



Friday, March 26, 2004

Three schools collaborate to teach lean learning class

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

With the debut of the first lean principles graduate course this semester, Dennis Pawley's vision is becoming a reality. The OU trustee created the Pawley Institute to share lean learning concepts, with the ultimate goal to make American manufacturing more competitive.

Three OU schools – the **School of Education and Human Services** (SEHS), **School of Engineering and Computer Science** (SECS), and **School of Business Administration** (SBA) – are collaborating to teach the first lean learning course in the **Pawley Institute** to 24 students – eight from each school.

"It's a deep dive into the topic of lean, taught by three disciplines," said Kevin Yamada, executive director of the Pawley Institute. "There's the human side, the business side and the technical side of lean. In the real world, each department isn't separate. They all have to work together, and that's how we've structured this course."

The students are learning firsthand what it means to work together through the lab portion of the class. Working on cross-functional teams, the students are helping Nustep, an Ann Arbor manufacturing company, benefit from lean processes. Nustep builds a cross-training exercise machine used in physical therapy and rehabilitation programs. The students are writing a team paper and giving a presentation with their recommendations about the company's throughput and volume.

"How an engineer looks at a problem is different than how training and development looks at a problem," said Monica Tracey, assistant professor of education and lead instructor. "They're seeing a different perspective, and it's really playing out in the case study."

Graduate student Stan Duda agrees. The manufacturing engineer for Rochester Gear in Clifford, Mich., is benefiting from time spent with classmates and professors from other disciplines. "I like the different input I'm getting. Until this class, I didn't have a lot of experiences with the human resources and business side."

Tracey is joined by Sankar Sengupta, associate professor, SECS, and Gary Barber, professor, SECS, and Gene Fleidner, associate professor operations management, SBA, to teach the course.

In addition, guest speakers, including Pawley, visit the class to give their perspectives on lean learning. John Smith, vice president and chief operating officer of Ross Controls, spoke to the class about lean accounting principles. And, Pawley, the former executive vice president for Chrysler, impressed the students with his vast knowledge and business experience.

"It was just incredible," Yamada said. "Dennis is such a passionate speaker and he has a very infectious way of getting people excited about lean learning."

The lean learning class filled quickly this semester. Another class will be offered during the fall 2004 semester.

"Global competition is here with a vengeance" Yamada said. "Dennis hates for work to go to other countries. The Pawley Institute is his contribution to help the United States make manufacturing more competitive. It's not going to happen overnight. It will take two or three generations before we start seeing the results."

The transformation is beginning with students like Duda. "We're learning lean is more than implementing tools. It's about creating a culture. I never looked at it that way before," he said.

That's exactly what Pawley hoped for when he created the Pawley Institute. He wants the next generation of

engineers, human resource professionals and business managers to look at manufacturing in a new light – lean.

For more information, visit the [Pawley Institute](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, March 26, 2004
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, March 26, 2004
Article Start Date: Thursday, April 1, 2004