APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY ... INTO ... Academic Advising

“There comes that mysterious meeting in life when someone acknowledges who we are and what we can be, IGNITING the circuits of our highest potential.” Rusty Berkus

Have you ever had a person in your life who really believed in you and your potential, even when that potential wasn’t exactly obvious to you? Chances are that we have all been recipients of such a gift from others and the doors that they opened for us have changed our lives in important ways. It is a powerful moment when you choose to see others as full of potential, with the ability to build upon the skills and talents they already possess. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an organizational development tool that focuses on bringing out the best in people and organizations, instead of viewing them as problems that need to be solved.

The initial process and core activity is the INTERVIEW.
In theory, the interview has the potential to CREATE A RELATIONSHIP and DISCOVER COMMON GROUND.
According to Watkins and Mohr (2001, p. 14), INQUIRY IS DEFINED as “the process of seeking to understand through asking questions.” Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) maintain that an . . . . . . AI—Appreciative Inquiry—process CREATES SIX FREEDOMS:

1. Freedom to BE KNOWN IN RELATIONSHIP
2. Freedom to BE HEARD
3. Freedom to DREAM IN COMMUNITY
4. Freedom to CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE
5. Freedom to ACT WITH SUPPORT
6. Freedom to BE POSITIVE

Margaret Mead ~ “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has...”
SAMPLE questions and topics:

- Tell me about a time when . . .
- Think back through your experiences since grade school and tell me what your favorite class was. Why was it your favorite class?
- While in college, describe the situation that you felt best about.
- Describe a time when you enjoyed being in school? What were the circumstances during that time?
- Describe a time when you were proud about a class project. Why were you proud?
- What do you value most about being in college?
- If you could make three wishes for the future, what would they be?
- What skills did you use successfully that could be applied to the current challenges?
- What did you learn from that experience that would be effective here?
- What would you like to have more of? What would you like to do differently?
- What made __________________so exciting, meaningful, satisfying?
- How can I help? How can I support you?

1. **BELIEVE** in the goodness of each student who walks through your door. Treat him or her like you would want your son/daughter/best friend to be treated.
2. **DISCOVERY:** Utilize positive open-ended questions to draw out what students enjoy doing, their strengths, and their passions. Listen to each answer carefully before asking the next positive question.
3. **DREAM:** Help students formulate a vision of what they might become and then assist them in developing their life and career goals.
4. **DESIGN:** Give students a clear idea of what they will need to do by devising concrete, incremental, and achievable goals to make these dreams come true.
5. **DESTINY:** Be there for them when they stumble, believe in them every step of the way, and help them continue to update and refine their dreams as they go.

*Bloom and Martin*: “We are not naïve enough to think that all of your conversations with students will be about positive topics. We do advocate building an advising relationship grounded in AI principles with each of your students. This approach can assure students that you are there to do whatever you can to empower them to fulfill their goals and dreams. And, when they do occasionally veer off track, they will come back to you for direction and inspiration to reestablish their course.”

**Excerpts from**: “Using Appreciative Inquiry in Advising At-Risk Students: Moving from Challenge to Success”, Jack Truschel, East Stroudsburg University.  
http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/070706jt.htm

And: **“Incorporating Appreciative Inquiry into Academic Advising”**, Jennifer L. Bloom, Ed.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Nancy Archer Martin, Educational Management Network/Witt/Kieffer.  
http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/020829jb.htm

**Rebecca S. Sterley, AA Voice Editor**  
- Director, Advisor Advocate, rsterley@iup.edu, 724-357-3111  
- NACADA Member, http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/