

# Creating an Exceptional Adjunct Faculty Experience

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Our learner-centered environment evokes the passion to dive deeply, explore fully and discover the relevance and impact of learning

**Richard Bernstein and Dominique Charlotteaux**

**Participate in the Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training (AIFT) in Florida, 2010**

**AIFT presented by The Center for Appreciative Inquiry**

Certification as an Ai Facilitator - Practicum/Supervised Experience Report

## **Broward College Academic Excellence Council Faculty Development Committee**

### **The Team**

**All team members are employees of Broward College, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.**

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### **Training**

AIFT Dates/Location: September 22-25, 2010 at Broward College's Central Campus, Davie, Florida. Funding for this experience was provided by a Title V CO-OP Grant.

### **Organization**

Broward College is the county's oldest and largest institution of higher learning. The college has three campuses and five centers serving a diverse community of over 65,000 credit and non-credit students. BC offers educational programs geared toward transfer, workforce development, economic development, international education, Bachelor degree programs and personal enrichment.

### **Stakeholders and Topic Identification**

During the college's planning process for the 2011-11 academic year, the president of Broward College, J. David Armstrong, charged Russ Adkins, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, to put together a committee to address the training needs of the college's adjunct faculty. Adkins chose the Faculty Development Committee of the Academic Excellence Council to facilitate the request.

Just prior to the Ai Training Session, Terri Justice and Kevin Keating were asked by Vice President Adkins, to Co-Chair the Faculty Development Committee of the Academic Excellence Council. The committee's purpose was to address "The Adjunct Experience at Broward College." In many disciplines, over 60% of classes are taught by adjunct faculty. Consequently this inquiry was intended to ensure that adjunct faculty at Broward College participate in an enriched Professional Development experience.

The team actually began discussions at the Friday and Saturday sessions of the AIFT training. The pending charge to create an adjunct Professional Development program was brought up during the morning session on Friday as a workable topic for discussion during the "Practicing" sessions on Day 3. Conducting an Appreciative Inquiry into the experience of adjunct faculty could yield more insights and perhaps create broader opportunities to enrich their experience. The topic was initially discussed in terms of problems and issues. Then, the group created a customized interview that probed memorable learning experiences and the best times at Broward College. The outcome of these sessions was a focus on autonomy, room to learn, supportive ideas, empowerment and fun.

The provocative statement created by the team during the training was: *Our learner centered environment evokes the passion to dive deeply, explore fully and discover the relevance and impact of learning.*

The focus of the inquiry was: Creating an Exceptional Adjunct Experience at Broward College.

## **The AI Experience**

On June 1st, the newly created Adjunct Faculty Institute was formed. It consisted of 30 adjunct faculty from all campuses of Broward college.

Here is part of the invitation that helped set the stage for the positive inquiry meeting:

We look forward to presenting a System Wide Collaborative Experience for building organizational capacity to move all aspects of our “Adjunct” experience from Good to Great. Schools, like all organizations, thrive when they respond as an aligned system to accomplish what is right, positive and possible. Discovering our common and higher ground is the beginning of the process that focuses us on the future we seek to build for ourselves.

## **The Focus of AI and the Interviews**

### **The Interview Questions**

#### **1.) BEST EXPERIENCE**

Describe an exceptional learning experience when you were the most engaged ...

In each of our lives there is a time when we just know that we have experienced a perfect moment – a moment when we feel really good about the work we are doing and what we are contributing. As you think back on your learning experiences, tell me about one of the most exceptional learning moments in your life.

- 1) Who was involved?
- 2) What about that experience made you feel most involved and most excited ?

#### **2.) VALUES**

What did you value about the experience?

- 1) Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself as a learner, instructor, or colleague at Broward College?
- 2) When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value?
- 3) What is it about Broward College that you value? What is the single most important thing that Broward College has contributed to your life?

#### **3.) CORE VALUE**

After you hear the story, encourage the interviewee to generalize. ...

- 1) What is it about Broward College’s – structures, systems, processes, policies, staff, leaders, or strategies – that if they did exist, would transform Broward College or make it different than it is today?
- 2) What specifically at Broward College allows for exceptional learning experiences?

#### **4.) THREE WISHES**

1) If you had three wishes for Broward College, what would they be?

Please share things that would enable the college to become even more vibrant and truly the sort of place in which great learning and teaching take place on a daily basis.

The committee identified their themes:

- Teaching is bi-directional & create lifelong learning
- Find passion=Empowerment Active learning/collaboration = “By in” improves accountability (Passionate professors Teaching is a learning experience)
- Activity based learning
- Project based learning
- Student engagement
- Students share knowledge
- Applied learning =change
- Encourage creative/new ideas
- Take advantage of the diverse talents of faculty, staff & students
- Excite faculty with technology to enhance student learning in the classroom

## **The Future**

The team has agreed to meet monthly through the Fall term, and to continue our effort to determine what can be done to create an exceptional Experience of the Adjunct faculty. The various facets that may be included are shown graphically in a separate document. These include departmental information and support being delivered by: electronic handbooks and references; a formal structured certification program and ongoing workshops with sequenced certification levels; and revisions of the orientations to include both classroom topics and administrative issues.

The team will continue to meet prior to each full Committee session to ensure that the positive momentum of the Ai process is part of the fabric of progress. The process has already touched a wide range of people across the College, and has support from the President and new VPAA.

Presentation Content: Through the use of PowerPoint, interactive dialogue, and guided imagery, participants will be introduced to the Appreciative Inquiry (Ai) process. In order to experience the positive dynamics behind Ai, attendees will work in pairs and be led through an abbreviated appreciative inquiry. Bridging from that shared experience, the team will describe the visual and word images used to create an exceptional adjunct experience at Broward College. This includes affirming the college’s past and present strengths, successes and potentials including adjunct orientations, annual Adjunct Professor of the Year Awards, and details of the new Adjunct Experience at the college.

The team will highlight their research from over 30 adjunct interviews which began with the question, “What are three things you wish you had been told before you walked into the classroom for the first

time?” This Ai experience led to our provocative statement – “Broward College adjunct faculty are valued members of the college community with full institutional support empowering the creation of engaging environments that fosters lifelong learning and student success.”

Participants will be provided a bibliography of materials used for the creation of the Ai process and the development of the adjunct faculty experience.

### **Permission to Share Our Story**

The Broward College Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Linda Howdyshell has given permission to Company of Experts to share this experience.

### **The Team’s Reflections & Wishes**

#### Richard Bernstein:

I can remember being a new faculty member and an adjunct faculty member, so I can reflect on what it was like to be in those positions. I want to take the AI experience and be able to expand that to all faculty. I want to be able to provide the opportunity for faculty to be engaged and empower them to be able to then in turn, engage their students. The faculty sessions, using the AI experience can bring faculty together to share their best practices and provide for the best experience for faculty regardless of their teaching method (face to face, hybrid or online classes. We all have a wealth of knowledge to impart-lets tap into that knowledge and may our life experience be more gratifying.

#### Dominique Charlotteaux:

Teaching workshops in the Adjunct Faculty Institute has been a truly uplifting experience. As an experienced education and psychology instructor, the experience has allowed me to partake in a dialog about classroom management and student engagement techniques with professional peers and to share best practices from my own classroom. In the future, it is my hope that the Adjunct Faculty Institute and its workshops will become institutionalized at the college, that additional professional development workshops will be offered to Adjunct Instructors, and that all workshops will also be delivered in the blended format using D2L.

Furthermore, I also hope that the same model will be implemented for newly hired full-time faculty via a New Faculty Institute that will regularly offer a wide variety of professional development workshops, especially on pedagogy, for new full-time faculty. In the future, these professional development opportunities could also be made available to all faculty at Broward College.