

## A Focus on Service Excellence *By Denisa Metko*

**T**hree years ago, Rollins College President Lewis Duncan launched an initiative designed to improve the experiences from a service standpoint of students, campus visitors, alumni, employees and other institutional stakeholders. Dubbed the Service Excellence Initiative, it revolves around four service standards identified by the president and his leadership team — responsive, respectful, competent and collaborative.

At the outset of the initiative, the president assembled a team of senior leaders (the Service Excellence Team) to spearhead the campus-wide effort to integrate Rollins' service philosophy and standards into its internal processes, identify solutions to service issues and problems on an ongoing basis, and provide training and support to the campus community. In just three short years, the Service Excellence Initiative has grown to permeate the entire Rollins campus, and thanks to several drivers that keep it front and center, the service philosophy is top of mind for most every employee.

### Recognition

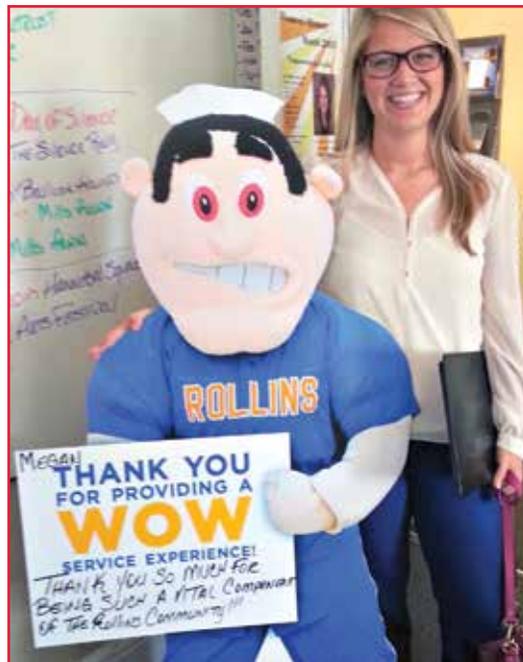
Public recognition of a job well done is the foundation of the Service Excellence Initiative, and there are several mechanisms by which Rollins employees are acknowledged for their efforts and commitment to service excellence.

#### Wow! E-Card

Wow! e-cards provide an easy way for any member of the campus community to quickly and personally acknowledge a Rollins employee for exceptional service. It's as simple as filling out a quick online form on the Service Excellence website and hitting the "submit" button. The e-card features Rollins' mascot, Tommy the Tar, with the message "You provided a Wow! experience." Senders also have the option of composing a short personal note to accompany the card.

#### Traveling Tommy Award

Rollins' newest service excellence award, Traveling Tommy is a four-foot-tall cardboard cutout of mascot Tommy the Tar holding a dry-erase version of the Wow! e-card on which the recipient's service deed is written. Each recipient displays Tommy in his or her work area for a period of up to two weeks before passing him along to another deserving recipient. Wherever Traveling Tommy is spotted on campus, he serves as a reminder that service excellence is alive and well at Rollins.



*Rollins College employee Megan Joyner with her Traveling Tommy Award*

#### Service Excellence Departmental Award

This annual award was established as a means of recognizing a campus department or team for demonstrated evidence of meeting or exceeding Rollins' service standards. Any faculty or staff member can submit a nomination. The department selected for the award is recognized at the college's annual awards celebration, receives a trophy and a plaque, and each member of the department receives a \$10 gift card to the campus bookstore. Rollins' HR department was the 2012 recipient.

#### "You Are Remarkable" Staff Recognition Award

This award is given annually to a handful of Rollins staff members who have gone above and beyond to offer exceptional customer service. Any member of the campus community can submit a nomination for the "You Are Remarkable" award. Each recipient receives personal recognition from Rollins' president, an award certificate and a \$50 deposit on his or her R-card. Six individuals per year receive the award, but nominees also are recognized, with each receiving a card and a "You Made Your Mark" button, which they are encouraged to wear with pride!

#### Service Excellence Kudos

Another way individuals can be publicly recognized for exemplifying Rollins' four pillars of service excellence

is with a Service Excellence Kudos. Any member of the Rollins community can fill out the online form to submit a shout-out to an individual. The form is sent electronically to the Service Excellence Team, which then posts the kudos to an online Wall of Acknowledgement on the Service Excellence website. Each kudos message is addressed to the recipient and signed by the sender. Currently, there are more than 70 kudos posted to the “wall.” Just one example:

“I stopped by the bursar’s office this morning to process a reimbursement and forgot my R-card when I left. Pat was nice enough to call me to let me know and when she couldn’t reach me, delivered it on her way to lunch. Thanks so much for going out of your way to help me, Pat!”

## Service Obstacle System

If recognition is the foundation of Rollins’ Service Excellence Initiative, then the Service Obstacle System is the cornerstone. The Service Obstacle System (SOS) is a mechanism by which employees can report campus-wide system obstacles that impede them from delivering excellent service to students, colleagues and other members of the Rollins community.

The SOS is not merely a complaint box to report minor problems, but rather is intended for issues that are larger in scope and systemic in nature with the potential to affect more than one person from providing excellent service. Observations that are submitted through the online SOS are evaluated by a cross-functional team, as well as management and staff representatives from the departments closest to the issue.

The process is simple, and the automation ensures communication flow and efficiency. When submitting a ticket, submitters must:

- Include at least one example of the obstacle and be as specific as possible;
- Describe the impact on the customer experience and/or the ability to provide excellent service to the customer;
- Include which department(s) might be involved in helping to resolve the obstacle;
- Include any recommendations for solving the issue;
- Indicate if they know of any action that has already been taken in an attempt to mitigate the obstacle.

Upon submission of the ticket, the submitter is automatically greeted with a thank-you notice, ensuring

the individual that the submission has been successful and that it will be discussed at the next scheduled SOS meeting. The traffic control coordinator, the member of the SOS team charged with the maintenance and information sharing responsibilities, receives an e-mail notification of the issue, and then alerts the other team members of the new issue.

The team investigates the problem and identifies members or departments within the college most closely connected with the issue. A representative of the team brings the issue to the attention of those with the responsibility to eliminate or change the obstacle. All involved explore possible solutions and ultimately develop a suitable resolution, all the while keeping the obstacle submitter in the loop with an automated communications system.

Since the SOS was launched in June 2011, more than 50 tickets have been submitted, with 30 having been successfully closed and the remaining 20 presently being worked on. The variety of resolutions has ranged from creating an office for student employment to the enhancement of campus maps.

## STARSS

Striving to Achieve Rollins Service Standards (STARSS) is an ongoing series of workshops, discussion forums, speakers and events intended to foster dialogue, interaction, professional development and community building around the college’s four service standards. All faculty and staff are encouraged to attend at least one of the events each year.

## A Culture of Service Excellence

Excellence in service delivery is an important element of Rollins College’s mission. We believe that all employees are in a position to shape the service culture of the organization. Simple, inexpensive, creative mechanisms like our many recognition tools, the Service Obstacle System, the Service Excellence website, and our workshops and training sessions ensure that service excellence is at the forefront of all that we do. The culture shift has been remarkable, as providing outstanding service seems to be second nature now to most Rollins employees. As we enter the third year of the Service Excellence Initiative, we can’t wait to try and top ourselves yet again! 

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