

Georgia Oglethorpe: Defining Who We Are - Improving on What We Do

Mike Renfrow
University of West Georgia

Dan Lewis
University of West Georgia

Abstract

Keeping continuous improvement as its compass, the department of Campus Planning & Facilities (CP&F) at the University of West Georgia (UWG) initiated a self assessment program in the spring of 2004 utilizing the criteria applied to the Georgia Oglethorpe Award, Inc. Patterned after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the criteria were created as a means to diagnose the maturity of a management/leadership system. This maturity is identified by the extent to which any organization has defined and deployed its approaches to leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurement analysis, human resource focus, process management, and business results.

The process took 11 months to complete and resulted in a 48-page application response that defined our organizational profile, identified our approach to the aforementioned criteria, and most importantly, provided us with an opportunity to learn more about ourselves. The application was reviewed by a team of outside examiners who performed a site visit in April 2005. CP&F will receive the Georgia Oglethorpe Focus Recognition Award in September 2005.

Introduction of the Organization

The Campus Planning and Facilities Department (CP&F) of the University of West Georgia (UWG) provides facility, grounds, logistics, maintenance, construction planning, risk management, and environmental health and safety support to the fifth largest campus within the University System of Georgia (USG). Located in Carrollton, Georgia, UWG is committed to the pursuit of “educational excellence in a learning environment.” This commitment is supported through the diligent efforts of CP&F using cost-effectiveness, continuous improvement, customer input, safety, and environmentally responsible methodology.

Serving within UWG’s Business and Finance Division, CP&F is comprised of three departments: Campus Planning and Development (CP&D), Facilities and Grounds (F&G), and Risk Management/ Environmental Health and Safety (RM/EHS). With a full-time staff of 135, CP&F is charged with the responsibility of operating, maintaining, and supporting a 394 acre campus with 70 facilities (1,653,648 gsf), while ensuring a safe, well maintained and aesthetically pleasing environment for over 10,000 students, 750 faculty and staff, and the surrounding university community.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

Keeping continuous improvement as its compass, CP&F at UWG initiated a self assessment program in the spring of 2004 utilizing the criteria applied to the Georgia Oglethorpe Award, Inc. Patterned after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the criteria were created as a means to diagnose the maturity of a management/leadership system. This maturity is identified by the extent to which any organization has defined

and deployed its approaches to leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurement analysis, human resource focus, process management, and business results.

Design

Under the leadership of Assistant Vice-President for Campus Planning and Facilities, Mike Renfrow, direct reports from each area met on a weekly basis from March to December 2004 to review and respond to the criteria questions. Matrices were constructed to breakdown the questions in the application, determine the methodology currently used, and develop a response.

The application response was limited to fifty pages and was submitted in December 2004. A site visit was conducted by outside examiners in April 2005. The application may be reviewed on the CP&F website:

http://moosh1101.westga.edu/cpf/Ga_Oglethorpe/2005GAoglethorpeUWG.pdf

Implementation

The assessment process revealed that there were disconnects in the approaches to several areas measured which resulted in CP&F's reevaluation and correction of the processes that are used in:

- Strategic Planning - CP&F was incorporating such planning resources as the UWG Master Plan, their mission and vision statement, the Bread and Butter Goals, and SACS Assessment, rather than aligning with one strategic plan. A comprehensive CP&F strategies document has since been drafted that incorporates the existing planning resources.
- Customer and Market Focus - Consultant studies and satisfaction surveys are not necessarily effective enough to measure who their customers are and what they

want. Customer evaluation and input has been improved with two-way communication with students (e.g. tours of campus), faculty and staff (e.g. quarterly meetings), and the community (e.g. 10 civic club presentations per year).

- Human Resource Focus - CP&F realized that two-way communications was instrumental in developing trust and direction. Employee input was essential to empowerment, efficient planning, and closer working relationships.
- Process Management – An evaluation of our core work processes led to changes in how we plan, schedule and organize work. Upgrades were made to our Computer Maintenance Management Software (CMMS). Peer reviews from other institutions along with advice from outside consultants provided us with a different perspective on our work force and methodologies.
- Business Results - Monthly reports were initiated to provide better documentation of the processes that were deployed. The CMMS upgrade will provide more accessible information regarding labor efficiency, work backlog, preventative maintenance, and material ordering.
- Benchmarking - Tools such as the APPA Strategic Assessment Model help in comparisons with other volunteer organizations but may not be as effective as best-in-class benchmarking with local industries, peer reviews and professional consultants.

Benefits

The application process was instrumental in identifying and defining CP&F's organizational governance and structure, strategic challenges and objectives, leadership planning and direction, and alignment with and support of the overall mission and vision of UWG. The process also required CP&F to examine and define their value creation processes, customer and market knowledge, social responsibilities, change management issues, performance measures, and business results.

Consultant analysis and peer review recommendations have been submitted and were initiated on technical support, staffing, and supplies. Planning upgrades to the CMMS have resulted in a more efficient method of organizing, scheduling and implementation of work, as well as improved documentation of daily metrics and business results.

Although the tangible benefit for this process is to be recognized as the recipient of the Georgia Oglethorpe Award, the assessment process itself has been the most rewarding experience. Weekly meetings with fellow CP&F representatives, reviewing current work processes and techniques, and reviewing business results and customer feedback, provided all with a better understanding of the workforce, the connectivity of the working areas, the work performance, and how our customers perceive us. Mike Renfrow proclaimed, "This process helped our focus, provided clarity, and added a level of simplicity as it redirected our thoughts towards what are customers require and how we achieve their needs."

UWG has also benefited as CP&F has excelled in improving employee morale, energy savings, grounds beautification, environmental compliance, customer satisfaction

assessments, and reinvestment of savings to other areas of UWG for improvement. With the consultant fees and upgrade of the CMMS system accounting for the major investments (\$127,000) in this incentive, CP&F takes pride in the following achievements:

- A 13.3% (\$1,028,537) reduction in their personal services and operating expenditures within the last five years
- The completion of a privatization residence housing project on campus known as Arbor View Apartments. The project adds 612 beds to our housing inventory and was completed in less than 12 months.
- Campus construction projects totaling \$2.7 million were completed on-time and in budget.
- An estimated 10% (\$706,489) increase in worker productivity.

Secondary beneficiaries include UWG's students, faculty and staff, and the West Georgia community as a whole. Benefits include the continued improvements in safety, landscaping, and maintenance of their 394 acre campus.

Retrospect

Despite the disconnects that were discovered during this assessment, CP&F completed the application process and applied for the post consensus feedback. "We were not in this for an award," declared Mr. Renfrow; "The primary goal for going through this application process is to determine how we can be a more effective organization." CP&F will receive the Georgia Oglethorpe Focus Recognition in September 2005 and plans to resubmit an application when it has determined that its processes are more aligned with the criteria for performance excellence.