

# 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**

DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS



# 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

DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS

Copyright © 2012 Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved.

# 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)



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS

# 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

# Strengths Approach

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 AT THE U: CREATING A STRENGTHS-BASED UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

## STRENGTHS INITIATIVE FRAMEWORK

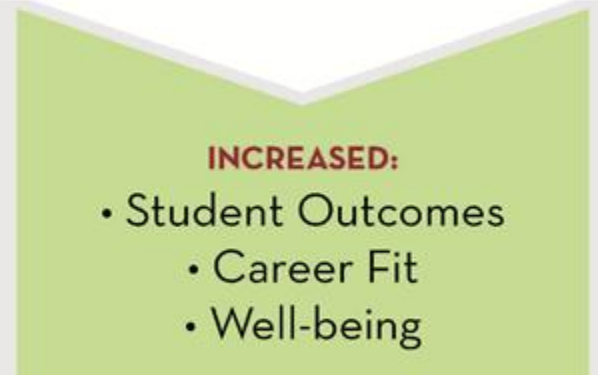
On the Twin Cities campus we are using a Strengths approach to enhance student engagement and well-being which leads to improved retention, graduation and life success. StrengthsFinder® is a tool that contributes to the demonstration of the Student Learning Outcomes ([www.slo.umn.edu](http://www.slo.umn.edu))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

### Strengths Integration Strategies



### 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.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

\*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



Jacquelyn Johnson @jacqui\_johnson8

Mar 9

Strangest encounter with a security guard. #awk #smalltalk #heaskedaboutstrengths @UMNprobs

Retweeted by UMNProbs

Expand

DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS



**Rebecca Kang**

Anyone else finish their StrengthsFinder and get their Top 5?  
I got: Achiever, Analytical, Focus, Consistency, and Learner. In that order.

What did everyone else get?

Like · Comment · Follow Post · July 19 at 12:21am

👍 12 people like this.

💬 View previous comments 100 of 107



**Emily Schaumann** connectedness, harmony, activator, maximizer, positivity

July 19 at 1:24am · Like



**Blake Apgar** Developer, empathy, adaptability, intellection, ideation.

July 19 at 1:34am · Like · 🍌 1



**Hayley Turner** @Haylz1893

31 Aug

@umn\_strengths I'm going to use responsibility in student groups to help lead the way. #gopher16 #umn



**UMN Strengths** @UMN\_Strengths

4 Feb

This Week's Strength is COMPETITION! See how others use this strength to be successful: [strengths.umn.edu](http://strengths.umn.edu) . Week 19 Strengths 20/34



**Brittany Berenz** @Britt\_Berenz

5 F

I don't know anything about Competition, except that I always win!

@umn\_strengths [pic.twitter.com/CFwRSLI](http://pic.twitter.com/CFwRSLI)

🔄 Retweeted by UMN\_Strengths

📷 View photo

## Online engagement opportunities

- [strengthsquest.com](http://strengthsquest.com)
- [strengths.umn.edu](http://strengths.umn.edu)
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Portal
- Videos

## In-class engagement opportunities

- First-year experience
- Access to Success
- “Success over stress”
- Career courses
- Leadership minor

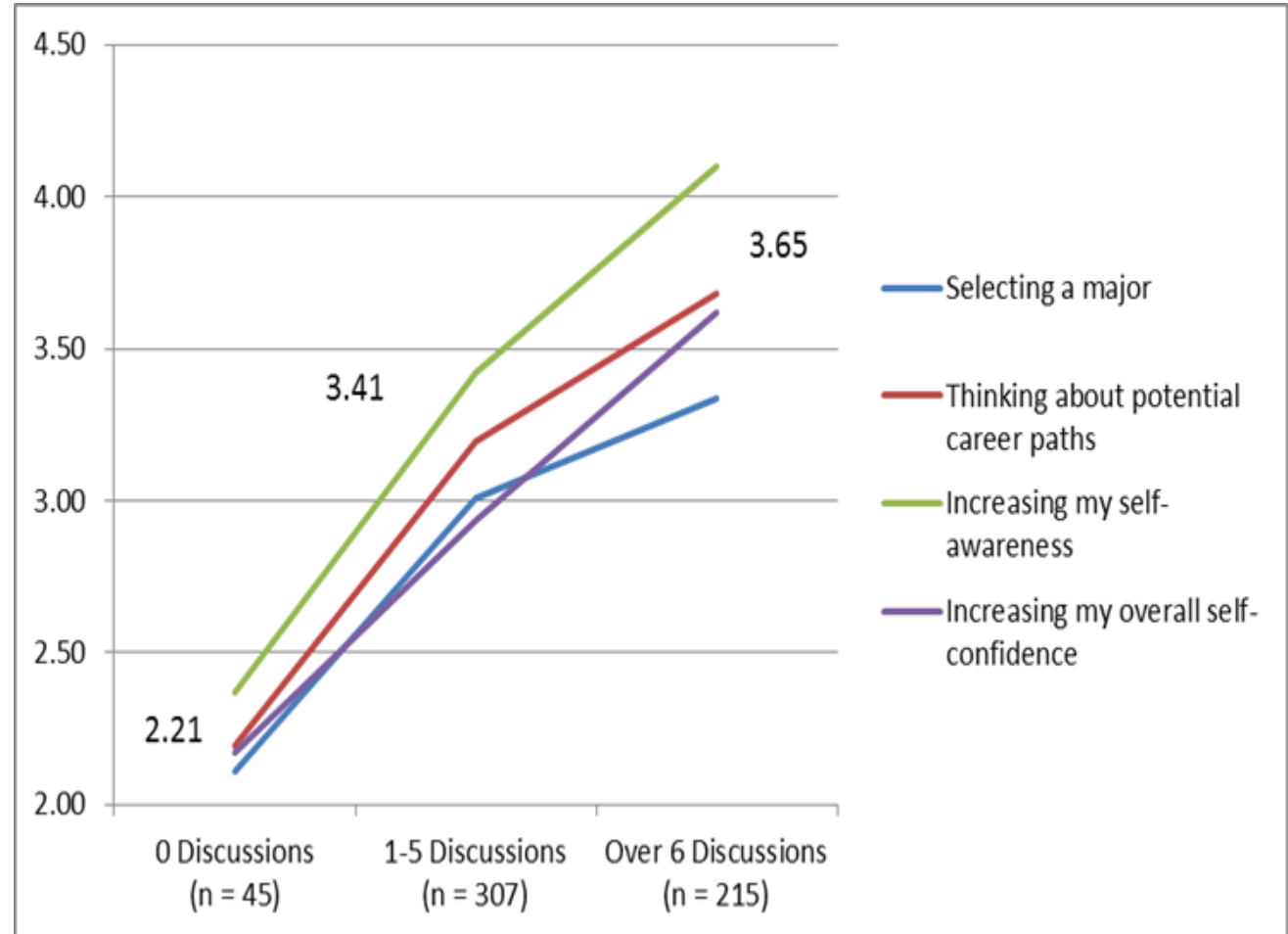
DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS





# Strengths Discussions Matter

“I believe that knowing my Strengths and interacting with them has positively impacted me in the following areas”



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS



# Strengths & Career



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS

# Strengths & 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



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS

# Strengths and Learning Abroad Center



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS



# 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



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS

# 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?



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS



# The Future...

- Funding secured for year four of the Strengths Initiative
- Conversations with Learning Abroad Center Advising team
- Career course for 2<sup>nd</sup> year students to be offered next year, strengths will be a component



DISCOVERY ILLUMINATES  
STUDENTS' STRENGTHS



# Questions, Comments

**Follow us on  
Twitter!**

**@UMN\_Strengths**

**#StrengthsAndU**

**Contact Us!**

**Katy Hinz  
katyh@umn.edu**

**Angie Schmidt  
Whitney  
whit1008@umn.edu**

**Sheila Collins  
collio59@umn.edu**

