Dealing With the Customer

"Customer relations is an integral part of your job -- not an extension of it."

-- William B. Martin, Quality Customer Service
Self-Directed Work Team Meets Challenge

When the Director for Budget and Institutional Research (B&IR) decided to take several months of leave-without-pay in December, Allen Simkins challenged the B&IR group to become a self-directed work team. As a self-directed team, the group assumed the responsibilities of the Director.

"Learning the dynamics of such a novel concept as a self-directed work team has been interesting for us," said Chris Clark, team leader. "I certainly appreciate Dee Vest acting as the facilitator for our team."

The formation of the team required specialized training, drafting a charter, and installing measurements. Some of the team measurements focused on process checks such as a customer satisfaction survey, project log system, interdepartmental procedure assessment, and team performance reviews.

Other important issues that were tackled were the hiring of replacements, weekly team meetings, consensus voting, improvements to the availability of electronic information, and the Longitudinal Student Tracking System. The latter, which is in the final stages of implementation, will enhance data access and improve student assessment.

"Working with the B&IR self-directed work team has been one of the most exciting challenges of my professional career," said Facilitator Dee Vest. "It was a challenge that has brought me a great deal of satisfaction in being part of a cohesive group who achieved difficult team objectives."

Now the B&IR Team faces a new challenge. As the Director returns to campus in August, the team has to redefine its role. They will still remain a self-directed team, but will give some of the team's responsibilities back to the Director. In addition, the Director will be redefining her role. In industry, some supervisors for self-directed teams have become linebackers for their teams, breaking down barriers which prevent them from succeeding. Some become sales reps for the team, maintaining customer contact and generating more business for the team.

"I charged this team with a difficult task," said Allen Simkins. "But they came through with flying colors, and I think they learned a great deal in the process. I admire their determination and accomplishments. I'm certain they'll handle this new challenge equally well."

Put this on your calendar!

Administrative Services Opening of School Meetings
Wednesday and Thursday, September 4th and 5th

Look for:

■ A General Session that will teach us how to make lemonade out of life's lemons
■ A Videofest featuring Tom Peters and other quality experts
■ A session that will help us see that we do make a difference in providing great customer service
■ A session that will tell us about our involvement in the 2002 Winter Olympics

First 100 employees to attend the General Session will receive a free polo shirt!