

GUEST PARKING AT SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY: FROM A DIRT ROAD TO THE HIGHWAY

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

An overhaul of the guest parking permit procedure at Sonoma State University turned a labor-intensive and error-prone system into a smooth, quick, efficient and well-communicated process benefiting the guest, the campus host and Parking Services.

Previously, the guest parking request process at Sonoma State University was completely manual and time-consuming. Each request required approval by a manager and touched no less than four people in order to have the request completed and the pass available to the guest. The process required a minimum 48-hour advance notice and manual entry of the information into a spreadsheet, which was then printed and walked to the information booth on a daily basis because internet did not extend to the booth. Often, without 48-hour notice, visits resulted in someone paying for guest parking out of pocket.

Using Lean Six Sigma tools and methodologies, a project team looked closely at the guest-parking process and made recommendations for removal of steps that did not provide value to the end user. Through a partnership with the Sonoma State IT department and changes to university procedures, the guest parking process was reduced from as many as 24 steps to four steps and is now almost completely automated.

The 48 hour turnaround time for permit requests was reduced to seconds through an online, error-proofed form that generates a request directly to the information booth. Added benefits to the process also include email communication to the requestor and host about the guest permit, along with communication with the guest about where to pick up their parking permit and any notes from the official host to the guest. This level of communication helped close the loop between the requestor, host, guest and parking services.

The new online guest parking process collects accurate data that may be audited appropriately and consistently. It ensures compliance with the campus' policy on guest parking, and the parking manager now reviews requests on a monthly basis and shares reports directly with appropriate departments without having to revisit the data to perform clean-up.

MILESTONES

Sep
2017

- Project kickoff

Sept - Oct
2017

- Historical data collection and analysis

Oct
2017

- Campus user surveys

Jan
2018

- To-be process design

Jan-Mar
2018

- IT webform design

Mar - Apr
2018

- Pilot and final testing

May
2018

- Deployment of program

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

Before the implementation of the new guest-parking process, more than 27,500 individual requests were processed from July 2014 through October 2017. The process was heavily manual, requiring data entry both by the requestor and by Transportation and Parking Services staff. An email from the requestor with details was manually transcribed into a database, inputting key information from both the requestor and guest.

In a random sampling, one requestor submitted 107 permits over the two-and-a-half-year period with only 35 percent of the requests entered correctly.

Today, with the addition of the webform, the requestor information is automatically generated from the single sign-on registry resulting in 100 percent accuracy. The webform allows for validation of the requested permits and a policy-compliant audit trail.

With the new automated requests, permits are delivered in seconds vs. the previous 48 hours. The decrease in delivery time is a direct benefit to the campus community as they may now conveniently arrange for parking permits on short notice.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

Guests, requestors and official hosts now receive an email from Transportation and Parking Services confirming the request. Previously, communication was inconsistent and infrequent.

Permit requestors and official hosts now have their pertinent information entered automatically with the single sign-in campus registry database; this ensures accuracy and ability to easily analyze usage.

Required advance notice for permit requests has dropped from 48 hours to just seconds by leveraging technology.

Transportation and Parking Services will save close to 2,000 sheets of paper per year and more than 400 hours of staff time processing guest parking.

Overall, this new process has been successful and met with appreciation from across the campus.

LESSONS LEARNED

1

Building the ideal to-be process prior to involving IT allowed for co-creation of a specification document that leveraged available technology and resources but maintained a simple and efficient process.

2

Development of a clear communication plan would have helped ensure a consistent deployment of the solution across campus.

PROJECT TEAM

Mike Ogg

director of continuous improvement and project lead

Tyson Hill

senior director of Risk Management and Safety Services and project sponsor

Missy Brunetta

director of Emergency Services and interim director of Parking Services

Karen Leitsch

administrative manager for School of Social Sciences

Kendall Newman

assistant budget support analyst

Megan Varnadore

parking operations manager

Jordan Bergero

programmer/analyst

Brian Biggs

programmer/analyst

FURTHER REFERENCE

SSU Transportation & Parking Services visitor parking site:

<https://web.sonoma.edu/parking/permits/visitors.html>