

Imago Relationships International
May 09, 2006

Questions and Answers:

Appreciative Inquiry process for co-creating an Imago vision with the community

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry was developed at the Taos Institute, as a way of building a shared vision within a diverse community. The process shifts people's attention from traditional problem solving, which often focuses on weakness and negativity. Within Appreciative Inquiry, participants seek to find shared strengths from the community and its history, to co-create an inspiring and achievable vision of the future, to which all can be committed.

How has Appreciative Inquiry been used to involve the Imago Community in creating a plan?

At the 2005 Imago Conference in Atlanta, the IRI Board Chair, Maureen Brine partnered with the Imago Peace Project to lead a session called "Dare to Dream". Peace project members guided small discussions groups to provide answers to questions about building a strong Imago community, and a strong Imago brand.

The results of this input from the community have been compiled into a document, which was reviewed by the Board, at the same time as they completed their annual review of the milestones set for the year. In this way they made sure that the focus on the plan matched the suggestions from the Imago community members.

Will there be more opportunity to provide input using this process?

Following the success of last year's Appreciative Inquiry process, a longer session has been planned for the community to use AI at the 2006 conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

How does the Board make strategic decisions which affect the Imago community?

Most major proposals considered by the Board come from a subcommittee, the faculty, or the work of the Executive Director with the community. Usually the Executive Director reaches out to gather input from people involved, so that a well-considered proposal can be presented to the Board. This may even involve a formal survey, for example when making the decision to take the annual conference to Austria in 2007.

Most Board members are also Imago Therapists, working alongside their Imago colleagues around the world, and are able to then review the proposals, and ensure that sufficient information and opinions have been gathered prior to making a decision.

What are the opportunities for community members to provide more input to Imago Relationships International's plans?

The most effective way for community members to get more involved in shaping the direction of Imago Relationships International is to join one of the sub-committees of the Board. These committees are led by Board members, and rely on other Imago therapists, educators and supporters to guide their work.

Subcommittees currently include the following:

- **Global Membership** – working to provide support to Imago regional groups around the world. The Global membership committee runs an annual Global Summit meeting at the annual conference (Maryrita Weiners)
- **Grants** – providing matching grants of up to \$10,000 to Imago groups. (Julie Drezner)
- **Development** – seeking funds for Imago work, and leading the creation of a social action agenda, helping those who cannot afford private-practice mental-health care. (Julie Drezner)
- **Finance** – advising the Board on the expenditure of IRI funds. (Ron Clark)
- **Nominating** – seeking and recommending new Board members, from both within and outside the Imago community. (Gene Shelly)
- **Programs** – Creating new professional programs, to meet the needs of the community. The programscommittee oversees a number of product development task-forces. (Sophie Slade)
- **Professional Training and Standards** – Working with the Board and Faculty to ensure that clinical training and practice meets high standards of excellence (Gene Shelly)
- **Conference** – Planning the annual conference. (Bob Patterson)

Other ways to provide input include joining the telephone “Think Tank” meetings, organized weekly by Edward Shea. Many of these involve Board members and the Executive Director discussing key issues, such as fundraising, and new programs. You can call Edward Shea on (630) 530-1060 to suggest topics.

Tim Atkinson, Executive Director is always interested in hearing your ideas and suggestions. He can be contacted at 212 240 7433.