David Cooperrider, PhD, Honored as Peter F. Drucker Distinguished Fellow

David L. Cooperrider, Case Western Reserve University’s internationally renowned organizational behavior professor known for his strengths-focused Appreciative Inquiry (AI) strategy and research, is fulfilling his role as the third and current Peter F. Drucker Distinguished Fellow for the Peter F. Drucker & Masatoshi Ito School of Management, part of Claremont Graduate University.

The school in Claremont, Calif., bestowed the honor in April shortly after a lecture and program Cooperrider provided there on "The Discovery and Design of Positive Institutions." As distinguished fellow, Cooperrider is a valued resource for students, and he plans to teach a special graduate level seminar at the Drucker School on "Appreciative Inquiry and the Design of Positive Institutions" during the summer of 2011.

Recently, he advised six Drucker students who came to Cleveland to personally experience Mayor Frank Jackson’s Summit 2010: The Global Engine, held Sept. 22-23. They took part in the one-year follow-up to 2009’s three-day summit, Building an Economic Engine to Empower a Green City on a Blue Lake.

The goal of Sustainable Cleveland 2019 is to make Cleveland a model of sustainability and a leader in the emerging green economy over the next nine years. This effort is focused on using AI to support business growth, protect the environment, and create opportunities for prosperity.

Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005) had a career as a writer, consultant and teacher spanning more than six decades. Cooperrider is fond of discussions he recalls having with Drucker, whom he regards as one of the greatest thinkers of the past century. Cooperrider says Drucker advised him that the essence of leadership “is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make a system’s weaknesses irrelevant.”

“Too often our shell-shocked bureaucracies and negative political systems drain our energy, deplete our resources, and focus our collective attention on the worst, not the best, in life,” Cooperrider says. “But strengths-based organizations and societies are different — they’ve learned that human systems excel only through dedicated inquiry and positive public dialogue into our collective strengths, never by simply fixing weaknesses.”
David Cooperrider, the Fairmount Minerals Professor of Social Entrepreneurship at Case Western Reserve’s Weatherhead School of Management, and Suresh Srivastva jointly wrote the 1987 classic *Appreciative Inquiry Into Organizational Life*. The research shifted management attention from “a problem to be solved” to the importance of innovation spawning a “universe of strengths.” The end result is creation of new and sustainable value.

His book series *Advances in Appreciative Inquiry* (Emerald Publishers) and academic works such as *The Organization Dimensions of Global Change* have been drawn upon by scholars, executives, and leaders from all walks of life. Appreciative Inquiry is being called upon in the corporate world and in economics, public service, urban renewal, international development, and in faith-based institutions.

Cooperrider travels extensively to speak about positive change. His newest frontier, shared with professors Ron Fry of Case Western Reserve’s Weatherhead School of Management and Peter Senge of MIT, is the application of AI and large scale strengths-based approaches for the creation of sustainable cities and green economic design.

“David Cooperrider is building on and extending the work of Peter Drucker in an exciting and highly beneficial way,” said Vijay Sathe, a professor at the Drucker School. “Drucker said the best way to predict the future was to invent it. Cooperrider and his methods are helping businesses and people around the world to invent a better future for all sectors of society.”

Cooperrider joins only two others who have been named as a Peter F. Drucker Distinguished Fellow: Ikujiro Nonaka, author of *The Knowledge-Creating Company*, was named in 2008 and Charles Handy, author of *The Age of Unreason*, was named in 2009.

Cooperrider servers as faculty chair for the Fowler Center for Sustainable Value at Weatherhead, where he created the Global Forum for Business as an Agent of World Benefit in collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact and the Academy of Management. He has taught and lectured at Harvard, Stanford, Cambridge and many other business schools and organizations worldwide.