The Subtleties of Appreciative Advising: Expanding Practices Beyond the Conversation

Shaina Gonzalez and Lauren Schumacher Chambers
University of South Florida

Appreciative Advising strives to shift our focus away from a habitual problem-focus to a focus on the positive in order to "heighten energy, sharpen vision and inspire action for change" (The Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2008). The real power of this positive psychology infused approach lies in the nuances and subtleties of appreciative advising. The subtleties are the non-conversation, lead-by-example choices we make that make our conversations more than perceived empty words. By paying attention to the details of our office environment, print materials, web presence, workshops, presentations and one on one interviews, we have the opportunity to optimize our interactions with students. The purpose of this article is to highlight the subtle pieces of the Appreciative Advising approach, including office environment, print materials, web presence, and workshops, presentations and one on one interviews, which allow for a 360 degree method.

Environment

One of the most important phases of Appreciative Advising is the *Disarm* phase where advisors intentionally work to create a warm, welcoming environment for students (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). This environment includes the advising reception area as well as the advisor's individual office. Creating an inviting, homelike environment can easily engage a student and establish a positive rapport, which is important to "establish a safe connection with students who then feel comfortable opening up about their hopes, fears, and dreams" (Strain, 2009). Even in different types of office environments (for example, centralized versus decentralized offices) students can be exposed to office spaces that feel personal and inviting. There are numerous ways that advisors can subtly incorporate some of the six phases of appreciative advising into their areas with minimal, intermediary, or unbounded resources.

An example of a centralized environment is the Office of National Scholarships (ONS) at the University of South Florida (USF). This office includes a waiting area and advisor offices. The waiting area features refined elements that incorporate a few of the six phases. A student is *disarmed* by a welcoming student assistant able to answer many questions, not just facilitate appointments. Further, the student is able to *dream* and *discover* with the numerous posters advertising national scholarships, such as Fulbright US Student Program and Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, which support students in studying abroad. Information about deadlines and requirements are posted to encourage students to follow through (*Don't Settle*) in applying for these national scholarships. With minimal resource, limited by university budget, the area has been designed with the phases of Appreciative Advising in mind.

Once the advising session begins, the student is welcomed to the advisor's office. The office is able to *disarm* students through the advisors personal pictures, diplomas/awards, travel mementos and additional information about national scholarship opportunities. The travel mementos (photos and postcards of travel destinations) encourage students to *dream* and

discover about potential study abroad destinations and also ways to "think outside the box" in terms of their traditional academic experiences at USF. Many national scholarships focus on studying abroad. The advisor's office is where a student can *dream* and *discover* as well as connect national scholarships advising to Appreciative Advising. These extra personal effects can be found in items an advisor already possesses and don't require any excess purchase. They are beyond what the university provides and are therefore intermediary resources.

Opposite of the ONS, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) offers a decentralized approach to advising, made necessary by the many schools and majors the college has to offer. In such an organizational structure, most advisor offices are hidden away from waiting areas, often in between faculty offices and classroom spaces, even in makeshift cubicles. Many times students sit on the floor in an outside hallway as they wait for their appointment time. With minimal resource, some advisors try to incorporate all phases with a bulletin board outside their office to communicate information to students as well as to encourage a relationship and empower students, in lieu of a traditional waiting area.

One CAS advisor, Kasandrea Sereno has designed her office as what she calls a "Student Friendly Pit Stop" (Sereno, 2013). Over time, she has collected contemporary furniture and décor reflecting today's trends and her personality to *disarm* her students. She has found creative way to deliver information to her students by installing a flat screen TV which displays student audits, web resources, and helpful multimedia tools covering the *Dream, Discover, Design, and Don't Settle* phases of Appreciative Advising. We believe that her students react positively because she strikes the perfect balance between comfort and information without becoming overwhelming. Her office is an example of unbounded resource and desire accrued over years of advising and experience.

Print

Print materials serve several purposes at USF. Some serve as curriculum guides for current students, others as advertising materials to recruit new students into our programs and courses. In an Appreciative Advising atmosphere, these would serve the Dream, Discover, Design, and Don't Settle functions. The format of the print material can greatly enhance the degree to which Appreciative Advising is achieved.

The School of Mass Communications (MCM) recently revised their handouts with appreciative advising at the center of their redesign. The old materials featured a basic breakdown of major requirements for degree completion and required a meeting with an advisor for explanation; the sheets were one-dimensional and did not inspire action (See Appendix A). The newer sheet made by the School of Mass Communications (Appendix A) incorporated a description of the career field and goals of the major **(***Discover, Dream***)**, a guided sequence of the order of classes **(***Design, Deliver***)**, and contact information for further support **(***Don't Settle***)**. Accounting for the phases of Appreciative Advising alone created an easy-to-read document that encouraged students to seek further advising rather than alienate the student (see example after page break). According to Michelle Bombaugh, another advisor in the School of Mass Communications, students are finding the handouts to be very clear and can stand alone as a

resource, rather than require a meeting for clarification (M. Bombaugh, personal communication, October 3, 2013).

When creating print documents, it is helpful to create an action statement or plan that gives a student cause to get started. In the example of the Mass Communications handout, a four-semester sequence helps a student to get started in registering for courses and planning future semesters. Other plans of action could include statements such as "take GKT exam by January 1st for admission to education majors" or "go to the career center by the end of your freshman year to help with major selection, career planning, and resume development." These statements will help implement *Design, Deliver***,** and *Don't Settle*.

Personal connections to faculty and staff on print documents help to incorporate *Discover, Design* and *Don't Settle* phases. Students feel empowered to seek additional help and major guidance, attend office hours, plan for internships, or even learn about other experiences available. A personal connection can be something from an email address to a short bio. Optional further information works with the *Discover* and *Design* phases. Here you can incorporate supplemental information that might not be common knowledge. For example, minors that pair with the degree program, major exclusive study abroad trips, and options for undergraduate research.

Workshops

In the Office of National Scholarships, informational workshops are used to introduce students to the office and for specific national scholarship notification opportunities. They are given by everyone in the office, from the Director and the Assistant Director, to the Advisors, to the Graduate Assistant. The workshops are grouped by level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior and graduate student) and are held once each semester (fall, spring and summer). There are also special workshops put on for specific national scholarships and the application process for that particular national scholarship. For the purposes of appreciative advising, the Office of National Scholarships set specific national scholarship workshops months before the USF deadline so that students have the opportunity to learn about the national scholarship and start to work with the advisor on their application. The Office of National Scholarships also hosts guest speakers from the scholarship foundations to speak with students and give insight into what the national scholarship is looking for in an applicant. In the past representatives from the Marshall Scholarship, Fulbright US Student Program, Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship, Boren Scholarship and FL Gubernatorial Fellowship have presented on campus regarding their national scholarship opportunities. In the Office of National Scholarships workshops and information sessions can be classified as the appreciative advising phases of *Disarm, Discover* and *Don't Settle*. Through workshops and information sessions, the office *disarms* the students by introducing them to the office (putting a face to a name) and the purpose of the office (which is to identify, recruit and mentor high achieving students to apply for national scholarships). In the *Discover* phase, students are asked about the national scholarship opportunities including what the scholarship is and how it fits into their future trajectory, who is eligible to apply and the deadlines to apply (USF and national). In the *Don't Settle* phase, students are encouraged to make an online profile and then an appointment to meet one on one with a national scholarships

advisor to speak about national scholarship opportunities. It is through this one on one appointment with students where the true subtleties of Appreciative Advising are found.

One on One Interview/Appointments

The one on one intake interview/appointment is where appreciative advising is most evident in the Office of National Scholarships. The one on one intake interview/appointment where all six phases of Appreciative Advising: *Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver* and *Don't Settle* are found in the advising process. The objective of the 30 minute one on one intake interview/appointment is to let the student know that the Office of National Scholarships is interested in them as people and wants to get to know them so the national scholarships advisor can better match them with specific national scholarships, which will support their dreams **(***Disarm, Discover, Dream***)**. The national scholarships advisor attaches the student to one or more national scholarship lists (or pipelines) so the student will receive informational emails regarding the scholarships **(***Dream, Design***).** The national scholarships advisor then gives the student specific next steps to develop their academic and professional profile and put forward successful applications **(***Design, Deliver, Don't Settle***).** Finally the national scholarships advisor determines the level of student sparkle, vision and commitment **(***Don't Settle***).** They key points for the national scholarships advisor to cover with the student in the one on one interview include: greeting and welcome, introduction to the office, how to win and getting to know the student. In the "getting to know the student" section the national scholarship advisor asks students specific questions regarding their experiences, career aspirations, hopes and dreams (this encompasses all six phases of appreciative advising). For example, in terms of their choice of Major/Career the national scholarships advisor would ask: What are your specific interests in this field? Where will you be in 10 years? How will you change the world? For Community Involvement, the national scholarship advisor would ask: What kinds of honor societies, clubs, research, and internship experiences have you have? Are you active in a church, synagogue or mosque? For Study Abroad/Languages, the national scholarship advisor would ask: Have you studied abroad before? If you could go to any country, anywhere, where would it be? For Other Interests, the national scholarships advisor would ask: What do you do for fun? Do you play a sport, musical instrument? The national scholarships advisor always inquires about Special Circumstances and asks students regarding their status as non-traditional students, students with disabilities and those who have overcome great obstacles and diversity. The national scholarships advisor also includes suggestions for follow up for the student. These follow up steps gives the student a task to accomplish and also helps them achieve the *Don't Settle* phase of appreciative advising. An example of this follow up can be the student meeting again with the national scholarships advisor or the student being directed to seek out additional resources on campus such as the Undergraduate Research office, Education Abroad office, Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, and Tutoring and Learning Services.

Web Presence

The Office of National Scholarships also uses a strong web-presence to communicate with students about national scholarship opportunities. Both the Office of National Scholarships website and the Facebook page represents the *Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design* and *Don't Settle* phases of Appreciative Advising. On the ONS website, interested students are able to use a

search engine to search for national scholarship opportunities, make an online profile (used in the one on one interviews), see USF and national scholarship deadlines, learn about past national scholarship winners, view the upcoming workshop and information session schedule and sign up for a workshop as well as contact the office with any questions. The Facebook page is used to post information to students about upcoming events, workshops, USF deadlines, speakers relating to ONS, USF and beyond. The Office of National Scholarships also posts information about when applications for scholarships open and news and information about national scholarship winners.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates how our academic advising environment, print materials, workshops, one-on-one interviews and web presences comprise the six phases of Appreciative Advising. We believe that academic advising extends beyond a 30-minute question and answer session with the student; it involves relationship building and accountability not only on the part of the student but also the advisor. We propose that an appreciative approach to these advising subtleties will further enhance each of the phases that we are trying to emphasize in a given sessions, and encourage students to continue to utilize advising as a valuable resource. By developing and enhancing our advising materials past the standard and typical resources and creating an Appreciative Advising setting, we are able to further cultivate those positive relationships with students.

References

Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B. L., & He, Y. (2008). *The appreciative advising revolution*. Champaign, IL: Stipes.

Bombaugh, M. (2013, October 3). Personal interview.

Sereno, K., & Magee, M. (2013). *Creating Student Friendly Pit Stops*. Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net/kasandreasereno

Strain, A.L. (2009). What Message is Your Office Space Conveying to Students, *The Mentor*, *11*, http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/091007as.htm

The Center for Appreciative Inquiry (2008). Home Page. Retrieved from http://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/

University of South Florida Office of National Scholarships (2013). Home Page. Retrieved from *http://ons.usf.edu/*

Appendix 1

MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM AND PRODUCTION

TELECOM NEWS (NWS)

2008-2009 (1.0)
(Total: 37 Hours)

CORE CURRICULUM			CREDITS	PRE-REQUISITES
MMC	2100	Writing for the Mass Media	3	Must meet SMC entrance requirements
MMC	3602	Mass Comm and Society	3	See Undergraduate Catalog

SEQUENCE CORE CURRICULUM (all seven courses required)				
JOU	4181	Public Affairs Reporting	3	JOU 3101 or RTV 3301, POS 2041, POS 2112 or POS 3142 or POS 3182
MMC	4200	Communications Law	3	MMC 2100, MMC 3602
MMC	4420	Research Methods	3	MMC 2100, MMC 3602
RTV	3001	Introduction to Telecommunications	3	MMC 2100, MMC 3602
RTV	3301	Broadcast News	4	MMC 2100, MMC 3602
RTV	4304	TV News	3	RTV 4320
RTV	4320	Electronic Field Production	3	RTV 3001, RTV 3301

CI = Consent of Instructor

QUALIFYING SELECTIVE REQUIREMENTS (minimum of 9 hours)	
Any Approved Mass Communications Course	See Faculty Adviser

REQUIRED COURSES OUTSIDE MASS COMMUNICATIONS				
PHI	1103	Critical Thinking	3	See Undergraduate Catalog
SPC	2600	Public Speaking	3	See Undergraduate Catalog
POS	2041	American National Government	3	See Undergraduate Catalog
POS	2112 OR	State and Local Government	3	See Undergraduate Catalog
POS	3142	Introduction to Urban Politics and Government	3	See Undergraduate Catalog

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- At least 80 hours must be outside Mass Communications, 65 of which must be in liberal arts and sciences (and which may be fulfilled with courses that meet other requirements, such as Gen Ed, Exit Requirements, Foreign Language)
- A 2.5 GPA in Mass Communications courses with no Mass Communications grade lower than C-

Be sure to see your curriculum adviser for additional requirements such as:

- CLAST Exam (or exemptions)
- Foreign Language (Level II proficiency)
- Exit Requirements (9 hours)

NOTE: It is the student's responsibility to meet all requirements for graduation. The student is also responsible for meeting all college and university deadlines. You should familiarize yourself with the Undergraduate Catalog and with official announcements and notices posted in the school, on Blackboard, on the USF website, and on campus. You are encouraged to maintain a current copy of your SASS report (available through OASIS) and to communicate regularly with your adviser(s).

School of Mass Communications
USF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Appendix 2

REQUIRED COURSES OUTSIDE MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Still deciding between the different course sequences? Choose the required electives that apply to more than one sequence.

		Advertising	Magazine	News - Editorial	Public Relations	Telecom News	Telecom Production
ECO 1000	Basic Economics	■	■	■	■		
PHI 1103	Critical Thinking		■	■		■	■
POS 2041	American National Gov.		■	■	■	■	
POS 2112	State and Local Gov.		■■	■■	■■	■■	
POS 3142	Intro to Urban Politics		■■	■■	■■	■■	
SYG 2010	Contemporary Social Problems		■	■			
CRW 2100	Narration and Description		■				■■
LIS 2005	Library and Internet Research Skills				■		
MAN 3025	Principles of Management				■		
MAR 3023	Basic Marketing	■			■		
ENC 3310	Expository Writing						■■
SPC 2608	Public Speaking					■	

■	Required
■■	Choose one of the three in that column

MINORS

Any student may complete a minor by taking 15-18 credit hours of specific courses in a particular subject area. A minor may be something that will enhance your career, or something that you do for pure enjoyment. Minors that are recommended for Mass Communications majors include (but are not limited to):

■ Communications ■ English ■ General Business ■ Political Science ■ Psychology

School of Mass Communications
USF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Appendix 3

TELECOM NEWS (NWS)

Telecommunications students at USF specialize in either television news or production. Both learn the ins and outs of the television business both in front of and behind the camera from newsgathering, shooting and editing to programming and station management. But School of Mass Communications students don't just read about it. They *do* it—in the field and in our own digital studios. In conjunction with WUSF television, our students produce and air a regular newscast called "Florida Focus" and longer television newsmagazine-style features under the "Spectrum" series. Advanced classes produce and publish multimedia cross-platform stories at Media General's News Center, home of The Tampa Tribune, NBC affiliate WFLA television and TBO.com. Experience like this can jumpstart your career.

Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4
MMC 3602 Mass Communications and Society (3)	RTV 3001 Intro to Telecommunications (3)	JOU 4181 Public Affairs Reporting (3)	RTV 4304 TV News (3)
MMC 2100 Writing for the Mass Media (3)	RTV 3301 Broadcast News (4)	*MMC 4200 Communication Law (3)	*Selective Requirement (3)
	*MMC 4420 Research Methods (3)	RTV 4320 Electronic Field Production (3)	*Selective Requirement (3) (RTV 4942 recommended)
		*Selective Requirement (3)	

*Courses with an asterisk (*) are not required to be completed prior to moving to the next semester of courses
NOTE: Most major courses are not available during the summer semesters.
Selective courses are courses from any of the other sequences as long as the pre-requisite has been met for the course.

Appendix 4

REQUIRED COURSES OUTSIDE MASS COMMUNICATIONS	
PHI 1103 Critical Thinking (3)	May count as a Social and Behavioral Science
SPC 2608 Public Speaking (3)	May count as a Humanities
POS 2041 American National Government (3)	
POS 2112 State and Local Government (3)	May substitute with POS 3142 Introduction to Urban Politics (3)

MINORS

Any student may complete a minor by taking 15-18 credit hours of specific courses in a particular subject area. A minor may be something that will enhance your career, or something that you do for pure enjoyment. Minors that are recommended for Mass Communications majors include (but are not limited to):

■ Communications ■ English ■ General Business ■ Political Science ■ Psychology

FACULTY ADVISERS		
Kristin Arnold, Instructor	CIS 3090	karnold@usf.edu
Justin Brown, Assistant Professor	CIS 3103	justinsbrown@usf.edu
Ken Killebrew, Associate Professor	CIS 3088	kkillebr@usf.edu
Raymond Mendez, Visiting Instructor	CIS 3085	rmendez3@usf.edu
Frederick Pearce, Director and Professor	CIS 3114	fwpearce@usf.edu

2011-2012 PRACTICUM ADVISER

For information about practicum and internship experiences, students should review the catalog prerequisites for practicum and internship courses and the school Internet site listing for "Work Experiences" and then contact the faculty member as appropriate to their area of interest:

Telecommunications	Frederick Pearce	CIS 3114	fwpearce@usf.edu