

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Delaware Judiciary and U of Del. mark first anniversary  
of efficiency program partnership**

The Delaware Judicial Branch marked the first anniversary of its long-term process improvement agreement with the University of Delaware at a short ceremony today at the university's Alfred Lerner Hall in Newark. The partnership is designed to help the branch improve the efficiency and effectiveness of court operations by applying proven private sector process improvement management techniques.

Delaware Chief Justice Leo E. Strine, Jr. and Dean Bruce Weber of the Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics addressed the gathering and offered updates on the significant progress that has been made in the first year of the ten-year partnership. Also in attendance were representatives from other state agencies including the Attorney General's Office, the Office of Defense Services, the Department of Correction, the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services, and the Governor's Office. These agencies partnered with the Delaware Judiciary in this process improvement effort.

To date, the process improvement program has saved the Judicial Branch and participating partner agencies more than 4,250 staff hours. In addition, the program has provided students at the University of Delaware real-world, hands-on experience in implementing Lean Six Sigma process improvements.

The partnership with the university is part of the Delaware Judiciary's long-term plan to re-think the way the branch does business while investing in the professional development of its employees and using technology wisely. Ultimately, this effort will improve the quality and efficiency of the services provided to Delaware citizens.

"Taxpayers have a right to expect that we use their dollars as well as possible. Litigants have a right to expect that we process their cases as efficiently and conveniently for them as possible. By committing ourselves long-term as an entire judiciary, and not on a court specific basis, to adopting the best approach to process improvement used by leading private sector business and by having a leading school of business like Lerner be our partner in that process, we will save the public money and better serve the people who need our courts. Consistent with our commitment to using best business practices, Lerner has been our partner in our efforts to take the historic step of having every court in Delaware, in every case, civil or criminal, use the same high quality e-filing system. This will save an enormous amount of time and money, and also provide a foundation of quality information flow that is critical to improving our criminal justice system. Not least of all, our partnership with Lerner is an investment in our employees, because they get valuable training and experience that will help them have better opportunities for advancement," said Chief Justice Strine.

The Judicial Branch and partner agencies completed 19 process improvement projects, seven of which included student involvement. In one project, the student teams worked to update the Court of Common Pleas bail tracking system, converting it from a paper-based 3 by 5 card ledger system to an electronic spreadsheet on a shared drive. This effort alone yielded an annual estimated savings of 400 to 600 staff hours. Also, student teams helped the Department of Correction improve data collection and move to a less paper-intense system. The reduction of (and in some cases elimination of) paper combined with other improvements will save an estimated 2,000 staff hours. In addition, the improvements will help the DOC reduce both long-term storage space needs and the need for a courier service to shuttle case files between locations.

For the University of Delaware, the agreement has given students the kind of experience-driven learning that is in line with the mission of Lerner College.

“Lerner focuses on projects that we intend to be impactful and ‘add value’” said Dean Weber. “Based on the feedback we’ve gotten from all the parties, it has been a win-win for all concerned ... We strive as educators of future managers and leaders to develop entrepreneurial mindsets. This partnership is a really good example of how the University can work with a critical institution and a community partner with mutual benefits for both parties.”

Chief Justice Strine said he fully expects that the partnership with the University of Delaware will continue to pay similar efficiency dividends for many years to come, and the partnership will be a model that others will want to emulate.

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