

By Ingrid Ostby

Best-in-Class

Implementing industry knowledge in academia and beyond

Jill Anne O'Sullivan is an accomplished woman. She recently was awarded the Progressive Manufacturing PM100 2010 Award for her efforts teaching an enterprise resources planning (ERP) course. Farmingdale State College, where she is an assistant professor, was the only college honored.

O'Sullivan also was named APICS Board Member of the Year in 2008 for her commitment to the New York City-Long Island (NYC-LI) chapter, and she received an Excellence in Teaching award from Farmingdale College Foundation.

Along with these accolades, O'Sullivan is the executive vice president of the APICS NYC-LI chapter and is working toward her doctorate at Pace University. At Farmingdale State, she has been a part of the business management department since 2003, teaching operations and supply chain management, strategic management, Just-in-Time (JIT) inventory management, and introduction to ERP. She also has written an ERP textbook for her class entitled *Enterprise Resource Planning: A Transitional Approach from the Classroom to the Business World*.

O'Sullivan joined APICS in 2007 after a colleague explained how membership advances operations knowledge. APICS also is referenced in the operations textbook from which O'Sullivan teaches, so it seemed like a natural progression. She says she was interested in staying connected to industry professionals and encouraging her students' involvement in the APICS student chapter at Farmingdale State.

Her participation in the NYC-LI APICS chapter board of directors has been rewarding for O'Sullivan. "Being a part of NYC-LI APICS has allowed me to form relationships with other dedi-

cated volunteers who have an interest in the next generation—my students," she explains.

ERP advancement

Through the NYC-LI chapter, O'Sullivan was offered an opportunity to collaborate with industry experts to help bring a state-of-the-art ERP system into the classroom. "This is a gifted system database used in my local workforce. With the opportunity to teach this to my students, I, in turn, am preparing future employees for the workforce," she says. "This is a cyclical type of relationship ... [the] gift is used and returned in the form of potentially skilled workers, reducing the time for training and helping with implementation or ERP systems needs."

O'Sullivan adds that the system has proven very successful and now is used in small and midsized businesses on the local, national, and international levels.

Farmingdale State since has designated labs for students to use the ERP database. "Through these activities ... I have been able to provide students to local companies [for employment] who are prepared with ERP knowledge that sometimes surpasses [the knowledge of current] employees at these companies," O'Sullivan says. "Students armed with this skill set have a competitive advantage over other candidates when applying for positions."



Jill Anne O'Sullivan

Assistant professor

Farmingdale State College

O'Sullivan has found the APICS body of knowledge to be a crucial part of implementing the ERP system and in creating her ERP textbook. She uses it for course material in her operations and supply chain management and JIT courses, as well. "I use the APICS body of knowledge in all the classes I teach traditionally and online," O'Sullivan says.

Industry awareness

Of all her efforts and awards, O'Sullivan says, "They would not have happened if I did not belong to NYC-LI APICS." She adds that volunteering for APICS makes her more aware of industry best practices, which she brings into the classroom.

"Volunteering at the NYC-LI chapter helps me understand the strengths of people, the weaknesses of processes, [and] the opportunities for change," O'Sullivan says. "I see enormous potential for what APICS, the industry, and academia can do."

While O'Sullivan believes having industry input and support are validations of her efforts, what's most critical for her is seeing how businesspeople can work together to make a difference. "APICS rewards me with the options to accomplish much and be motivated by others," she says. "It has stirred my interest in aiding my students' growth and career potential."

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