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# AI Practitioner



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# The Long-Term Impact of Appreciative Inquiry at Colleges and Universities

**Dr Lane A. Glenn**  
**Dr Kelly Saretsky**  
**Dr Nancy E. Stetson**

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**Northwest Community College**



## Inside this issue

## The Long-Term Impact of Appreciative Inquiry at Colleges and Universities

### Welcome to May 2014 issue of AI Practitioner

In “Long-Term Impact of Appreciative Inquiry at Colleges and Universities” we see the many benefits coming from using AI over many years.

Editors Lane Glenn, Kelly Saretsky and Nancy Stetson bring together examples of this “Quest for Quality” on re-imagining the Quality Improvement process, revolutionising academic advising and moving from a teacher- to learner-centric system. There are also specific steps, tips and lessons

learned for introducing and nurturing positive change in higher education.

In the Feature Choice article, “Change Leadership as a Social Construction”, Carsten Hornstrup highlights four important ways of coordinating relationships vital to an organisation’s performance.

Research Review & Notes highlights how research-practitioners will be bridging the

worlds of research and practice in a series of special AI Practitioner columns.

In AI Resources Matt Moehle, Roopa Nandi and Hardik Shah bring us a wealth of material related to AI in higher education.

We thank Northwest Community College in Canada for sponsoring this May 2014 issue.

**Anne Radford**  
Editor, AI Practitioner

#### 4 Issue Introduction

How are colleges and universities around the world using Appreciative Inquiry?

Editors: Lane Glenn,  
Kelly Saretsky and Nancy Stetson



#### 9 Feature Choice

*Change Leadership as a Social Construction*

Carsten Hornstrup



#### 21 Appreciative Inquiry

*An Innovative Initiative for Continuous Improvement in Doctoral Education*

Joanne Singleton, Marie Truglio-Londrigan and Lucille Ferrara



#### 26 Appreciative Inquiry

*Twenty Years of Change and Innovation in a School of Nursing's Quality Improvement Process*

Lucille Ferrara, Joanne Singleton,  
Lin Drury, Sophie Kaufman and  
Joanne DeMarco



#### 32 From Windshield to Rearview Mirror

*Reflections on Being an Appreciative Leader in Higher Education*

Judy Walters



#### 38 Empowering Young Women to Explore Science and Technology

*The Ongoing Techsploration and NSCC Partnership*

Laurie Edwards, Tricia Robertson  
and Jeanie Cockell



### 43 Appreciative Coaching for a New College Leader

*Steps for New Behaviors, Approaches and Whole System Outcomes*

Elaine Suess and James Clark



### 47 How Appreciative Advising is Revolutionizing Academic Advising

*Framework, Evolution and Possible Future Directions*

Bryant L. Hutson, Ye He and Jennifer Bloom



### 54 Strategic Planning Using Appreciative Inquiry in Qatar's First American University Campus

*Steps Used and Lessons Learned During a Period of Profound Change*

Byrad Yyelland and Robert Bianchi



### 60 Sustaining Appreciative Inquiry in Colleges and Universities

*Five Helpful Hints*

Kelly Saretsky



### 66 From Teacher to Learner Centric

*The Awakening and Continued Renewal of the Partnership between Maharani Lakshmi Ammanni College for Women and Pegasus Institute for Excellence*

Shobha Sundaresan, Sushama Bavle, C. K. Dwarakanath, Sai Sambat, Lt. Cdr. Geethalakshmi and M. R. Sreesh



### 72 Appreciative Inquiry Helps A New College Leader Create a Team Environment – Fast!

Sandra Davidson



### 78 Creating and Sustaining an Appreciative Culture in a Community College from 2006 to 2014

Jayne Peaslee



### 85 Appreciative Inquiry Research Review & Notes

Editor of AI Practitioner, describes the new approach to Research Review & Notes

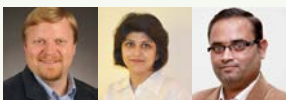
Anne Radford



### 91 Appreciative Inquiry Resources

Resources for practitioners wishing to explore the idea of the use of AI in universities and colleges

Matthew R. Moehle, Roopa Nandi and Hardik Shah



### 98 About the August 2014 Issue

A special issue focusing on AI-related doctoral dissertations completed in the Taos Institute Ph.D. Program

Kristin Bodiford and Celiane Camargo-Borges



### 99 About the sponsor of this issue

Northwest Community College (NWCC) is an accredited post-secondary institution that has embraced AI since 2012 to SOAR.



### 100 Advertisements

Taos Institute M.Sc. in Professional Development: Relational Leading  
The Center for Appreciative Inquiry  
AI Practitioner Feature Choice  
Topics 2014

### 102 IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner Subscription Information



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# The Long-Term Impact of Appreciative Inquiry at Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities around the world have used Appreciative Inquiry for many projects and initiatives. Often there is a great burst of energy and excitement around this ‘unconditionally positive’ way of imagining bold, new futures, but then organizations turn their attention elsewhere. Others commit to AI as their primary approach over a period of months or years. What is the effect on educational institutions of the long-term use of AI?

Colleges and universities around the world have used Appreciative Inquiry for strategic planning, professional development, conflict resolution, program review, accreditation self-study, instructional design, team development, celebrating diversity and many other projects and initiatives. Frequently, there is a great burst of energy and excitement around this “unconditionally positive” way of coming together in inquiry and dialogue and imagining bold, new futures. Important things are accomplished and then, oftentimes, the organization turns its attention elsewhere, toward new opportunities and different ways of working together.

Then there are those individuals and organizations that commit to AI as their primary approach to planning, as a way of being and working together and as part of their personal identity and organizational culture. These AI practitioners, and the colleges and universities they work with, have used AI more than once, over a period of months or several years, and now have new stories to tell and strategies to share.

In this issue, we focus on the long-term use of AI at colleges and universities around the world, and meet practitioners who share with us their stories of positive change.

### From problem hunting to a quest for quality

Doctors, nurses and other healthcare specialists are trained to identify and solve problems. Usually, that’s a good thing: when diagnosing and treating an injury or illness, that’s what we want.

Still, even in a natural problem-solving environment like a hospital – or a health education program – there are abundant opportunities to recognize what is working well, and to learn and grow from strengths and successes.



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AI is changing QI at an American school of nursing. Read more on page 26

This was the view of the faculty and staff at Pace University when they set out to create the Lienhard School of Nursing's first Doctor of Nursing Practice Program, and when they reimagined their approach to ongoing quality improvement.

In "Appreciative Inquiry: An Innovative Initiative for Continuous Improvement in Doctoral Education," Joanne Singleton, Marie Londrigan, Lucille Ferrara and their colleagues in the Pace University Doctor of Nursing Practice Faculty Group describe how they created a program of study in which "education activities mirror the principles of AI, content supports the AI model, and program evaluation tools are fashioned within the AI framework".

And in "Appreciative Inquiry: Twenty Years of Change and Innovation in a School Of Nursing's Quality Improvement Process", Lucille Ferrara, Joanne Singleton, Lin Drury, Sophie Kaufman, and Joanne DeMarco explain how an appreciative lens transformed a twenty-year-old approach to continuous improvement from "problem hunting" to an on going AI "quest for quality".

### AI Leadership Essentials

Dr. Judy Walters has spent decades in senior leadership positions in higher education, including serving as president or chancellor at three California colleges. Throughout her career, she has learned about and applied a number of strengths-based approaches to leadership and planning. In "From Windshield to Rearview Mirror: Reflections on Being an Appreciative Leader in Higher Education", Dr. Walters offers her suggestions for "AI Leadership Essentials", such as fostering "Leaders-at-All-Levels", and ways to communicate "positively, openly, and often".

### Techsploring the Future Together

In "Empowering Young Women to Explore Science and Technology: The Ongoing Techsploration and NSCC Partnership", three appreciative leaders, each with her own background and approach to strengths-based work in education, describes her experience integrating AI into the visioning, planning and operational activities of Techsploration, a Canadian not-for-profit organization that empowers young women in grades 9–12 to explore careers in science, trades and technology.

Laurie Edwards, director of Career and Counselling Services at Nova Scotia Community College and the president of the board of directors at Techsploration; Tricia Robertson, executive director of Techsploration; and Jeanie Cockell co-president of Cockell McArthur-Blair Consulting and a director on the board of Techsploration explain how "talking sticks", personal storytelling and strategic visioning sessions (SVS) have developed a vibrant and effective board, and improved the experiences and accomplishments of the young women they serve.

### The Way Forward

While Appreciative Inquiry at colleges and universities is often practiced in large summits with hundreds of participants, or through a series of focused community conversations, AI can also have deep and meaningful impacts on organizations by



Read about how young women in Nova Scotia, Canada are being empowered to pursue careers in science and technology in "Empowering Young Women to Explore Science and Technology" on page 38

touching the life of a single, influential leader. In “Appreciative Coaching for a New College Leader: Steps for New Behaviors, Approaches and Whole System Outcomes”, leadership and talent management coach Elaine Suess, and James Clark, professor and director of the School of Social Work at the University of Cincinnati’s College of Allied Health Sciences, share how a unique approach to one-on-one coaching helped a new leader develop new habits, and a new “Way Forward”.

### Good Advice

Over the years, as more faculty and staff at colleges and universities around the world have learned about and started to practice Appreciative Inquiry, AI has found its way into classrooms, curriculum committees, hiring processes and more. As Bryant Hutson, Ye He and Jennifer Bloom explain in “How Appreciative Advising is Revolutionizing Academic Advising: Framework, Evolution and Possible Future Directions”, AI has also evolved through “initiation” into “development” and now onward to “expansion” in the ways that students find their way, and their academic and career futures, on college campuses.

### AI Springing Forward in Qatar

For such a small country in the Middle East (approximately 2 million people), Qatar is playing a large role on the world stage right now. Thanks to tremendous oil and natural gas resources, it is the world’s richest country per capita. It is also one of the most peaceful, and has been wielding its political influence in some important ways during the recent “Arab Spring”.

Qatar is looking ahead to hosting the 2022 World Cup soccer tournament, and has embarked on an ambitious transformation plan called “National Vision 2030”, through which it is hoping to develop an even more advanced, sustainable and diversified economy. One of the ways Qatar is investing in that future economy is through building a system of higher education.

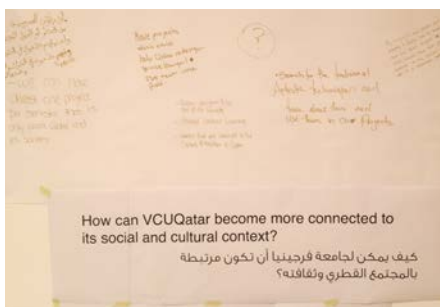
In “Strategic Planning Using Appreciative Inquiry in Qatar’s First American University Campus: Steps Used and Lessons Learned During a Period of Profound Change”, Byrad Yyelland and Robert Bianchi describe their experience introducing AI at Virginia Commonwealth University – Qatar (VCUQ), the first of eight universities from around the world to establish branch campuses in the country’s “Education City”.

Considering what Qatar and VCUQ have set out to accomplish, Yyelland and Bianchi suggest that “Radical change calls for a clear assessment of one’s strengths, innovative thinking and a commitment to work together to achieve these goals”. In their article, they describe some lessons they have been learning, using AI as a springboard for that radical change.

Dr. Kelly Saretsky, one of the co-editors of this issue of AI Practitioner, is the director of Institutional Research and Planning at the College of the North Atlantic – Qatar (CNAQ). For the last five years, Dr. Saretsky has been in charge of the strategic



Read about how academic advising in the United States is evolving through the incorporation of AI on page 47



Read about the role Qatar is taking in education in the Middle East, and how Qatar (VCUQ) is taking the initiative on page 54



A word cloud expresses participants' responses to new approaches to strategic planning at their college in Qatar. Read more on page 60.

planning efforts for this Canadian technical college, using AI to bring together faculty, staff and student stakeholders on her campus, and adapting this appreciative approach to her Middle Eastern setting in some unique and important ways. In "Sustaining Appreciative Inquiry in Colleges and Universities: Five Helpful Hints", Dr. Saretsky provides some research-based tips for introducing and nurturing positive change in any environment.

### The Awakening

When AI is introduced into an organization for the first time – even into organizations that already embrace strengths-based planning processes and collaborative approaches to leadership – there is often a tremendous sense of excitement, openness and discovery.

In "The Awakening and Continued Renewal of the Partnership between Maharani Lakshmi Ammanni College for Women and Pegasus Institute for Excellence", Shobha Sundaresan, Sushama Bavle, C. K. Dwarakanath, Sai Sambat, Lt. Cdr. Geethalakshmi and M. R. Sreeshya tell a story of collaboration between Maharani Lakshmi Ammanni College for Women and the Pegasus Institute for Excellence in Bangalore, India that led to the use of "Appreciative Experiential Learning" and some important accomplishments in community building, leadership development, and the evolution of MLACW from a teacher-centric system to a learner-centric one over the last ten years.

### Appreciative teaming

In "Appreciative Inquiry Helps A New Leader Create a Team Environment – Fast!" Sandra Davidson tells a story of both individual and organizational change. As a relatively new chief academic officer at a for-profit healthcare college, Sandra was given the challenge/opportunity of redesigning the organization and how it worked by hiring an entirely new leadership team and discovering new ways of effectively leading faculty and staff at twelve campuses spread across seven states.

Weaving together AI, the "SOAR" framework and a number of other strengths-based planning and leadership tools and techniques, Sandra and her new team spent two years crafting a vision for their preferred future and turning it into reality through team-building meetings, project matrices and a "leadership diamond" that helped them keep an appreciative eye on work processes, organizational structure, management systems, culture and behaviour.

### Be the change...

Jayne Peaslee and the faculty and staff at Corning Community College in Corning, New York have spent the last seven years integrating Appreciative Inquiry into every facet of college planning and development. In "Creating and Sustaining an Appreciative Culture in a Community College from 2006 to 2014", Jayne shares how CCC has trained several AI facilitators who in turn have led the college to use AI in strategic planning, team building, leadership development, institutional re-accreditation and, most recently, bringing aboard a new college president.



Exploring the possibilities of AI in a women's college in Bangalore, India. Read about it on page 66

Spencer Hill Campus of Corning Community College. Read how AI has been incorporated at many levels on page 78



Peaslee and her colleagues at CCC, like the other contributors to this issue of AI Practitioner, have discovered that “When a college focuses on possibilities, rather than problems, then positive organizational changes tend to flourish”.

**Lane Glenn, Kelly Saretsky and Nancy Stetson**  
**Editors, May 2014**





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# About the August 2014 Issue

## Bridging Research and Practice: Illustrations from Appreciative Inquiry in Doctoral Research



The Taos Institute's Ph.D. program offers practitioners the opportunity to engage in inquiry about their practice using constructionist methods such as appreciative inquiry, dialogue, narrative and discourse analysis, ethnography, and other collaborative approaches.

This special issue focuses on dissertations completed in the Taos Institute's doctoral program, having a special emphasis on Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and related approaches. It is focused on bridging theory and practice with Appreciative Inquiry. The examples included will provide research and practice options for practitioners in a wide array of disciplines. Our hope is that this issue will serve as a useful illustration of the ways in which practice and research are united to support positive change. Through the included stories, a multiplicity of voices and conversations will invite reflection, dialogue, new understanding, and encourage practitioners to inquire and ignite innovative ways to engage in research as social practice. Taking a focus which bridges research and practice using Appreciative Inquiry will be of interest to AI practitioners seeking to improve their practice as organizational leaders, change agents, researchers or consultants.

*Kristin and Celiane offer a community and learning space for researcher practitioners to explore collaborative and participatory ways of designing research with social construction principles at [www.designingresearch.com](http://www.designingresearch.com).*

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## Purpose of AI Practitioner

This publication is for people interested in making the world a better place using positive relational approaches to change such as Appreciative Inquiry. The publication is distributed quarterly: February, May, August and November.

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