



Mary Hoddy

Staff Education and Training Coordinator
Wisconsin Union University
of Wisconsin-Madison

The Wisconsin Union is one of the largest university unions in the United States. It is a unique entity that combines business, education, and community into a single, visionary not-for-profit organization. Its terrace has chairs painted in farm-tractor colors, and its significant profits from ice cream and beer are reinvested into programs and activities.

It is managed by a student-majority governing council, and provides a wealth of nonclassroom learning opportunities for the university's students, faculty, and staff, as well as local residents. And it is a working laboratory in which the principles of appreciative inquiry (see Trends on page 21) are applied daily.

"Many people use negative role modeling, even in training classes. We tell people what not to do, and it's hard not to think about that. The brain needs to hear what we're supposed to do," says Mary Hoddy staff education and training coordinator for the Wisconsin Union at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Hoddy is responsible for the workplace learning activities of the union's 800 to 1,000 part-time employees, who work primarily in food and retail services, maintenance, and custodial activities, in addition to 200 full-time professional staff in administration and marketing.

With the assistance of two full-time and 15 part-time student staff members, she oversees more than 75 workshops and 100-plus learning events each year. Her department's offerings range from new-employee orientation and OSHA-mandated classes, to diversity and leadership training.

In her role since 1987, Hoddy is an evangelist—both for the union and for the benefits of appreciative inquiry as applied to human resources and employee education. The Wisconsin Union was possibly the first university union to hire a professional staff member for training and development, so Hoddy has been breaking new ground for nearly 20 years.

Appreciative inquiry appealed to Hoddy from the start. "It gave me language and research results for what I already believed about how adults learn. It affirmed what I thought we could and should do."

Now, everything Hoddy's department does is solidly grounded in principles of adult education and appreciative inquiry.

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