Cal Poly Graphic Communication Institute Advises Printing Professionals in Middle East

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Two Cal Poly Graphic Communication Department professors traveled to the Middle East recently to teach professionals there the latest graphic arts concepts and methods.

Professors Malcolm Keif and Kevin Cooper spent a week in Manama, Bahrain, as part of a project of the Graphic Communication Institute at Cal Poly. They were invited by the Concise Trade Margin Group of Bahrain to educate printing company executives on strategic management and “lean management” concepts.

Lean management focuses on implementing more efficient and profitable production processes using employee empowerment, teams and product “pull,” with existing or fewer resources, Keif explained. The Kingdom of Bahrain is one of the six-member countries comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The other GCC countries are Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

Keif and Cooper conducted two seminars for executives from four GCC countries, toured local printing companies, and experienced Bahrain's culture and methods of conducting business.

Also during their stay, Cooper and Keif were invited to tour and address the director of the Bahrain Ministry of Information and Head of Production for the government printing office.

“Visiting Bahrain exceeded my expectations,” Keif said. “The people were very friendly and receptive to the concepts we were promoting. There are deep cultural values that make employee empowerment challenging, but there was a willingness to pursue lean principles.”

Cooper agreed that the experience was “tremendous for us personally and for the Graphic Communication Institute at Cal Poly. Everyone made us feel very welcome and helped us better understand the issues of the region.”

Harvey Levenson, head of Cal Poly's Graphic Communication Department, said, “While Cal Poly is a state university, for decades the Graphic Communication program has attracted national attention. We are now positioned with a faculty having the knowledge and experience to influence the international graphic communication community. The Bahrain program is one example. The Graphic Communication Department presently has programs pending with institutions in Russia, China and Great Britain.”

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