

MnSCU Initiative Fund Staff Development Grant Inver Hills Community College (Fiscal Year 2008)

Inver Hills Community College: \$5,000 to provide training campus-wide and to the IHCC Operations Team on Appreciative Inquiry.

Project Re-cap:

Inver Hills hired independent consultant Cynthia Heelan to provide a workshop on the Appreciative Inquiry methodology for Inver Hills Operations Team (comprised of administrators, some managers and supervisors, and staff who lead key programs), and MAPE and AFSCME union leadership. Appreciative Inquiry uses an organization's strengths to engage in strategic planning and problem-solving. The workshop provided a brief introduction to the Appreciative Inquiry methodology. Most of the day was spent in a hands-on application of the methodology to campus communications issues.

Seventeen administrators, managers, supervisors and union leaders participated. Costs were as follows:

Cynthia Heelan preparation and facilitation fee: \$2,020

Food for all day event: \$360.73

Impact:

The college had a taste of the success that can be achieved by using this positive approach to problem-solving, rather than a traditional problem identification/solution approach. Within a week of the workshop, the college had engaged a keynote speaker for its fall 2008 convocation on reducing workplace conflict and stress—one of the action steps identified in the workshop. Following the fall convocation presentation, the college will determine what further applications Appreciative Inquiry has at the college, and will decide whether to engage the consultant to conduct further workshops.

Reflections:

The college Operations Team developed a basic understanding of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology, what kinds of issues lend themselves to the methodology, and what kinds of issues require a different tool. It made us aware of how our culture is focused on problem identification, and we experienced the energizing effect of using a positive, strength-based methodology.

The presentation would have been even more effective had we been able to include faculty. However, because the grant was not made until late November after the academic calendar was set, and the time period in which funds could be expended did not span the entire summer 2008, we were unable to find a date when we could have significant faculty participation.