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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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“Quality questions create a quality life.”

Anthony Robbins

Vice Chairman for Health Education, and Science for the United Nations Research Center for the International Council for Caring Communities

### APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY WORKSHOP STUDY

#### OBJECTIVE

The Executive Committee of the Office of Faculty Governance (2009-10)\* studied and adopted the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method as a way of strengthening the faculty's voice in determining the University's future, enhancing faculty vitality, and implementing positive change. As a companion piece to the Bain Report (now Carolina Counts) which is generally instructive based on the needs of the University, Appreciative Inquiry methodology is asset/strength based and may well prove beneficial in this period of financial stress which has led to severe material cutbacks and lowering of morale across campus.

What differentiates Appreciative Inquiry as a method from other forms of group involvement and problem solving is its emphasis on starting any planning process with activities that allow building from strengths, creating a sense of community in the working group, learning from past positive experiences, and by developing shared common vision before addressing deficits and problems. This not only mobilizes positive energy; it also creates a focus on forward movement and the changes that are wanted rather than past failures and disappointments.

The conclusion of the FEC assessment was that the AI approach could have a positive effect on such diverse efforts as the Academic Plan, the Innovation Roadmap, mentoring programs, and change based efforts in departments, schools, and programs. The Office of Faculty Governance asks to begin a dialogue about how what we have learned through this process might benefit these and similar University wide efforts.

\*A committee made up of Pete Andrews, Chair of Public Policy, Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Chair of Religious Studies, and Dennis Mumby, Chair of Communications Studies, Anne Whisnant, Office of Faculty Governance and David Kiel (then), Institute for the Arts and Humanities reviewed the AI literature and consulted with Professor Gordon Whitaker of the School of Government, who heads the SOG public engagement project, and with Margaret Henderson, and Lydian Altman, who are SOG staff members and AI practitioners working with local government.

#### METHOD/STUDY

##### **Strengthening Faculty Voice through Appreciative Inquiry; a Workshop for the UNC Faculty**

Sponsored by the Office of Faculty Governance, the Center for Faculty Excellence and the Institute for the Arts and Humanities, May 19-21, 2010.

Thirty-five faculty and staff members participated in some or the entire program on May 19 including faculty representing seventeen separate units. Faculty representatives from Social Work, Journalism, Education, Dramatic Art, Communications Studies, and Religious Studies, along with staff members from the Human Resources, CFE, the Office of Faculty Governance, Office of the Provost, the Graduate School, and the Health Sciences Library attended the more intensive “how to” program on May 20-21.

Anticipating a potential use for a wider use of AI Facilitator Sallie Lee\*, sponsors Kiel and Coble designed the inquiry around ideas of innovation. The workshop was designed to be highly experiential, and included training in core AI concepts and techniques such as interviewing, case study development, qualitative analysis of themes, visioning, and follow through.

About the Workshop Facilitator; Sallie Lee, Sunshares Studio, Asheville NC\*

Senior AI Practitioner Sallie Lee was chosen in a competitive process by a faculty committee from among the nation's foremost AI consultants. She has offered AI training around the world for the past fifteen years reaching over 1000 participants in a wide variety of business, government and not profit organizations.

Lee has worked with David Cooperrider, AI's originator, in Case Western Reserve University's year-long Global Excellence in Management (GEM) program, gaining certification in Global Change and Social Innovation.

She has recently conducted AI programs with the UNC School of Government, McKinsey Consulting, and the Australian Institute of management. She was guest editor for the Designing Strength-Based Organizations issue (Nov. 2008), in the journal The AI Practitioner.

## BENEFITS

The process of Appreciative Inquiry allows participants to draw on positive aspects of their work and associations. Asked through carefully designed questions participants are led to examine a topic/inquiry from its strengths and potential rather than from a deficit based point of view.

As creativity is part of the process we begin to explore the ideas of capacity. Creativity is the only resource that is inexhaustible- it is not like a barrel of oil or a birthday cake that is used up- in fact it grows the more you use it- like a muscle- to full capacity. If we move past the metaphor to think about capacity in a university community "full" is not even part of the equation any longer. Ingenuity coupled with strength based inquiry, as opposed to deficit based analysis, exponentially changes the potential sum and expanding capacity becomes the reality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS/ POTENTIAL SCOPE OF SERVICES

- Chancellor's Innovation Roadmap Initiative
  - To help Faculty understand not only the initiative but how they can become part of it.
- Academic Plan
  - Improving faculty buy-in and engagement with its implementation
  - **As a next step we recommend that the Office of Faculty Governance and the Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee of the Academic Plan meet to discuss how an AI approach might be used to engage faculty in the next stages of the academic planning processes.**
- Improving collegiality in a single department
  - **UNC Dramatic Art will use AI in its August 2010 retreat to strengthen resiliency and define unit mission.**
- Assisting in a merger between two major academic support units
- Assisting in strengthening Faculty voice in Faculty Governance
  - **One meeting of Faculty Council in Academic year 2010-11 will use AI in assessing effectiveness of the Council communications.**
- Designing a patient involvement research protocol for patients suffering from a particular chronic illness
- Assisting faculty dialogue and community building as part of a Professional School's strategic plan
- Creating a mentoring program for new faculty by an academic professional society
- Developing a strategic marketing and communications plan for a major academic unit

- **UNC Public Policy will use AI to develop a marketing plan for the department based on current strengths.**
- **UNC Religious Studies will use AI in their August retreat.**

**We recommend that Appreciative Inquiry training as well as AI services to University entities become a permanent part of the services offered by the Center for Faculty Excellence. The basic funding for this enterprise can be based on the costs of our three day workshop which included Facilitator Sallie Lee's fee, travel and all materials for the workshop which came to \$10,000\*. An expendable fund would need to be allocated or raised for expanded efforts.**

\*The costs were divided among the Office of Faculty Governance, the Center for Faculty Excellence, and the Institute for the Arts and Humanities.

## **CLOSING**

The current Administration of the University of North Carolina has dedicated itself to extraordinary growth and understanding within and without our academic culture. "We are bound together by the task that stands before us ...." And we are bound for a place where the tasks may be more daunting or less defined than those we face now.

If we are to address the inquiries of the present and the future it is crucial that we take in hand how we address them. It is entirely possible that "how we know" presently may not be sufficient or even appropriate for our needs and very likely for how we educate ourselves to think.

Emphasis on the examination of thinking is consistent with the current conversations within the academy about engaged scholarship, collaborative ventures that provide the best learning experiences for our students and the ephemeral concept that a product may or may not be the point of a process.

Clearly the movement toward creative thinking and solutions is testament to the kind of thinking about humanistic endeavors that are difficult to systematize yet essential to a creative life- the one thing we truly owe our students and ourselves.

As in science disciplines it has to become customary that the arts and humanities are able to go down a path potentially bound for a goal and embrace the possibility that the journey may take us into uncharted territory. Platitudes tell us that we must value the journey; that indeed it is the journey that is the point. In a world that needs real answers to real questions and, as importantly, life giving/ meaning making experiences we need to prepare for the unforeseen journey in a culture of creativity and capacity.

Our first goal will need to be nothing short of a paradigm shift in the way we understand education- this is where innovation is needed most profoundly. Appreciative Inquiry is not a new approach but it is innovative, in that it is not the norm in academe, to ask a community to examine its strengths, not its needs, and build from there. We are on the threshold of asking our Faculty to embrace new strategies for our research, teaching and service endeavors. As they will elicit inquiry of all kinds, we recommend an appreciative approach and know that in that fashion our colleagues will find the makings of personal and institution capacity.

McKay Coble  
Chair of the Faculty  
July 19, 2010



Dropping McKay off at the IAH on day three of the workshop:

Frank: What is all of that stuff on the window?

McKay: Notes and stuff- ideas about the future of the University.

Frank: Very colorful.

McKay: Colorful indeed!

