

Discover, Dream and Design: Evaluation of the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute**Ye He****University of North Carolina at Greensboro****Brianne Stanback****University of South Florida****Jennifer L. Bloom****University of South Carolina**

Building upon social constructivism, positive psychology, and appreciative inquiry, Appreciative Advising is an advising framework that challenges deficit-based mindset and offers advisors both theories and strategies to optimize their advising interactions with students. Embracing an appreciative mindset that intentionally seeks out the best in students, advisors intentionally use positive, active, and attentive listening and questioning strategies to build trust and rapport with students (disarm); reveal students' strengths and skills (discover); encourage and be inspired by students' dreams for their future (dream); co-construct action plans with students to make their goals a reality (design); support students as they carry out their plans (deliver); and challenge both themselves and the students to do and become even better (don't settle) (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008).

As institutions have learned about Appreciative Advising through publications, conferences, webinars, and workshops, many subsequently adopted the Appreciative Advising framework and strategies over the years and have reported successes in student advising, first-year programs, and retention programs (e.g. Bloom, et al., 2009; Cuevas, et al., 2011; Hall, 2008; Huebner, 2009; Hutson, 2006; Hutson & Bloom, 2007; Hutson & He, 2011; Kamphoff, et al., 2007; Sanchez, 2008). The growing number of institutions interested in adopting Appreciative Advising led to the increasing need for systematic Appreciative Advisor training and professional development beyond isolated presentations. To respond to these professional development needs, the first Appreciative Advising Institute was held in July 2011 in Las Vegas, Nevada sponsored by the Office of Appreciative Education at the University of South Carolina. Building upon the success of the first institute, the second institute was held in July 2012 in Charleston, South Carolina.

We conducted an evaluation of the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute based on the feedback from both participants and faculty to examine its impact and effectiveness. In this evaluation report, we will review the history as well as present an overview of Appreciative Advising Institute, report key findings to not only discover the impact of the institute, and share the dreams that participants and faculty have for the future of Appreciative Advising and Appreciative Education. Specific recommendations are also provided to guide the design and delivery of the 2013 Appreciative Advising Institute.

History and Overview of the Appreciative Advising Institute

The concept of the Appreciative Advising Institute was developed during summer of 2008, when early leaders of the Appreciative Advising movement attended two summits, brainstorming and planning meetings, in Gilbert, South Carolina. These summits led to the creation of the Office for Optimizing Educational Experiences, which later was changed to the Office of Appreciative Education, and the first Appreciative Advising Institute in 2011. A total of 60 participants attended the Institute. Institution participants included advisors, counselors, coaches, coordinators, assistant directors, associate directors, and directors responsible of academic and student services. The Institute was built on active learning principles that encourage participant involvement in activities rather than being passive recipients of knowledge delivered through lectures. Therefore, the institute involved all participants attending both large group presentations and small groups to engage in active learning sessions that were facilitated by the faculty. Participants also had the opportunity to engage with different small groups in Advisee sessions which involved role-playing with partners each afternoon. End-of-Day surveys, participant self-assessment, and final institute evaluation form were collected to measure participants' learning outcomes and perceptions of the institute quality. Overall, participants responded positively to the daily learning outcome assessments. In their final self-assessment, the majority of participants (>90%) reported growth in all areas, with the highest percentage of participants (97%) strongly agreed or agreed that they know how to challenge themselves to grow from being a good advisor to a great advisor. The final evaluation data also indicated that participants' perception of the general quality of the Institute was overwhelmingly positive. Over 95% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the objectives of the Institute were clearly presented, the activities were relevant and informative, and that they had ample opportunities to interact with the faculty and other advisors.

The formal and informal feedback gathered during the 2011 institute allowed faculty to modify the design of the 2012 Institute to enhance the experiences for all faculty and participants involved. The 2012 Institute was designed as a three-day institute starting with an opening session in the afternoon of the first day. Participants continued to have opportunities to attend big group presentations and small group discussions. Based on 2011 participants' feedback, the Round Robin sessions where faculty led presentations on specific topics were offered in 2012 and all participants had the opportunity to select two out of eight presentations to attend. Instead of having small group role play sessions (called Advise! sessions at the 2011 Institute), all participants reconvened in 2012 during the afternoons into a large group to participate in a variety of activities, including: a faculty panel question and answer session, faculty-led role play scenarios, and an overview of the Appreciative Advising Certification process. The Institute ended with a Change session where participants began to consider how to implement Appreciative Advising on their home campus.

Methods

To examine the impact of the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute and to provide feedback for the design of the upcoming 2013 Institute, an evaluation was designed to collect data from both faculty and participants attending the 2012 Institute. Two general questions guided the evaluation of the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute: 1) What is the impact of Appreciative Advising Institute on participants and faculty? 2) What visions of Appreciative

Advising and Appreciative Education do participants and faculty have after attending the Institute?

Participants of this evaluation include 85 institute participants and seven institute faculty members. Both quantitative data and qualitative data were collected as part of this evaluation. Data from institute participants were collected from the “Dream Activity” during the Institute, and a final institute evaluation survey that was distributed at the end of the Institute. The “Dream Activity” was conducted during the big group session on July 31, 2012, where participants were asked to discuss “their dreams for Appreciative Advising and Appreciative Education 5-10 years from now” at their table groups. Discussion points were collected for analysis. The final institute evaluation survey was designed to obtain participants’ feedback regarding their experiences at the Institute. The evaluation form contained 32 Likert-scale quantitative items organized into three major areas: 1) self-assessment; 2) Appreciative Advising; and 3) the Institute. The four items on self-assessment required participants to evaluate their own awareness after attending the Institute. Regarding Appreciative Advising, participants were given four statements related to their overall understanding of the framework, and then asked to evaluate their mastery of specific strategies in each of the six phases of Appreciative Advising. Finally, participants were asked to evaluate the various session formats offered through the Appreciative Advising Institute. A total of 40 participants completed the final survey (return rate 47%). The reliability of the survey is .93.

Data from Institute faculty were collected from an open-ended survey sent after the institute was over. The survey included three questions: 1) Please describe the impact that serving on the 2012 Appreciative Advising faculty has had on you personally and/or professionally; 2) What impact do you think the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute had on participants?; and 3) Imagine Appreciative Education 5-10 years from now, what does it look like?

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 21.0. Descriptive statistics were reported based on subscales of the participant survey. Qualitative data from both participants’ “Dream Activity” and the faculty open-ended survey were analyzed for themes and patterns (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Both faculty and participant responses were taken into consideration to address each evaluation question.

Results

Based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from both the faculty and participants, the results of the evaluation were organized to address the two evaluation questions: 1) impact of the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute; and 2) visions for the development of Appreciative Advising and Appreciative Education.

Discover: Impact of Appreciative Advising Institute

The majority of the participants reported that the Appreciative Advising Institute significantly enhanced their awareness of their strengths as advisors, their own dreams and goals, how to raise their expectations for themselves, and resources that are available. While a few participants reported they were just as aware of their strengths and dreams after attending the institute (5-8%), all participants reported being at least somewhat more aware of ways to raise

expectations for themselves and available resources. Table 1 shows participant responses for the self-assessment section of the final evaluation survey.

Table 1. *Participant Responses to Self-Assessment (N=40)*

	Significantly More Aware	Somewhat More Aware	As Aware As Before
I am aware of my strengths as an adviser.	63%	30%	5%
I am aware of my own dreams and goals.	60%	33%	8%
I am aware of what it would take for me to raise my own expectations.	73%	28%	0%
I am aware of resources that are available to me.	68%	33%	0%

Examining participants' understanding of Appreciative Advising framework and their mastery of strategies used in Appreciative Advising, we note that a majority of the participants agreed with the growth of their knowledge and skills in advising. Almost all participants agreed 100% that they learned that having an Appreciative mindset is important in advising. It was important to recognize that several participants (at least 3 participants, or 8%) reported that they were already familiar with some of the strategies used in Appreciative Advising including allaying student suspicion and defensiveness, making their office a welcoming and comfortable environment, and helping students create a vision for their future.

Comparing the mean scores of participants' responses to statements regarding the six phases in Appreciative Advising, we noted that participants rated their mastery of strategies in Disarm and Delivery the highest (See Table 2). In particular, they reported learning about ways to set up offices, verbal and non-verbal behaviors, and the importance for students to take ownership of their own plans.

Overall, participants rated their experiences at the Institute very positively as illustrated in Table 3. Over 80% of the participants 100% agreed that the large group sessions were informative and they had opportunities to interact with other participants. The majority of the participants also agreed that their small group sessions were meaningful and that they had opportunities to interact with Institute faculty.

Figure 1. Participant Self-Perception on Learning Regarding Appreciative Advising (N=40)

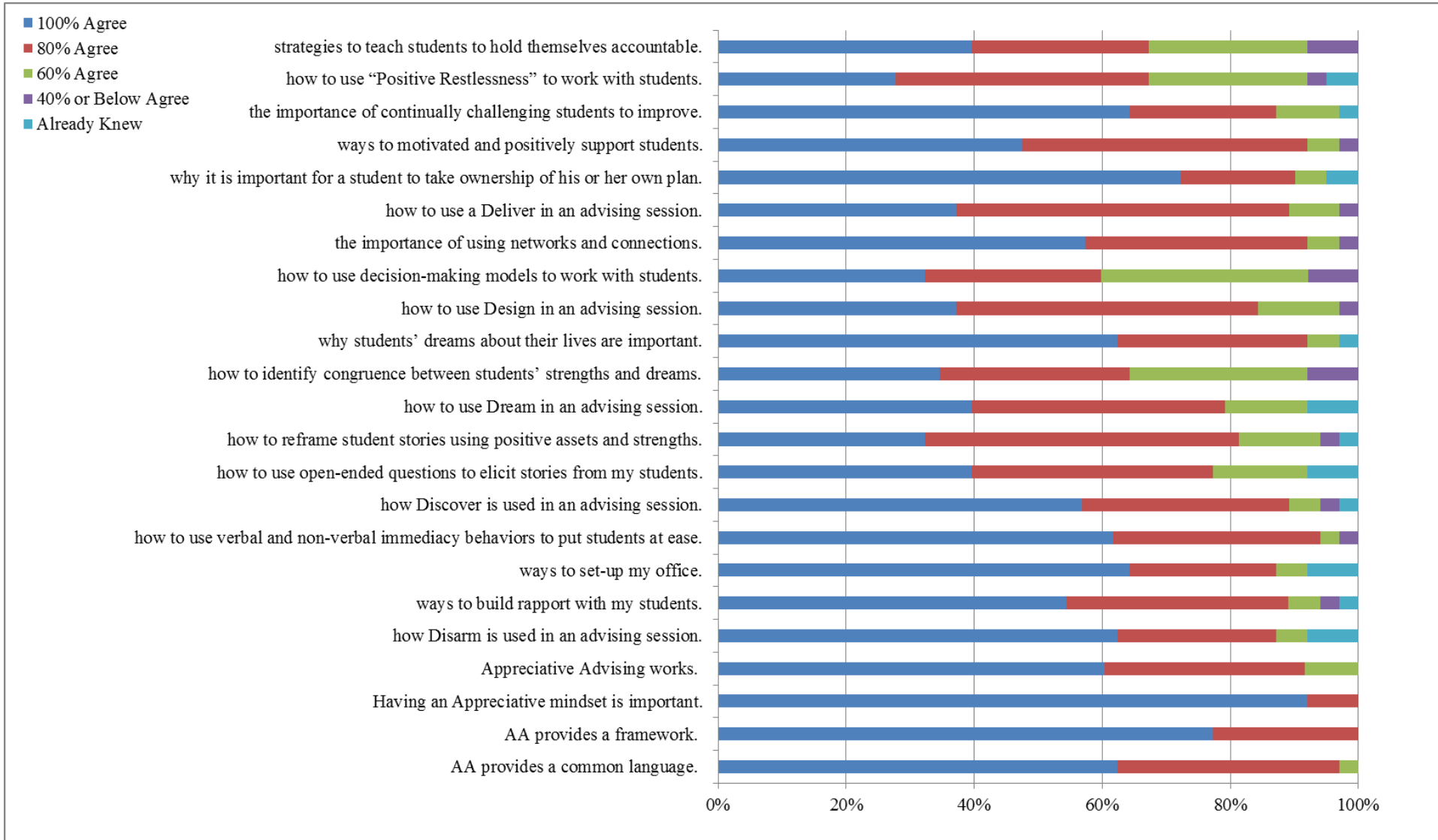


Table 2. *Mastery of Strategies among Participants (N = 40)*

AA Phases	Minimum	Maximum	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Disarm	2.00	7.00	6.31	1.13
Discover	1.33	7.00	6.07	1.10
Dream	1.33	7.00	6.06	.98
Design	2.00	7.00	6.12	.92
Deliver	2.00	7.00	6.29	.92
Don't Settle	1.33	7.00	6.02	1.06

Table 3. *Experiences at the Appreciative Advising Institute (N=40)*

Item	100% Agree	80% Agree	60% Agree	40% or Below Agree
The lectures presented in the large group sessions were informative learning experiences.	80%	18%	3%	0%
The exercises that I participated in during small group sessions were meaningful learning experiences.	70%	20%	8%	3%
I learned practical skills in the AA in ACTION session.	40%	38%	8%	13%
I had opportunities to interact with the Institute faculty.	70%	18%	8%	5%
I had opportunities to interact with Institute participants from other institutions.	85%	13%	3%	0%

On the last day of the Institute, attendees were asked to complete a brief questionnaire of their experience and the impact that the Institute had on them. The questionnaire included the following open-ended questions to allow participants the opportunity to expand on the earlier survey items: *What did you enjoy most throughout the AAI?; What are the most important things you learned from the AAI?; What suggestions and ideas do you have for future AAI?; and What else would you like to tell us?* Among the most popular AAI features that attendees enjoyed were: the opportunity to share and discuss with other participants informally, in small groups, or in round robin sessions. The most interesting remarks made by a participant were the person's perception of "feeling empowered to make a difference," especially as he/she returned to campus for a new academic year. Attendees noted how learning about and focusing on strengths, expressing gratitude, and leaving with a structured set of strategies for advising their students were among the important items they learned at AAI. One respondent commented that "Appreciation breeds appreciation", showing how the practice of gratitude may easily multiply.

After leading and facilitating, the AAI faculty was asked to reflect on the following items: *Please describe the impact that serving on the 2012 Appreciative Advising faculty has had on you personally and/or professionally; What impact do you think the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute had on participants; and Imagine Appreciative Education 5-10 years from now, what does it look like?* The faculty members expressed a number of different personal and professional impacts as a result of serving as facilitators. Most discussed how positive, affirming, and validating participating as AAI faculty was. A few faculty members also noted how transformative the small group experience was, with the following comment perhaps best summarizes its impact: "Day one of the AAI we were a group of strangers. Day two we were a cohesive team. Day three we were life-long friends and colleagues." Some of the faculty, like many AAI participants, shared how impactful the small group experience was throughout the Institute.

The faculty also felt the participants were impacted by the Institute through the dedicated space for deep personal reflection and an incubator for making new connections. For example, one faculty member noted:

Perhaps speaking even louder than the reaffirming feeling, I have had several (participants) who confided in me that after the experience, they decided that their current career path was not aligned with their dreams and strengths or that their current position at a particular school was not a good fit and that they were going to work on making choices to follow a different path.

The Institute may have identified new dreams and nudged some participants to a different path, which is another powerful impact of the Institute.

Dream: Visions of Appreciative Advising and Appreciative Education

Both participants and faculty were asked to share their visions for AA/AE in the future. In reflecting on the suggestions and ideas for future institutes, many participant responses advocated for more and longer round robin sessions. They also indicated an interest in having more role play opportunities and more time to practice AA strategies in small groups. A few participants reported how energized and rejuvenated the conference was and expressed gratitude for the AAI experience.

The faculty also shared their visions for the future of Appreciative Education over the next five to ten years. Almost all AAI faculty members see Appreciative Education growing to include hundreds of advisors and administrators, expanding to a national conference, becoming a core education accreditation requirement, and being practiced well beyond higher education settings. Some AAI faculty voiced the need for data collection and dissemination of research as a key component for advancing Appreciative Education. All AAI faculty members commented that the biggest beneficiaries of a broader implementation of Appreciative Education are the students of the future.

During the big group session on July 31, 2012, participants were asked to discuss their dreams for Appreciative Advising and Appreciative Education 5-10 years from now at their small table groups. Summarizing the ideas and visions participants shared, several themes emerged: 1) expansion of Appreciative Advising framework and practice and Appreciative Education concepts within and beyond higher education settings; 2) future systematic training, conferences, certification and awards; 3) resources and support; and 4) communication and networks.

When discussing the expansion of Appreciative Advising/Education within higher education settings, several groups of participants mentioned the importance of applying the framework in offices such as “study abroad, career services, financial aid” or “other student support services”, in “academic coaching and informal advising” settings, and in “faculty advising.” They also indicated an interest in informing “administrators” of the framework and the need to impact “policy” change. Beyond higher education settings, participants also noted the potential for Appreciative Advising/Education to be introduced to “K-12 counselors, administrators, and PTA”, “mental health professionals”, and to be used in “in middle and high schools.” Several participants also envisioned the potential to include more international participation in this movement through applications in international settings and hosting international conferences.

In terms of future training and conferences, participants envisioned having annual conferences and regular institute offerings. In addition, several participant groups expressed interest in having a webinar series and having “train the trainer” sessions to prepare more local trainers to share the framework. Participants also envisioned creating awards to recognize excellent practitioners using the Appreciative Advising framework.

Resources and support were also mentioned by a lot of participant groups. Major resources include “database of activities people are using,” “database for assessment,” “case studies and models,” and videos that demonstrate the use of Appreciative Advising and the Appreciative Advising Inventory. Finally, participants recommended creating a “network” through establishing a newsletter, listserv, LinkedIn, or Skype to engage all participants more regularly in an online environment.

Design: Discussions and Implications

Suggestions for 2013 and Future AA Institutes

Participants reported how valuable they found the sharing that occurred during the 2012 Institute’s round robins and small group sessions. Building more time into the AAI schedule for round robins was a suggestion echoed by many participants. Another idea is to invite returning participants to share how they returned to campus and began implementing Appreciative Advising on their respective campuses. Returning participants may also contribute in other novel ways such as leading AA in action small group role-plays in the afternoons. As more returning participants attend the Institute, special sessions can be held or a new track can be established to train them on how to teach others about Appreciative Advising. It may also benefit returning and first time participants to exchange groups to work with multiple faculty members throughout the AAI.

Interactions in the round robins and small groups may be enhanced on both faculty-participant and participant-participant levels. Having faculty biographies available online for participants before the Institute may be one way to begin learning about each other. Further, the development of special interest groups that focus on assessment and evaluation, first-year or at-risk students, higher education advising, and K-12 advising could enhance the experience in round robins and small groups. Through a pre-Institute survey, participants could designate an interest group to join, receive a special colored nametag to signify membership in that group, and partake a meal for time in their interest group. Each interest group could outline goals and a plan at the AAI and then use that as a platform for an on-going conversation beyond the meeting.

Technology was integrated throughout the Appreciative Advising Institute through the use of short video clips in large group and small group sessions, a round-robin session on the use of technology in advising, and the use of Twitter for participants to share feedback and reflection throughout the Institute. While participants reported some concerns in terms of the inconsistency in the expectations of technology use, overall, the evaluation results indicated that participants welcomed the integration of technology and recommended the use of technology to extend interactions and networking connections among advisors.

Based on faculty and participants’ dreams, feedback, and suggestions, the integration of technology can be extended to enhance interactions and increase the sustainability of the impact of the Appreciative Advising Institute in the future. Prior to the Institute, for example, faculty can introduce themselves using social network such as LinkedIn, Edmodo, or a Facebook group.

Likewise, participants can be encouraged to share their self-introductions and pictures prior to arriving at the Institute. During the institute, social media can also be used to extend face-to-face conversations online, especially with people in other small groups. In addition, considering participants' request to be able to attend more round robin sessions, it may be a good idea to record the round robin presentations to be shared with all institute participants. This option would make it possible for participants to have access to all sessions and presenters. Along with resources provided through the participant handbook that are prepared prior to the institute, faculty and participants may have additional resources and ideas they share throughout the institute. A Wiki or Google Doc could also be shared during the Institute to invite faculty and participants to share additional resources, ideas, and questions.

Evaluation Plan for 2013 Appreciative Advising Institute

Building upon the success of the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute, feedback from both faculty and participants will continue to be collected in order to measure the effectiveness and impact of Appreciative Advising Institute and to improve the experiences for all future participants. Based on the current evaluation, Table 4 is a logic model proposed for the evaluation of the 2013 Appreciative Advising Institute.

Table 4.

Proposed Logic Model for Evaluating the 2013 Appreciative Advising Institute

Inputs	Activities	Short-term Outcome	Long-term Impact
	AA institute experiences big group and small group discussions Discover strengths	Participants' enhanced self-awareness and skills in AA	Empowered educators
AA institute Faculty training and support Institute planning USC recruitment, marketing, registration, etc. Technology availability (on site)	AA institute -- participant final reflection on AA framework Faculty focus group and reflections	Faculty and participant reflection on AA/AE framework	AA/AE moving forward
	AA Institute – deliver - action plan Don't settle - peer mentoring Post-Institute follow-up survey	Participants leave institute with action plan to lead the change	Institution cultural change
	Don't settle - peer mentoring Post-Institute follow-up survey	Participants' reporting on impact of AA	Strength-based experience by all PK-adult students

While the long-term impact of the institute is to prepare empowered educators, move the field of Appreciative Advising/Education, initiate institution cultural change, and offer strength-based experiences for all Pre-K-adult learners, we propose to focus on the short-term outcomes of the Institute to evaluate participants': 1) self-awareness and use of AA strategies; 2) understanding of the Appreciative Advising/Education framework, 3) plans to lead change in their local contexts and 4) report on the impact of the application of Appreciative Advising after the Institute. In addition to continuing the data collection using the final evaluation survey, reflections by participants and faculty, we propose to collect participants' action plans as part of the evaluation data and conduct a post-Institute follow-up survey to monitor the delivery of the plan and successes participants achieve in their local settings.

Conclusion

Through the participation in the 2012 Appreciative Advising Institute, we were empowered by the experiences and interactions and appreciated the opportunity to summarize the evaluation feedback in this report. In addition to participants' growth and learning from the Institute, the evaluation findings also made us aware of the expertise among faculty and participants and visions we have for the future development of Appreciative Advising and Appreciative Education. We look forward to the 2013 Appreciative Advising Institute and continuing to deliver on the dreams that began in the early days of this exciting movement in education.

References

- Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B. L. & He, Y. (2008). *The appreciative advising revolution*. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing.
- Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B. L., He, Y., Amundsen, S., Buyarski, C., Christman, P. D., ... Kucharczyk, L.M. (2009, April 22). How eight institutions have incorporated appreciative advising. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from <http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/090422jb.htm>.
- Cuevas, A. E. P., Robinson, C., Clark, A., Hutson, B. L., & Bloom, J. L. (2011). Adapting the implementing appreciative advising framework to train orientation leaders. *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition*, 19(1), 86-98.
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co.
- Hall, L. R. (2008, July 23). Appreciative advising: How the Academic Centers for Excellence at the University of South Carolina are using this breakthrough concept. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from <http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/080723lh.htm>
- Hutson, B. L. & Bloom, J. L. (2007). The impact of appreciative advising on student success. *National Center for the First Year Experience E-Source for College Transitions Newsletter*, 5(1), 4-7.
- Hutson, B. L. (2010). The impact of appreciative advising-based university studies course on college student first-year experience. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*. 2(1), 4-13.

- Hutson, B. L., & He, Y. (2011). Appreciative Advising Inventory: Identifying college student assets for successful transition. *Journal of College Orientation & Transition*, 18(2), 23-36.
- IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 21.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.
- Kamphoff, C. S., Hutson, B. L., Amundsen, S. A., & Atwood, J. A. (2007). A motivational/empowerment model applied to students on academic probation. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice*. 8(4), 397-412.
- Sanchez, L. M. (2008, July 2). Two's company, three's a crowd: Can group advising be appreciative and effective? *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from <http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/080702ls.htm>.