

# **Business and Finance**

## Secret Shopper Program



**North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University**



# Secret Shopper Program

The Secret Shopper Program is an initiative implemented to obtain an objective view of North Carolina A&T State University through evaluating our level of customer service. A Secret Shopper visits the perspective departments anonymously, posing as a regular customer, to experience and evaluate the level of customer service provided. Secret Shopping provides management with a detailed assessment of employee performance and the variables that affect our customer's experience and satisfaction.



## Objectives

The core business objectives are the following for the Secret Shopper Program:

- § To provide management with a conclusive data to measure the current performance of employees.
- § To provide management with an understanding of employee's areas of strength, while highlighting those areas requiring additional attention or training.
- § To provide management with actionable information to improve customer service and enhance employee performance.



## Development

- § A committee was established by the Vice Chancellor of Business and Finance. It consisted of six (6) employees, two (2) students and later joined by a consultant.
- § Established regular meeting dates.
- § Developed customer service standards, expectations and goals.
- § Accessed the University's current culture and re-evaluated it for solutions of improvement.
- § Established guidelines and continuity.
- § Discussed the logistics for implementing the program.
- § Identified and instituted a list of key departments that were student-driven to target immediately.



# Process

- § Committee members partnered with student participants to identify questions pertaining to their experience.
- § Implemented an automated process to standardize the survey questions through an online portal providing access via mobile web links, email or SMS text, or scanning QR code for all participating departments.
- § Prioritized the list of perspective departments to target.
- § Identified four (4) high service areas: Bookstore, Financial Aid, Treasurer's /Cashier's Office and Sebastian Health Center.
- § Developed launch dates, locations and training for students participating in the program.
- § Established specific questions for the perspective departments relating to their area.

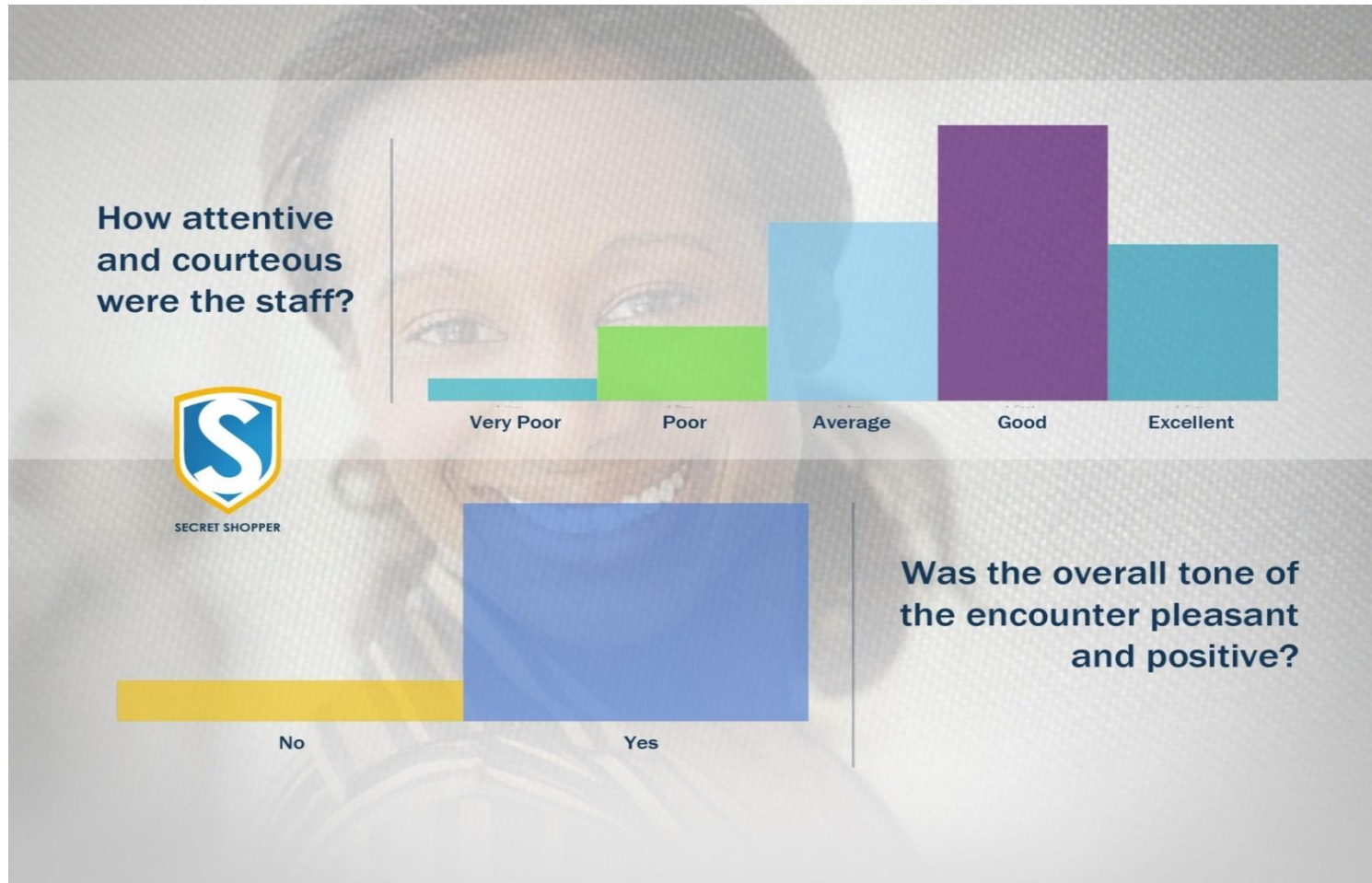


# Results

- § The first official launch was January 17, 2013.
- § Student survey included a series of 24 yes/no responses, short answer questions, and scaled questions.
- § The scale questions rate on a 5 point scale (1=very poor, 2=poor, 3=average, 4=good and 5=excellent).
- § A total of 95 responses were collected.
- § The results collected from the launch allowed the committee to provide useable data toward improving overall customer service on campus.
- § Overall consistency of the results did allow the committee to identify area of weakness, strengths and improvement.



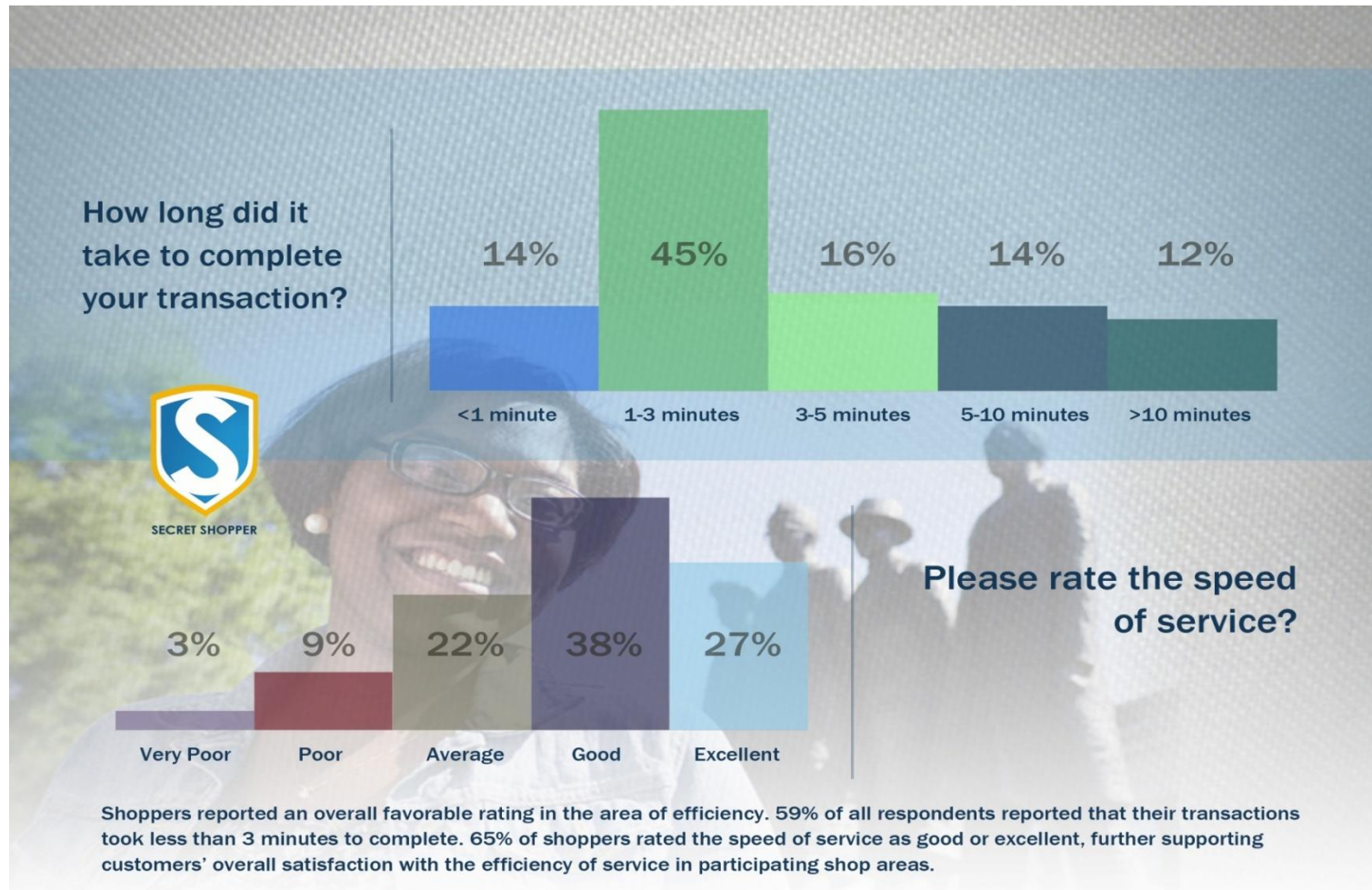
# Sample Results







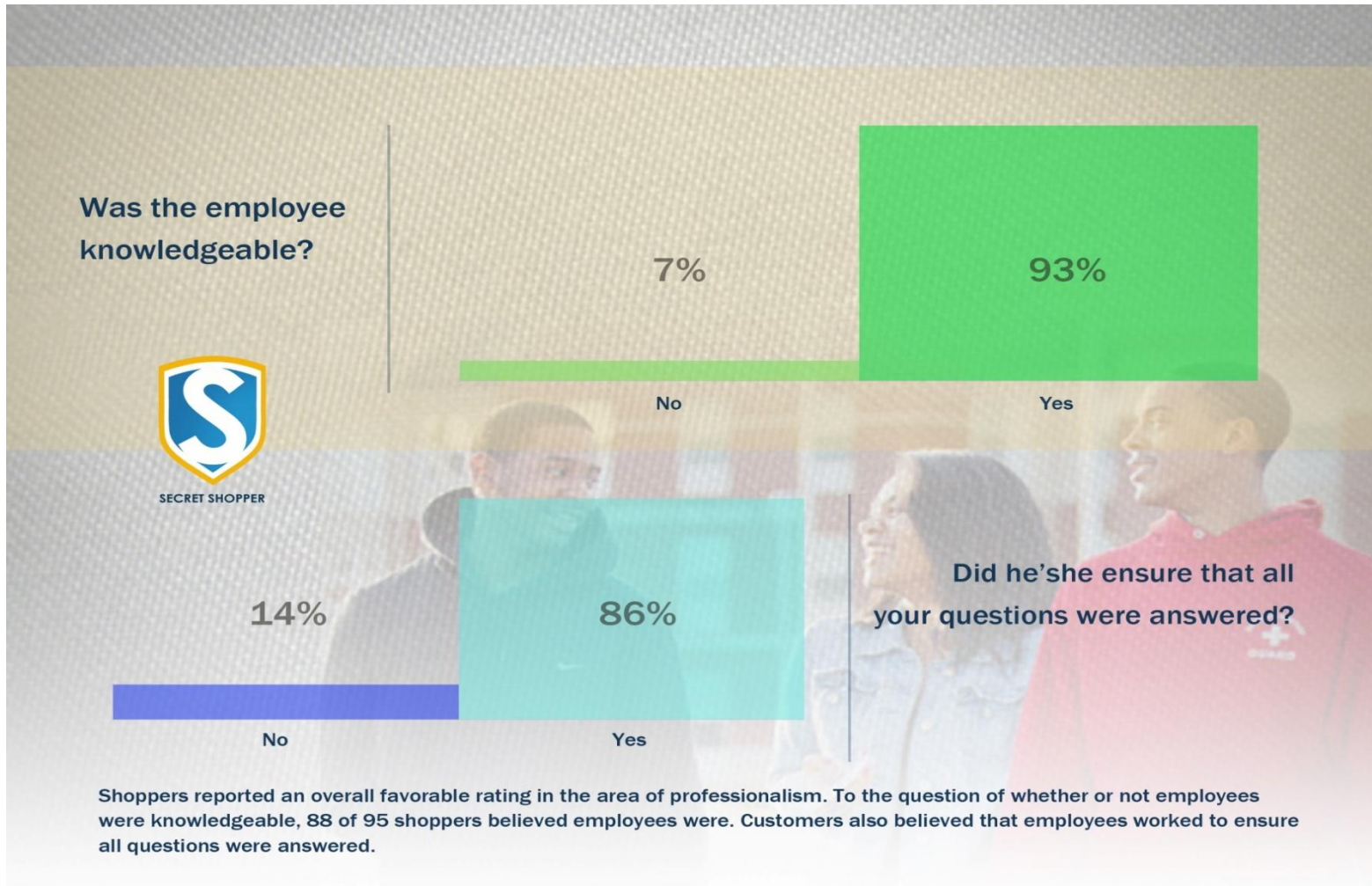
# Sample Results Cont.







# Sample Results Cont.



Shoppers reported an overall favorable rating in the area of professionalism. To the question of whether or not employees were knowledgeable, 88 of 95 shoppers believed employees were. Customers also believed that employees worked to ensure all questions were answered.



# Key Observations

- § **Missing Name Tags:** What's in a name? When it comes to customer service and leaving lasting, positive impressions upon customers, remembering a name is important. If only for a few moments after a visit, a customer's ability to place names with areas enhances buy-in and speaks to our ability to build customer relationships. Many shoppers cited the lack of name tags for frequent inability to remember the names of helpful staff members are persons who answered questions.
- § **Speed of Service:** Overall speed of service was a high point for shoppers throughout the shop period. Efficiency of staff members goes a long way to create positive experiences for customers.
- § **Telephone Etiquette:** Customers are always watching and listening. Some shoppers cited good and bad telephone etiquette within shop areas. Focus on first point-of-contact across all methods of communication and connection with customers should be a focus. We must give the same care and professionalism to phone customers as we do in face to face encounters to ensure consistently excellent customer service.



# Lessons Learned

- § **Wait Time:** Respondents did not uniformly report long wait times for services rendered. Future shops will target areas during traditional high-traffic or peak times to make sure we are gaining realistic information.
  
- § **Greetings and Thank You:** Perhaps the most strikingly consistent low mark among shoppers was the lack of the most powerful words in customer service, "thank you". Respondents, without regard to area, overwhelmingly cited a failure by staff to thank them at the conclusion of visits. A great takeaway from this shop might be the implementation of a university-wide effort to enhance customer service.



## Next Steps

- § Meet department heads of areas shopped to discuss findings; identifying areas of success, weakness and improvement.
- § Establish reports to submit for Chancellor's review of all area shopped and findings.
- § Develop an execution plan for program over Summer months for new rollout in Fall 2013.
- § Increase shopper database by recruiting during Summer School and Orientation.



# Future

This program will assist North Carolina A&T to become one of the premier institution for higher education by providing exemplary customer service.

- § Expand and refine current program, to include a re-evaluation of areas previously shopped to measure improvement.
- § Revisit the exploration of official naming and branding of the Secret Shopper Program.
- § Explore different incentive options for student participation.
- § Develop a program recognizing areas that have achieved exemplary customer service.



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