Setting the Table: Strategy and Culture Dining Together

SCUP Southern Regional Conference
October 8, 2019

Sonia Alvarez-Robinson, PhD
Georgia Tech Strategic Consulting
Setting the Table
Setting the Table

Strategy: Where you want to go and how you plan to get there

Culture: The conditions you will face on the way to your desired destination

The focus of our conversation

The spirit of the conversation
One example where you have seen someone do something positive for the future of humanity.
Which do you address first?

Strategy

The plan for the game

Culture

The spirit of the game
Through the Lens of Culture

The behaviors, beliefs, assumptions, priorities, and experiences of the people in an environment.

See

Feel

Do

Hear

Cause and Effect of Culture
What we **see** in our environment
Who we **see** in our environment
Who and what we **see**

How does it impact what goes into your strategy?
What we **hear** in our environment
What we **hear** in our environment
What we **hear** in our environment

How does it impact the way people interpret your strategy?
What we **do** in our environment
How we **feel** in our environment
How we feel in our environment
How we **feel** in our environment

How does what you do and how you feel impact how effectively you **implement** your strategy?
• Appreciative inquiry can leverage culture and strategy to enhance planning.
• Draw out the best of your institution’s culture.
• Strengthen and reinforce a positive culture.
• Close gaps between aspiration and reality.
The Conversation: Giving Thanks

Thankful for what we have

- How are people engaged?
- What is the conversation tone?
- What is likely to happen?
- What are the gaps in this discussion?
- How does focus on abundance influence our mindset?

Focused on what we lack

- What is the energy of the conversation?
- What is the majority of our time spent on?
- How do problems get resolved?
- How does focus on scarcity influence our minds?
Planning Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry

- Focus on what is **working**, has gone **well**, and does not need fixed
- Direct conversations more towards what we **possess** than what we lack
- Concentrate on what we **want** rather than what we never had
- Harness **strengths** rather than getting stuck on limitations
- Build **resilience** by acknowledging challenges while emphasizing how we got through them
- Imagine what **could** be, **should** be, and **will** be
“By paying attention to what is wrong, inadequate, or not good enough, we emphasize and amplify them by creating a language of deficit that permeates our thoughts and our words.”

- Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987) "Appreciative Inquiry into Organizational Life"
What makes a good question?

• Clear
• Succinct
• Open ended
• Inclusive
• Inviting
The Art of Inquiry: Questioning

1. Create a question that will:
   - Draw out the best of your institution’s culture.
   - Strengthen and reinforce a positive culture.
   - Close gaps between aspiration and reality.

2. Now apply your question
Key questions for visioning phase

1. What makes you most proud to be associated with Georgia Tech? Share a specific example of an event, person or achievement. Please explain WHY that example makes you most proud.

2. Explain HOW Georgia Tech accomplished this example; what made it successful; and what aspects of Georgia Tech’s strengths, culture and capabilities helped to support these accomplishments.

3. Thinking ahead to the year 2030, what is your biggest dream for Georgia Tech?
Our Process

**Visioning Phase:**
Dreaming about our future – building on strengths

**Goal Setting Phase:**
Clarifying distance to the goal and how we will get there

**Implement Phase:**
Unit level planning and mobilization of the plan
How will you apply appreciative inquiry in your next planning or group experience?
Strategy and Culture Go Hand in Hand
THANK YOU