject and all comments were recorded. At the following set of meetings, each group was shown what the other groups had commented. There were many common threads to each group's input, and those common threads were developed into a list of goals that if accomplished, all groups agreed would help attain excellence within the department. Attached to this application is a representative list of the staff comments.

Change Might Be a Good Thing but It Doesn't Come Easy

At First the reaction to the program was mixed. Many staff members were open to the idea, some were on the fence but went along because they knew they should, and a small but vocal percentage of the staff were not about to buy-in.

The non-believers spent a fair amount of time lobbying with the rest of the staff to not accept the program. A few got to the point that they wouldn't even greet the management staff if they met in a corridor. We heard things like "why try to fix something if it's not broken?" or "leave us alone and let us do our work". Granted, the staff members that would not buy-in to the program were a small percentage of the 110 members of the department. But a few loud voices can slow down the momentum if you let them. However the more we heard, the more were convinced that changes were needed. The non believers were waiting for us to give up, hoping that this would just be another idea from management that eventually would fizzle out.

Full Speed Ahead

The program gained strength at each meeting, because the staff realized that our management staff was serious about trying to address all of the issues and goals that were identified in the initial meetings. As goals were met and issues were addressed, the few staff members that were not willing to buy-in became fewer.

Each meeting was dedicated to only one or two goals or issues, and depending upon the subject, the staff became more and more willing to engage in thoughtful discussions and in some cases exercises that would help reach that particular goal. No decisions were made without their input or buy-in.

The Work Order System

Probably the single most important improvement to the department and its ability to perform facilities management responsibilities on campus was the development of a new web based work order system. The staff had identified many obstacles they felt were keeping our department from attaining our goals. We felt that many of those obstacles could be addressed through a good system customized to our needs. We felt it crucial to the program and to the success of the work order system that the staff be involved in designing the system

A committee of 25 staff members was formed to research and investigate what might be available to us. Demonstrations were arranged through the web for the committee to view and try out. Some of the obstacles/issues identified that we hoped would be addressed through a good work order system were:

- Communication – both within the department, and within the campus community regarding requests for assistance
- Time management – staff needed to be able to account for their time. Concerns that some staff were carrying the load for others
- Productivity – managers and supervisors wanted to have a way of measuring actual time vs. estimated time
- Fairness – staff wanted to have an objective method from which to be evaluated. In the past annual evaluations were given by supervisors without hard data
- Inventory – select a system that could tie in inventory requisitions directly to individual work orders
- PM management – only a small percentage of PM's were actually in the old system. Capture all preventive maintenance tasks and time to see if staffing is adequate to complete what is required
- Remote communications – select a system that would have the capability to communicate electronically with staff in the field
- Scheduling of work – system should be used as a tool for supervisors and staff to prioritize and schedule work requests

After a lot of research, the subcommittee selected a system called Facility Wizard Work order-arama. The system was customized to our departments needs, and all of the concerns that were identified were able to be addressed within the new system.

The system was introduced to the campus community in April of 2006 with great success. Bar coding connecting to our inventory with the work order system was added in June of 2006. All supervisors and managers were provided with blackberry devices enabling them to get direct emails in the field from the system in March of 2007.

Every campus community member who puts in a work request gets contacted automatically by the system, and can inquire as to the status of their request. They also are notified by the system when the work has been completed.

The system is used by all supervisors and managers to prioritize and schedule work orders for planned maintenance.

The system is now used as a tool for objective evaluation for all hourly staff using the data collected throughout the year. Information such as actual hours worked vs. estimated hours, number of work orders completed (tied to productivity), number of work orders initiated (tied to initiative) can be benchmarked against shop averages and departmental averages.

Departmental productivity can now be monitored with some degree of accuracy. Prior to the programs inception, the department was completing 13,000 work orders a year. In 2007 we tracked 34,000 completed work orders. The most glaring difference we found initially was in the operating budget for each shop. The shops were accounting for their work; they were doing more work, which meant they were spending more on supplies, exceeding their budgets. Be careful what you wish for.

The Program Progresses

Over time, the program evolved into training sessions given by different members of the management team. Enclosed in this application is one example of a presentation given on *Perception*.

Other topics included team work, where the staff members were randomly divided into teams. A pattern of colored blocks of different shapes was displayed in a certain configuration, and each group had a chance to study it. They were then asked to go back to their team and replicate the pattern as close as they could with an identical set of blocks. It was great to see plumbers, electricians, and cleaners all working together to complete the task.

Recognition

One of the issues the staff brought up was that of appropriate, meaningful recognition. Our management team has the philosophy that you can never have enough opportunities to give a staff member a pat on the back. While that works on the day to day front, we thought it would be good to recognize their contributions as a whole. Longevity of service seemed to be a good way of doing this.

We compiled the data on our staff, and grouped them from 1-3 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years etc. all the way up to 40+ years. At one meeting we produced a slide show showing old photos of how the campus looked when the staff member of the longest years started working at Union. After the slides, we handed out pins showing the years of service in Facilities with a garnet crystal stone (Union's color) to each staff member starting with the newest and ending with the longest, announcing their names individually, graduation-style. At that point, the few "nonbelievers" were converted.

Facilities Fitness Program

The most recent and in our opinion one of the most successful components of the Excellence Program began at the end of August of 2007. As stated earlier, many of our staff members in Facilities have been with the College for a long time. This means that we all aren't getting any younger. Knowing this, having our staff healthy and feeling good becomes more important than ever.

How could we get them to use our great athletic center to exercise? A committee of staff members concluded that the best way seemed to be to provide a fitness program and give them an incentive that was universal; *time off*. Union runs on a trimester system. We developed a contract that stated that the fitness program would run for the entire 10 week fall term. If they wanted to join the program, they signed the contract that stated that if they went to the Fitness Center or other area on campus 3 times a week for the entire term, they would get 1 ½ days off to be used during the following term. A copy of the contract is attached. They were given a calendar to record their work out days, to be initialed by their supervisor. As a bonus they received a T shirt and a water bottle (see enclosed photo) with the program logo dubbed by the committee: *Facilities Fitness Fanatics; we don't just maintain buildings*.

We introduced the program at one of the meetings, and had a guest speaker from the fitness equipment company we deal with to speak about proper fitness. To be honest, were hoping that perhaps 20 out of the 110 staff would be willing to join.

That day 50 staff members signed up. We were amazed to see how energized they were. When word got out on campus, we had folks from other departments asking if they could join. The program was a great success. We knew we might have some attrition over time, and at the end of the term we had a luncheon (salad) for all those that stuck it out, which turned out to be 35 staff members. We gave each a "graduation" present of a pedometer. Many lost weight, but all were feeling healthier. This term we had all 35 staff members sign up again to continue. It's amazing to see our staff wearing the shirts all at once in the gym.

The Excellence Program Today

The program continues, usually with a meeting each month that either has a training component, or we use it as a vehicle to communicate to the entire staff to give them information on topics like what is happening on campus in the future that might affect them.

We have taken some great strides as a department thanks to this program, and we have been able to provide improved service to the campus community. The program will be on-going. We still have strides to make, but we truly feel that we have gotten a little better each day.

Fulfilling the Criteria for the Award

- I) Institutional benefit – The benefits to the Union College campus are many. The Facilities Department is now stronger, and more important, on a course of continued growth. The marked increase in productivity is evidenced by the amount of work orders we now complete compared to previous years. The perception of the department within the campus community is improved

dramatically. The needs of the campus community are better served by the increased productivity and the instant communication now available. And finally, improving our department's practices and empowering our staff provides a stronger stewardship of the Union campus.

II) Innovative, Creativity, and Originality

This program is not dictated by the management, but is rooted in the idea that the staff is instrumental in its creation and direction. Creativity, innovation, and originality were actually goals in the program, as they are in our approach to the everyday caretaking of the campus environs and community. Team building, employee recognition, and the Facilities Fitness Program are examples of the type of original thinking that went into the program.

III) Portability and Sustainability

Each institution is different; however this program or even portions of the program could easily be tailored to any department to address their specific needs. Sustainability is addressed through a stronger preventive maintenance program as well as through a stronger, healthier, and happier work force.

IV) Management Commitment/Employee Involvement

This program has the complete support of the administration of the College. The Vice President of Finance and Administration attends meetings whenever she is available. As stated the program was developed by both the hourly staff and the management of Facilities Services at Union. Over time, we had 100% participation in the program.

V) Documentation, Analysis, Customer Input, & Benchmarking

Documentation, analysis, and benchmarking are all completed within the new work order system, as all planned work is scheduled by the supervisors, all materials and supplies are bar coded directly to individual work orders, and all labor and material is automatically calculated on the order once it's closed so we know how much the work cost. As stated, we now run reports on productivity that are used as an evaluation tool for each employee, as well as comparative data for work load completion between departments. Customers are contacted automatically regarding the status of their request.

In summary the Excellence Program has changed how we at Facilities Services do business, maintain the campus and interface with our customers in the campus community. The staff members are feeling good about themselves, are working as a team, and realize the importance of their work. The community has benefited from the improved scheduling and immediate communication.

Meeting notes 2/21/05 – 2/28/05
"Obstacles to Excellence"

Parking- Need a place to park college vehicle – Departmental issues

Why are the students on "community time" not assigned to other groups (e.g. cleaning)

Communication- Supervisor to employees -Missed opportunities to gain efficiencies

Communication

Personal clothes get ruined.

Money as an incentive- Being asked to do more- Where's more \$\$?

Poor Morale- you work hard only for a student to mess up what you just did- vandalism

Stressful time in summer with set-ups and clean-ups

Summer cleaning- very stressful- Cleaning up after the students at the same time getting ready for summer programs- Also # of missing people.

People who don't use sick time should get some form of compensation.

Duplicate work requests and slow turn around

Vandalism goes unnoticed- need quicker communication on status of jobs.

Better communication to everyone on required set-ups.

Motivation/evaluation improvements- need better advancement program- no where to go – promotion

Parking when returning to office in personal vehicle- Need temporary holding spot

Rules- Have a list of rules in each residence hall to limit vandalism.

For summer break, sometime half of room is done only to go back next day to finish.

Fear of change with this program– Need constant communication.

We should talk about this effort (Excellence Meetings) with each other.

Motivation System- Meaningful award recognition system- Timely, meaningful recognition Award

Need Material on a timely basis- Waiting for materials a problem

Lack of communication between departments-

Who will prioritize? - A supervisor might not necessarily know priorities.

Level of expectation among different departments

Buy-in to Program by Supervisors

~4% talking down program

Standardization of components and choice of components

Move meetings on faster

Consistent Commitment to job -Bad attitude, insubordination, not getting along

Communication on the condition of systems between workers-

New and high-tech type stuff scares some people – fear of the “new wo system”

Communication- Attitude, especially on nights- people just here taking up space

Attendance

More meetings to voice concerns

Monetary Incentive

No Standardization

No obstacles!!!!!!!

WO System needs change- biggest obstacle is negative attitude- fear of change- starting with managers to the “workers” –give things a chance-

No uniforms

Full cooperation from other departments- What other programs do other departments have-

Prioritizing-Problems repeating over and over- Steam problems/safety issues- Deferred Maintenance

Negative attitude

Housekeeping help especially in summer-

Negative Attitude- Inequities in pay – evaluations need help-

Morale improvements- title – increase responsibilities and title to higher paid workers-

Don't know how the program effects Grounds-

Poor manager attitude carries over to workers- animosity between people- bickering-

Cooperation between workers

Money- raises are an insult-

favoritism- teamwork- individuals showing lack of respect for other depts/people

Money- cost of new system

Administration- has to adapt changes for entire college-

management inadequacies/training-

Breakdown of communication to workers regarding contract work to take place in their area- be careful of micromanagement-

workers need to know what is available to them to grow or promote-

Getting on the same page- as far as the program

Improving attitudes of workers

Summer Cleaning- very stressful- contractors, programs, cleaning up after everyone-

follow thru with contractors- not enough people

Communication-left hand not knowing what the right is doing

Construction mess left-

Lack of participation, motivation- long term employee syndrome – more carrot/ more stick

Coordination with other departments-

Leaving deferred maintenance issues until they are breakdowns-

Use Central scheduling more effectively-

I'm happy

Summer Work- too stressful, not enough people

VANDALISM

Accountability- Lack of- Supervisors and workers

Communication and coordination – Walk thru construction projects before turnover

Summer help to accomplish routine tasks

Communication- all of the above- interdepartmental- taking out the carpet the day after it was shampooed- ownership – stepping on toes- no job jurisdiction -

Work better with Security-

Communication between departments-

Meetings are boring-

Lack of standardization- Many components obsolete

Summer cleaning stressful- not enough people

Davidson and Fox –magnetic locks on fire doors too high for some people-

fire doors are a problem- Potter has fire doors need to be locked and they are wedged open all the time-

Smoking is a problem- cigarette burns-

Security very slow responding

No radios for cleaners- need to find a phone to call someone Courtesy phone broken
Need Phones in closets

Redundant work orders

Narrow minded thinking- won't think out of the box- new construction lacks far-thinking as far as technology- poor engineering- value engineering- we spend a lot of time fixing new buildings

Work attitudes- morale- if I don't do it it will get done- accountability

Security access-

Lack of communication with summer work- working around contractors- need better scheduling of contractor work

Concern about understanding the work order system- Summer cleaning need more people

Summer cleaning and communication between the departments

Parking is a problem- staff- Hourly wages for housekeeping

Summer program scheduling adds extra work at a time when it is difficult

Communication and information on work orders- access to buildings by Security- I D of requestor on work order especially in Security-

Sense of being on a team – equality of pay among the trades

Bigger stockroom

Lack of coordination of activities between departments- Better communication- better communication of schedule- everyone should know

Work orders- don't know status of work orders-

Leadership- more direction- common goals- respect

More of an analytical approach to problem solving not just reaction

Building trust between staff and management

Keeping everything positive- communication, information, PMA (positive mental attitude)

- more money- comfort approaching management

Attitude- negative attitudes spread –

communication- monthly (?) meetings-

More buildings, more help-

Residence Life should be more in control of the students- Students don't seem to care –

Security should check more on students-

Ownership of all areas-

Shouldn't have to call in "sick" when they have either family illness or personal business

Trust between management and staff- Listen to staff- work together to resolve problems-

Carrying beeper during shut-downs and holidays- beeper pay too low-

People caught in middle of Step system-

Money too low- evaluations holding them back- people being here many years only making \$8-9 –

Money too low for people here a while- People filling in for absentees should get some extra benefit

People being utilized wrong- General Maintainers not doing Gen'l. Maint. work- Doing set-ups, moving etc. Should be first line of Maintenance- Lugging and lifting instead of maintaining-

Contractors get treated better than we do- They should come onto campus with the tools they need- not held responsible for problems they create-

No comment

Communication- get all of the info you need on a w.o. before you begin-

People feeling threatened if they don't match the number of w.o. someone else does

Vehicle maintenance is totally different than other groups

Morale- for instance- being evaluated- one guy – treat him good and you get a good evaluation-

Difference in pay for same job- people caught in step system-

Neatness- personal appearance-

Image to maintain- vehicle and equipment should look good- less vehicles but better vehicles- Professional image-

■ Agenda

- Introduction & Announcements
- Perception/Image
- Facilities/Residence Life Donation Program



Perception/Image

- How the Campus Community sees us as a department
- Our Department's success is sometimes tarnished by ignoring a poor condition





Perception/Image

- How the Campus Community sees us as individual workers ultimately reflects on the Facilities Department's Image:
 - How we look – “Dress for Success”
 - Looking good means feeling good (about ourselves.)

Perception/Image

- How can we portray a positive or negative image:
 - Our appearance/our actions
 - Our interaction with Campus Community members
 - Radio use etiquette
 - Film Clip from *Good Will Hunting*

Perception/Image

- Our image is affected by the quality of our work
- Completing a task and leaving the rest for someone else is like not doing the job at all as seen through the eyes of the end-user



Perception/Image

- The most dangerous of all:
 - Ignoring an unsafe condition
- It is our responsibility as stewards of the campus to provide a safe environment for the campus community
- It is our responsibility to protect Union College from costly liabilities



Perception/Image

- There are many conditions on campus that affect our image for which we have little control
- Lack of funding is usually the reason
- Every year “what not to do” is the hardest decision

