Strengths at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and Abroad: Using a Strengths Based Approach to Enhance Career Development

Katy Hinz (katyh@umn.edu), Office for Student Engagement
Empathy, Learner, Arranger, Positivity, Maximizer

Angie Schmidt Whitney (whit1008@umn.edu), CLA Career Services
Woo, Communication, Arranger, Positivity, Strategic

Sheila Collins (colli059@umn.edu), Learning Abroad Center

Engage with us on Twitter!
@UMN_Strengths
#StrengthsAndU
Clifton StrengthsFinder

- Online talent assessment that helps people discover and describe their talents
- Based on 40+ years of research, based in positive psychology
- Widely used
  - More than 4500 completes per day (one every 19 seconds)
- More than 2.5 million copies of *StrengthsFinder 2.0* sold; over one million StrengthsQuest
- Available in more than 25 languages
U of M’s Strengths Story

• Strengths was already happening in “pockets” at the U

• Strengths Advisory Board (2009)

• Gallup Strengths in Education conference (June 2009)

• Full-time position developed in the Office for Student Engagement (September 2010)

• Vice Provost for Student Affairs championed initiative for first year students (March 2011)
Strengths by the Numbers

17,000+ first-year and transfer students have taken StrengthsFinder through the Strengths at the U initiative

5,500+ staff, faculty, and other groups have used U of M purchased codes to take StrengthsFinder since March 2011

3,440+ students, staff, faculty, parents and alumni participated in Strengths related workshops organized and/or facilitated by the Office for Student Engagement

1,400+ individuals have purchased StrengthsFinder test code access and/or StrengthsFinder books from the University Bookstore

600+ members of the University community have participated in Gallup-facilitated Strengths Educator and Mentorship workshops since March 2011

175+ staff and faculty have attended Strengths workshops from August 2012-August 2013 through the Office of Organizational Effectiveness

20+ departments at the U of M had staff members serving on 4 working groups to help launch Strengths at the U, and 21 departments have been represented by members of the Strengths Advisory Board
We are using a Strengths approach on our campus to enhance student engagement and well-being which leads to improved retention, graduation and life success.
**STRENGTHS INITIATIVE FRAMEWORK**

On the Twin Cities campus we are using a Strengths approach to enhance student engagement and well-being which leads to improved retention, graduation and life success. StrengthsFinder® is a tool that contributes to the demonstration of the Student Learning Outcomes (www.slo.umn.edu) and the Student Development Outcomes (www.sdo.umn.edu).

**Strengths Integration Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Arrival</th>
<th>1st Year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
<th>3rd Year</th>
<th>4th Year</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths Awareness</td>
<td>Engagement Opportunities</td>
<td>Career Planning &amp; Integration</td>
<td>Capstone*</td>
<td>Post-Graduation Transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic &amp; Personal Transition</td>
<td>Major/Career Exploration</td>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic and Personal Growth**

In addition to these strategies, colleges and units are encouraged to integrate a Strengths-based approach into their own programs, learning experiences and curricula.

**Experiences**

- Service Learning
- Internships
- Learning Abroad
- Student Employment
- Leadership Opportunities
- Fraternity and Sorority Life
- Campus Traditions

**Academics & Career**

- Studying
- Choosing a Major
- Career Planning
- Research
- Test Taking
- Campus Resources
- Meeting and Working with Faculty & Staff

**Daily Life**

- Meeting and Building Relationships with Others
- Jobs
- Time Management
- Commuting to and Navigating Campus
- Health/Wellness
- Hanging Out with Friends
- Hobbies
- Family

**Increased:**

- Student Outcomes
- Career Fit
- Well-being

**Success**

*Capstone: a final project, culmination of experiences and resources, reflection, or other experience that relates to preparing to transition from undergraduate student to graduated student.*
Examples of Student “Touch Points”

- Welcome Week session
- Convocation (President’s office support)
- Academic advising and career counseling sessions
- Housing & Residential Life
- Workshops
- 34 in 34
- Strengths & Engagement Coaching
- Parents weekend
- Student Employment Leadership Program
Online engagement opportunities

- strengthsquest.com
- strengths.umn.edu
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Portal
- Videos

In-class engagement opportunities

- First-year experience
- Access to Success
- “Success over stress”
- Career courses
- Leadership minor
“I believe that knowing my Strengths and interacting with them has positively impacted me in the following areas”
Strengths & Career

Dream Job
Next Exit
Strengthen & Career

"Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." - Confucius

Empathy → Sales
Individualization → Counseling
Woo → Teaching

DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS
Strengths & Job Search Skills

• Interviewing: STARS Method
  – Situation/Task
  – Action
  – Result
  – Strength(s)
• Cover Letter
• Resume
• Elevator Pitch
Strengths and Learning Abroad Center
Strengths Trainings with LAC Staff

- Multiple trainings and workshops with Learning Abroad Center (LAC) Staff
- Several LAC have been through trainings with Gallup
- On-site coordinators took StrengthsFinder assessment & went through workshop to understand results
Career Exploration in Australia

3 week, 3 credit program

Strengths components:
• at beginning of program:
  - What is your personal definition of your top 5?
  - How have you used your top 5 in the past?
  - How can you use your top 5 to explore careers?
  - How can you use each strength in a healthy, productive way during your time in Australia?
• at Final Retreat:
  - How did you use your strengths in Australia and in your career exploration process?
The Future...

• Funding secured for year four of the Strengths Initiative

• Conversations with Learning Abroad Center Advising team

• Career course for 2nd year students to be offered next year, strengths will be a component