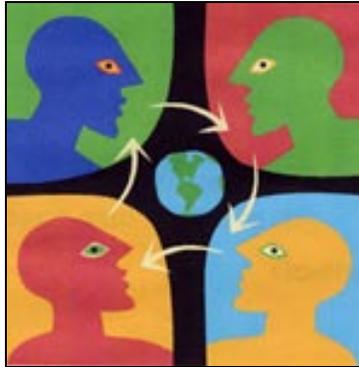


**Words Create Worlds®  
April to June 2009  
Certified AI Facilitators**



Congratulations to newly Certified Appreciative Inquiry Facilitators (CAIF) **Larita Alford**, Bermuda College, **Rebecca J. McPherson**, Medical University of South Carolina, **Susan Sanford**, consultant, and two teams from community colleges: **Duranda Greene, Lloyd Christopher and Lynette Woods**, Bermuda College and **Jean Anderson, Pamela Belcher, and Jo Ann Schwader**, North West Arkansas Community College.

The AIFT schedule is updated as new trainings are added. We invite you to visit our new registration page: <http://register.companyofexperts.net>. You can check out all of current offerings and register online!

New Title for our Certified AIFT Facilitators:

You will find all past issues of Words Create Worlds and our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition with great stories on the Resources section of our blog: <http://companyofexperts.net/biz/>. We will be adding more stories of success. Let us know if you have a case study or success story that we may want to profile on our blog! We invite you to explore the blog and our changing website. If you would like to be a contributor to the blog, please let us know. Also, we have a forum that we are hoping our AIFT Graduates will start to use to share, learn and explore Ai.

### **Newly Certified AI Facilitators**

**LARITA ALFORD** attended the AIFT held at Bermuda College. Bermuda College held the AIFT for college and community members. Larita is the Vice-President and Chief Academic Officer for Bermuda College

**FOR THE INQUIRY:** Larita's inquiry was with the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) – Board of Management. This is a non-profit organization that has as its primary focus quality assurance and accreditation of

post-secondary institution. It has only been in existence for six (6) years. The membership is scattered over the Caribbean, Bermuda and Latin America.

**Provocative Propositions (Strategic Goals and Objectives):**

1. Increase and sustain membership growth through:
  - a. Operational Core Groups
  - b. Promotion of organization targeted bodies (e.g. professional bodies)
2. Secure government and stakeholder support by:
  - a. Meetings with government in different territories
  - b. Inviting Ministers to annual Conferences to present speeches, papers etc;
  - c. Securing observer status at Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) – CARICOM
3. Pursue avenues to secure CANQATE financial viability and sustainability through:
  - a. Seeking funding from donor agencies
  - b. Online advertising
  - c. Ensuring charging/payment of membership fees
4. Facilitate commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) – Institutions and Agencies
5. Be a Centre for Research and Development
6. Establish an effective and efficient Secretariat

**CANQATE VISION**

*A Centre of Excellence in Tertiary Education Quality Assurance with a strong membership base that influences Tertiary Education in the Caribbean*

**LARITA REPORTS:** This inquiry is just the beginning, as it is the intention of the Board of Management to send the interview guide to core groups in the various regions where CANQATE members are located. Once responses are received additions and/or changes will be made to the core provocative propositions (PP's) that have already been developed. The Board will then review all of the PP's and outline steps for accomplishing them. This will include timelines, budgets, and persons responsible.

Her “personal best” experience related to facilitating this Inquiry was first seeing the members totally engaged in the process and having the tremendous sense that much had been accomplished at the end of the activities. Individuals felt that focusing on the positives throughout the process was much easier than looking at other methods. The satisfaction of seeing the folks excited about what they had accomplished was out of this world!

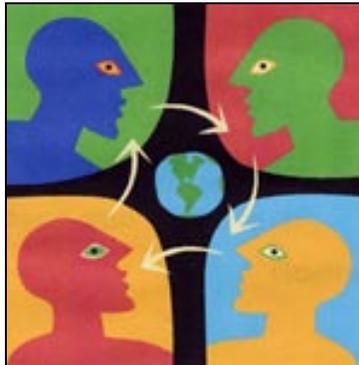
**TIP:** The AIFT uses the video “Power of Words” and Larita developed a modified power of words exercise. “I did not have time to get the video, so I used flash cards with words that I identified and flashed. Although this was nowhere as powerful as the video, it was extremely effective in making the point about the power of words and sometimes the focus in our organization. The group members accomplished a great deal and were pleased and impressed with what they had accomplished during this session”. The group was moved by the power of this exercise and Larita said “this was satisfying”.

**LARITA’S ON-GOING EFFORTS:** To continue this process, Larita will be working with the core team via email and other electronic methods. “It is my intention to ensure that the process continues through the dissemination of the interviews guides and collection of data from the core groups and general membership. I will provide information on the Ai process for core groups and support at the Annual Meeting.”

Larita shares the idea of the word image resulting from the inquiry:

“A Large Eagle representing QUALITY, SOARING over the Caribbean Island and on its wings flags, representing all of the countries.” This was powerful for all!”

**LARITA ALFORD** attended the AIFT at Bermuda College with Jeanie Cockell and Charles Miller as the Trainers/Facilitators.



**REBECCA J. MCPHERSON** attended the AIFT Northern Essex Community College.

**FOR THE INQUIRY:** Rebecca’s inquiry was with a large medical hospital that includes six medical colleges serving a broad range of health professions. They organized and led an Ai Summit for the Department of Pediatrics called “The Sunflower Project: Preparing Pediatricians for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. The positive topic developed during the AIFT that Rebecca attended.

Back home, Rebecca used the small group format with a gathering of members of the Planning team. Ai was introduced in a “micro- review” that led the participants through a modified interview guide that allowed them to explore a topic identified by the Executive team: experience of organizational change and their success with it. The interview

guide was reviewed and amended to reflect the core values of the Planning Team in association with this topic.

Each member of the Planning Team was provided a list of the entire Department plus key persons outside the department and the list was divided amongst the Planning Team. Each member contacted and interviewed their assigned individuals, the interviews were mostly face-to-face, recording compelling stories, identifying “root causes of educational success”, and aspects of strength within the program. Also recorded was anything the interviewee wished to see expanded, enhanced or strengthened, as well as quotable quotes.

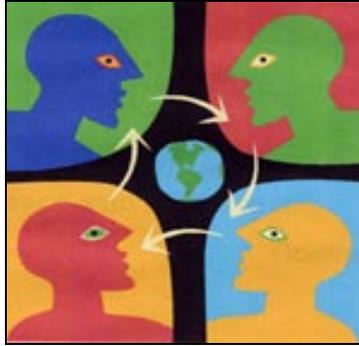
**REBECCA REPORTS:** At the summit 10 Innovation teams were formed and each team crafted dream statements or “**Mini Provocative Propositions**”: thus creating an inspiring statement of the “Dream” for each team that was ***aligned with the departmental provocative proposition***

Each Innovation Team presented to the entire community, as represented at the Sunflower Summit, what was....

1. ***Envisioned*** for the future
2. ***Planned*** as action in the short and long run
3. ***Their commitment*** to the Pediatric community
4. ***Required*** from the Pediatric and University community to be able to achieve their goals and meet their commitments to the community
5. ***Promised*** by the community to enable them to meet those same commitments.

**REBECCA’S ON-GOING EFFORTS:** The participants and Rebecca feel strongly about maintaining the energy for this project. “When educational programs are at their best they engender an enthusiasm for teaching and learning that becomes an integral part of the fabric of both the individuals and the organization. There is no area of endeavor where the need for developing the love of life-long learning is more important than medicine, wherein advances are reported at a dizzying pace. Likewise, there has never been a time when there are more tools available to students and teachers of medicine alike to enable us to accomplish our educational objectives. The trainees of today will be caring for children well into the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century!”

**REBECCA J. MCPHERSON, M.D. F.A.A.P.** attended the AIFT at NECC Jeanie Cockell and Charles Miller as the Trainers/Facilitators.



**SUSAN SANFORD** attended the AIFT at the University of Nevada, Reno.

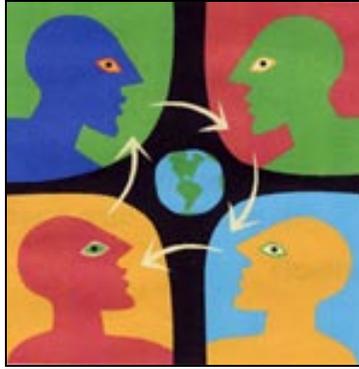
**FOR THE INQUIRY:** Susan's inquiry was with the Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains in Grass Valley, CA. The UUCM wanted a new five year plan. They had an all day "Appreciative Inquiry Congregation Playshop" and 25 people attended.

**SUSAN REPORTS:** Although it took Susan some time to facilitate her first inquiry, she reports that "Appreciative Inquiry has informed many aspects of my work". They modified the interview guide and used face to face paired interviews. According to Susan, the Ai process was pivotal in creating the new Long Range Development Plan (LRDP). In the last 10 minutes of the day, the process revealed that revitalizing the Adult Religious Education program (which has been largely defunct) was a high priority for people. The importance of this did not emerge in any of the other methods that they had used for soliciting input from the congregation and committees.

**TIP:** Susan indicated that she used the analogy of a river rafting trip – there are sections of whitewater rapids and sections of smooth, restful floating. "I drew the analogy for different parts of the process as the day went on. I think that the sections of "rapids" were easier for people and that they were more able to surrender to the experience without feeling a need to "finish it" or "get it right." That is, once a section of rapids is run, you're done. Second, to create some "smooth water" I scheduled short periods of silence at different times. People reported that this provided a welcome opportunity to reflect on what had just transpired, synthesize ideas, and flow easily into the next segment of the day. People also said that the river analogy was helpful. We closed the day with "gems" – each person who wanted to do so shared something from the day that had been particularly meaningful or delightful."

**SUSAN'S ON-GOING EFFORTS:** To encourage the Board of Trustees and the committees to consult the LRDP on a regular basis for whatever it can offer in terms of informing and focusing their work. As a member of the congregation, Susan will be "on the scene" and will seek opportunities for gathering stories, celebrating, and supporting continuing success.

**Susan Sanford** attended the AIFT at the University of Nevada, Reno with Trainer/Facilitator Jeanie Cockell.



**DURANDA GREENE, LLOYD CHRISTOPHER AND LYNETTE WOODS** attended the Northern Essex Community College AIFT and report that this as a group submission.

**FOR THE INQUIRY:** Dr. Duranda Greene, one of our team members, was appointed the President of Bermuda College on April 1, 2007, and was charged with developing a ten-year strategic plan. The decision to move from the traditional SWOT method to Ai was made. Dr. Greene and a delegation from Bermuda College attended the AIFT in 2007, immediately upon their return to Bermuda College they began planning and getting buy-in at key levels. By March they were ready and on March 17, 2008, Bermuda College closed its campus for the day and gathered at a local church hall for the “BC at its Best” Summit. Participants included all employees and representatives from the students and the Board of Governors. Charles Miller was the lead facilitator for the day and he was assisted by the four members of the BC team. During the Dr. Greene’s first three months on the job she had visited with each Department/Division to hear about their concerns and hopes for Bermuda College. Three themes kept arising during those discussions - Communication, Service and Teamwork. As a result, these were the themes that we decided to focus on at the Summit. They used the modified interview guide and conducted the paired, face to face interviews. You may view the entire Bermuda College strategic plan at [http://companyofexperts.net/biz/?page\\_id=72](http://companyofexperts.net/biz/?page_id=72).

**DURANDA REPORTS:** Getting individuals to concentrate on what they want more takes less energy than the traditional model of looking at what does not work. It was rewarding to hear employees share their thoughts about the process and how much they enjoyed the positive interactions. One of the best experiences during the facilitation was the high level of energy and creativity that was present as the teams “dreamed” and created their preferred future in images.”Appreciative Inquiry is becoming a way of life for me, in personal life as well as my profession life”.

**LLOYD REPORTS:** Performing a strategic plan in this manner was an eye opening experience for me. I was a member of the last strategic plan done by the College and this approach brought out the “best” from the participants. Looking at something from a positive point of view yields greater results than looking at the same item negatively.

One of the personal best experiences I had was when one of the participants said to me after a night time focus group sessions, “You know Mr. Christopher, when I first sat

down I was thinking that this was going to be another one of those 'boring / routine sessions' however, after going through this, I have a better appreciation for the College and where it wants to go. You guys have done a fantastic job this evening". The creativity of the small groups was another highlight for Lloyd. What they came up with in such a short time was amazing and Lloyd realized that no matter what, it can be done!

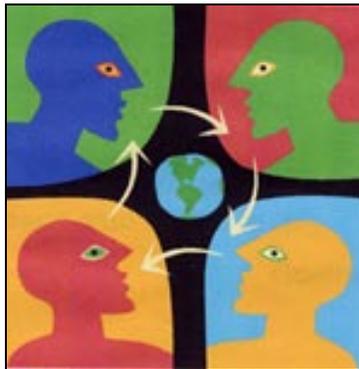
**LYNETTE REPORTS:** As co-chair of the Strategic Planning Committee Lynette will ensure that they stay focused on the short and long term goals. Monthly meetings encourage this focus. Lynette also participates in the celebration as they meet their goals.

Lynette's personal best experience was watching the employee's on Visioning Day get excited about what was transpiring, being fully engaged in the process, and working so well together in a positive environment. They entered the auditorium with preconceived ideas about the value of the process and not wanting to be in the environment all day. Lynette believes that they left at the end of the day with high feelings of accomplishment.

**DURANDA, LLOYD AND LYNETTE'S ON-GOING EFFORTS:**

DURANDA will be involved in the implementation and will ensure that all milestones are celebrated. AI was not a one day event but will become how they do things at Bermuda College. Lloyd will continue to ensure that individuals have the tools to achieve their propositions/strategies.

**DURANDA, LLOYD AND LYNETTE** attended the 2007 NECC AIFT with Charles Miller and Jeanie Cockell as the Trainer/Facilitators.



**JEAN ANDERSON, PAMELA BELCHER, AND JO ANN SCHWADER** attended the NWACC AIFT and report that this as a group submission.

**FOR THE INQUIRY:** Jean, Pam and Jo Ann attended the AIFT held at Northwest Arkansas. They are employees of NWACC and found the energy and funding that enabled them to have Jeanie Cockell support them to begin building their Ai foundation at NWACC. The core group developed two sets of interview questions from the generic guide. One was used for a brief review of the Ai process for those who attended the AIFT the previous year as well as a quick introduction for those new to the process. The

facilitators also used it to start building the positive momentum as well as develop agreements for working together. The second set of questions was used for the inquiry. The topic for the inquiry was *NWACC rewards implementation of Learning College language, priorities and values*. This topic was developed with the whole group after brainstorming issues and reframing to what is desired.

The interview method used with the first set of interviews was face-to-face pairs. The second set of interviews was done face-to-face in trios. One person interviewed, the other answered and the third was the scribe recording the answers.

The life-giving forces that were identified by the exceptional moments' interviews were helpfulness, desire to help others succeed, belief in our learners, commitment to excellence, learning, spirit of support, servant leadership and seeing the positive outcomes the college creates.

**JEAN REPORTS:** I wanted to gain a better understanding of the complete Ai process, which I did through working with the core group in planning this Ai workshop and also being a co-facilitator. Through this Ai interaction, I developed new and stronger relationships.

Last year's Ai facilitator training workshop made a lasting impression on many NWACC colleagues and the fact that they wanted to have a refresher session so that they could better incorporate the Ai principles in to their daily living—work and home—meant a lot to me and demonstrated that they believe in the power of Ai. My personal best about co-facilitating the Ai workshop was being able to work with Jean Cockell, an Ai expert facilitator, and the fact that everyone seemed to leave the workshop more energized than when they arrived! The timing of the workshop was perfect, even if it proved difficult for some employees to take time away from their daily responsibilities. I also appreciated a new employee's experience with Ai in a different institution. This new employee was very encouraging and seemed to believe we all are going in the right direction, and I believe he will be a catalyst to ensure that Ai at NWACC continues to blossom and grow.

**PAMELA REPORTS:** What I hoped would happen is for the participants to understand the value of the inquiry and the importance of the interviewing process to the success of the inquiry. That understanding happened when we did the first inquiry and the second inquiry solidified it!

What I learned about myself was how easily my state-of-being could be positively impacted and changed from immersing myself in the Ai process and how that can easily be transferred to participants through effective facilitation of Ai principles and how to execute the steps of the process.

I facilitated the section of the Ai training to: *Create the shared images of the preferred future or the dream*. The part that I love the most is Creating the Visual Image or Metaphor. We had a table full of items – pictures from magazines, colored pens,

feathers, stickers, yarn, confetti, metallic shreds, colored paper, tape, glue, etc. that each team could choose from, if they wished, to actually create an object/picture of what the dream looked like. Of course, they were also given the option to come up with other ways to depict the dream – songs, skits, or anything else they could think of. Both teams chose to use the materials to build something. During the exercise they were so focused and energized and the result were two wonderful depictions of the dream! When that exercise was complete they truly understood the need to create the visual image and how it leads to a clearer word image of the dream.

**JO ANN REPORTS:** My primary wish was for improved communication. What I learned was it is all about relationships. I already knew this but it was strongly reinforced that it is all about people and valuing them. My personal best about facilitating the Ai experience is the satisfaction I have gained when several of the participants shared that this experience was exactly what they needed and they felt rejuvenated after the workshop! They came into the workshop feeling tired and worn down and now feel like they can go on with renewed energy.

**JEAN, PAMELA, AND JO ANN'S ON-GOING EFFORTS:** They report that an excitement has been generated for moving the institution forward by the ideas and development of the strategic intentions/projects. The *New Leader Curriculum: Recipe for Success* has much positive energy around it and the entire group sees this project as a positive step in providing continuity for leadership at NWACC.

The group that worked on the design group topic of *Mentorship & Team Building* is encouraged by the ideas and plans of providing support to all new employees of the college. This group intensely desires to support, nurture and reinforce quality service to the institution helping to serve the learner community.

The third group working on developing a network and mechanism to improve communication of processes is motivated to set up communication systems to make processes more transparent. They see a potentially easy and relatively simple procedure to accomplish this goal.

One of the products of the workshop was to walk away with a design for a two-hour Ai-based workshop for various areas of the college. The participants were amazed at the ease they developed the outlines for these workshops and felt confident they would be able to deliver them. One of the workshops is designed for the Advisers in the Learner Services area. They are being restructured and there is much anxiety about the unknown. A workshop has been designed and delivered at a time to aid them to refocus and begin anew!

**TIPS FOR THE FUTURE:** To keep the momentum moving forward, Jo Ann is hosting a summer pot luck lunch where participants will meet to share about their progress towards their projects. It will be a time to celebrate successes and encourage further actions towards their goals.

The facilitators plan to meet and develop a plan to further the momentum and keep the positive energy moving forward. Jo Ann is offering a book study in the fall on a book with an AI focus [Leadership and the New Science](#) by Margaret Wheatley.

**JEAN, PAMELA, AND JO ANN** attended the 2008 NWACC AIFT with Charles Miller and Jeanie Cockell as the Trainer/Facilitators.

### **BRINGING TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS TO YOU – ONLINE**

Company of Experts will soon be offering workshops and training online! By offering customizable training solutions, cost efficient learning and training on demand, you will have the same great workshops as our face to face trainings and workshops, saving you time and money. We have partnered with Fintelo (a learning management software), which opens new doors for the Company of Experts providing us the opportunity to design and deliver quality online programs. We can support your current staff development services.

**We are planning our 2010 schedule and are looking for locations for our program listed below. If you have recommendations, please let us know.**

### **Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training (AIFT)**

Our successful four-day program designed to train facilitators and more. Please visit the Center for Appreciative Inquiry for more information.

### **Leadership Development Institute (LDI)**

A series of one-half day programs offered on-site to your leadership team. A two-day leadership program based on appreciative inquiry is also available.

### **Department Chair Institute (DCI)**

The DCI has outstanding content and has the same high quality as the AIFT.

If you would like to talk about a program on-site or if you would like to attend one of the trainings, email [Kathy@companyofexperts.net](mailto:Kathy@companyofexperts.net) or call us at (702) 228-4699. We are looking to add to our schedule currently under development.

### **Book on Appreciative Inquiry**

Nancy Stetson's book has received great reviews and is available for purchase! Nancy has worked closely with community colleges engaging them and encouraging them to look toward the future and build on their strengths using an Appreciative Inquiry approach.

*Stories of Positive Change in the Community College: Appreciative Inquiry in Action* published by the Company of Experts, Inc is now available as a soft-cover book and as a download. Nancy captures AI in action and produces outcomes using the stories of community colleges. This translates into an easy to read book that provides step by step answers to How Did They Do That? For more information or to purchase this new book, visit <http://www.companyofexperts.net>.

**To Purchase the following videos used in the AIFT – mention the Company of Experts when you call for special pricing!**

*Celebrate What's Right with the World.* Contact: Richard Gaynor, Star Thrower Dist., Saint Paul, MN 55101, 866.236.3050 | 651.209.1075, [richard@starthrower.com](mailto:richard@starthrower.com).

*Power of Words.* Contact: HelenDuBois, Sales Consultant, 800.421.0833, Ext.166 [helen.dubois@crmlearning.com](mailto:helen.dubois@crmlearning.com).

Wishing each of you hope, health and happiness.

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