



Center Stage: The Newsletter of the Center for Organizational Dynamics

March 2007

Becky Collins, Editor

Spotlight on Educational Opportunities: Appreciative Inquiry

Sir Winston Churchill's unflagging courage and encouragement throughout Britain's involvement in WWII has been credited as the inspiration of the firm resolve of the British people to persevere against enormous odds. Of himself, Churchill said, "... I am an optimist. It does not seem too much use being anything else." Today, Churchill's optimistic view of Britons and their mettle is frequently referred to by proponents of "Appreciative Inquiry" as a prime example of the power of their method of organizational change and re-design that builds on the foundation of what has been successful, rather than focusing on what hasn't been.

"Appreciative Inquiry [AI]", according to the [Case Western Reserve University Website](#), "is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. . . it involves systematic discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable . . ." Sure sounds like an idea inherent in the tenets of Organizational Dynamics at Penn, doesn't it?

Although AI as a discipline has been around for well over a decade, even a cursory examination of an AI bibliography suggests that the field has only recently come into its own. Websites, books, articles, and testimonials have proliferated in the past few years. [Small wonder, when you consider the disillusionment that mega corporations and mega technologies have wrought amongst workers at every level of every organization.] Appreciative Inquiry advocates might carry the "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," imperative a giant step further to the "Even if it is broke, don't fix it" as it seeks to "accentuate the positives" in organizations.

If you are intrigued by the possibilities of Appreciative Inquiry and its implications for your organization, you will want to take a look at an April 2007 [AI workshop](#) featuring our own Drs. Nancie Zane and Dana Kaminstein, and information on the [AI 2007 Conference](#), at Disney's Yacht and Beach Club Resorts in September 2007. Honorary chair for the conference is AI guru, [Dr. David Cooperrider](#), whose work will be familiar to many in the Organizational Dynamics community.

Cooperrider says, "We have reached the end of problem solving as a mode of inquiry capable of inspiring, mobilizing, and sustaining human system change. The future of Organization Development belongs to methods that affirm, compel, and accelerate anticipatory learning involving larger and larger levels of collectivity." The two programs above may help you lead your organization into that future.

Spotlight on You! "Network Night" April 11

The historic E. Craig Sweeten Alumni House at 3533 Locust walk will be the gathering spot for Center members on April 11, 2007, 5:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m., as the Center Advisory Committee presents our annual "Network Night."

Offering members the opportunity to meet and greet one another as well as representatives from Penn's Career Center and from other organizations in the Delaware Valley, the wine-and-hors-d'ouvres evening is a favorite of those who attended in the past.

This year, the gathering will also feature two musicians, **Miles Hunter**, flamenco guitarist, and **Ari Pizer** on piano, saxophone, and/or guitar.

Please let us know you are coming by calling Rasheeda Hubert at 215-898-6967 or emailing her at dynamics@sas.upenn.edu.

Reminder: Dr. Stern to Speak March 29



This week, the popular [Dinner Lecture](#) series features Dr. Lewis Stern, Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Executive Coaching at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology.

Dr. Stern's coaching expertise includes executive, new-leader, career, and high-potential leaders. His former clients include Johnson and Johnson, Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital, and John Hancock, among many others.

Dr. Stern will lecture on the topic, "Graduate Education in Executive Coaching: Competence, Professional Ethics, and Commitment to the Community."

To register for this program, call Rasheeda Hubert at 215-898-6967 or email her at dynamics@sas.upenn.edu. There is no charge to Center Members.

Boyer Joins Center Advisory Board



A 2006 Graduate of the Organizational Dynamics Degree Program, **Michael D. Boyer** is the newest member of the Center Advisory Board.

We will be spotlighting various Board members in future issues, but thought it only fair that Mike's picture be included in this issue since his colleagues on the Board appeared last month!

Spotlight on Organizational Dynamics Faculty: Dr. Ackoff at 88 — Still Going!!!

Some incredible facts about **Dr. Russell Ackoff**: he turned 88 years old last month; he published his first book in 1946; he published his most recent book, *Management F-Laws*, in January 2007; he has been honored all over the world yet is as accessible as an everyday professor.



At Penn the Ackoff Center for Advancement of Systems Approaches (ACASA), housed in the School of Engineering [and a strategic partner with Organizational Dynamics], is dedicated to the research and development of the "systems approach to management," based on Ackoff's theories and convictions as they have evolved in his nearly 300 (!) [publications](#). Eminently readable, Dr. Ackoff's books and articles are as full of wit and humor as they are of scholarly weight and management wisdom. The new book's title is case in point: "F-LAWS (or flaws) are truths about organizations that we might wish to deny or ignore—simple and more reliable guides to managers' everyday behaviour than the complex truths proposed by scientists, economists, sociologists, politicians, and philosophers."

You can sample the new book in a [free minireview](#); and you might also want to check out a recent Ackoff article on "[Preparing for the Future Through Idealized Design](#)" in the Winter 2007 University of Toronto Rotman School of Management magazine, issue titled "What Next?" And if you are looking for an even more up-to-the-minute pronouncement from Dr. Ackoff, see the [ACASA blog](#) for an item on "Why Few Organizations Adopt Systems Thinking" which was posted on March 7, 2007.

Let's hope that Dr. Ackoff will soon publish something on another topic he knows about: *Systems Approach to Octogenarism*. It'll be a best-seller.

Calendar

- March 28** [Information Session](#) for prospective students, including those interested in the new [P3 concentration](#)
- March 29** Dinner Lecture: * "Graduate Education in Executive Coaching: Competence, Professional Ethics, and Commitment to the Community" - [Dr. Lewis Stern](#) (See item above.)
- April 7** [Special Information Session](#) for Prospective [P3](#) students, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 noon
- April 11** Center Member's "Network Night" (See item above.)
- April 21** [Special Information Session](#) for prospective [P3](#) students, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 noon
- April 25** [Special Information Session](#) for Prospective [P3](#) students, 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.
- May 9** [Information Session](#) for prospective students, including those interested in the new [P3](#) concentration, 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.
- April 23-26** [Appreciative Inquiry](#) Workshop (see item above.)

**Editor's Note: The popular Dinner Lecture series allows all members of the Organizational Dynamics community—faculty, students, alumni, and Center Members—to come together for a meal and a stimulating talk by leaders in OD. Lectures are held at the Inn at Penn during the regular pre-class dinner hour, beginning at 5:15 p.m. and ending just before students must leave for class. There is no charge for Center members.*

Thanks for the Memory!

And a memorable night it was on March 14, as members of the Organizational Dynamics community shared food, drink, and lively conversation at the World Café Live/WXPN Studios.

Everyone involved in the Center for Organizational Dynamics thanks everyone involved in planning and staging this fun event, with special thanks to: **Kim Perry** and **Linda DeLuca**, who hatched the idea; **Ali Castellini**, **Janis Martin-Hughes**, and **Bruce Warren**, who took care of the on-site arrangements; **Mother Nature**, who provided 70+ degrees; **Mother Nature**, who provided the previous week's snowstorm; and the **50-odd Dynamics people** who came together, just for fun, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.