Creating a Model of Exemplary Services

Showcase “Best Practice”

► **Process Improved:** Gary Sandefur, Dean of the College of Letters of Science, challenged the division of Student Academic Affairs to create a national model of exemplary services. The proposed model would be generated from a student’s perspective and represent the idealized student experience awaiting every L & S student. That charge resulted in a year long “Futures Project.” Learn about the strategies employed, progress made, and challenges yet to be addressed.

► **Unit (s):** L&S

► **Customers of the Process and Their Needs:** Employees within SAA division, campus partnering departments that interact with SAA, the College of Letters and Science colleagues and departments, students of UW-Madison served by SAA or L&S and through the campus-wide programming, all UW students on campus.

► **Problem/Opportunity Statement:** The division of Student Academic Affairs strives to enhance its service to students through a process of self-reflection, visioning and organized action. The division will become a national model of exemplary services through division wide enhancements that reflect the idealized student experience at UW-Madison. SAA will sustain a work climate and regard for SAA personnel that is apparent and deserving of national status.

► **Changes Made:** As a result of the year-long project, SAA has been recognized as a campus role model for large-scale transformation that elevates the contributions of many, involves all who wish to participate, and consolidates contributions of work teams into products that improve services and climate. The Project has built capacity for implementing change through training, communications, and creation of structures for input and assessment. A process has been maintained to provide definition of idealized systems and processes as well as organizational renovation. The nature and process of decision-making has been altered to include broad based awareness and organized participation through management teams, work groups and staff assemblies. Attention to the value of formal organizational development activities has resulted in improved communications, networking, advocacy and problem solving. One work team completed a complex analysis of business systems processes with multiple recommendations for process improvements and enhanced operations. In progress is work related to idealized visioning of SAA for the year 2015. In that initiative, concepts and principles of ideal service models are being constructed for SAA-wide dialogue and determinations.

► **Results:** The SAA initiative has been promoted as an example of ‘the will and the wisdom of the people’ employing campus resources for self-improvement, team growth and division wide transformation. The language of “top down” has given way to “transparent processes” and encouragement is given to questioning rather than simple compliance; proposing new paths
over defending old, and imagining a method of serving that contributes to student learning and academic achievement. In support of its sustainability, work focused on creating new structures to assure participation, regard for diverse opinions and affirm levels of accountability with emphasis on managerial accountability. The project continues with decision making occurring on a continuing basis. Fall 2006 and the year 2007 are targeted as roll-out stages for the long-range vision of services and structures essential to support the vision.

**Lessons Learned:**
- It takes more time than scheduled.
- It takes even more time.
- Trust people.
- Apply the process.
- Value and results come from respecting people & processes
- Satisfy needs and achieve consensus.
- It doesn’t really end.

► **Next Steps:** The Futures Project transformed into *SAA in Motion* - the action phase of the collective works. *SAA in Motion* will roll-out over the summer 2006 with interim steps defined and work groups re-charged for the new school year. For several fundamental work areas, consensus is yet to be achieved, and will therefore become focal areas in 2006/07.

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