Building on Our Strengths:
Strengths Based Strategies for Student Affairs
Learning outcome

INSPIRE
Think of a time you:

- could not wait to start an activity
- picked up an activity easily
- were lost in the moment
- wondered “How did I do that?”
- felt satisfied and could not wait to start again!
So what’s stopping you?
The Wrong Assumptions

- All behaviors can be learned
- The best in a role all get there the same way
- Weakness fixing leads to success
The Truths

The TRUTHS that allow you to play to your strengths most of the time

- As you grow you become more of who you already are
- You are going to grow and develop the most in your areas of strength
- What your team needs of you most of all is for you to bring your strengths deliberately
The Roots of Strengths

Positive Psychology - study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive
Deficit Based

Grade and Progress Reports

The Rabbit

Performance Evaluations

and

the Duck
Donald Clifton and the Gallup Organization

- Two million interviews
- Thoughts, feelings and behaviors → success
- Validated
Top Achievers:

- fully recognize their talents and develop them into strengths
- apply their strengths in roles that best suit them
- invent ways to apply their strengths in order to achieve Excellence
Strengths Development Framework

Discover/Awareness
- Understands, can define and verbalize their themes.
- Has a basic understanding of their themes.

Develop/Integrate
- Can see a clear connection between their themes and past and present behavior.
- Can link strengths to successes.

Apply/Application
- Can utilize the knowledge of their five themes to plan, strategize, analyze and direct their behavior.

Relationship
- Has a clear understanding of their uniqueness and sees others strengths.
- Has a relationship(s) that is encouraging their strength’s development.
How do I know what my strengths are?

- Clifton Strengths Finder
  - Gallup Organization
  - Strengths Quest/Strengths Finder

- SIGN
  - Success, Instinct, Growth, Need

- Your own instinct
  - No one knows your strengths like you do
    **No one!!**
Clifton Strengths Finder

- The Gallup Organization
- Identifies top 5 of 34 signature themes
- Used with over 4 million people in 17 languages
Talents

- **Behavior** patterns that make you *effective*
- **Thought** patterns that make you *efficient*
- **Beliefs** that empower you to *succeed*
- **Attitudes** that sustain your efforts toward achievement and *excellence*
- **Motivations** that propel you to take action and maintain the *energy* needed to achieve
- You can not not do it
- Talents are **potential strengths**!
Similar talents grouped into themes

The Clifton Strength Finder measures for 34

Common language
Today At Work...

THE TEAM BUILDING EXERCISE GOT STRANGELY COMPETITIVE.

AS IN.. "WHO CAN STAY ON THE HOT COALS LONGEST?"

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Strengths

- Talents productively applied
- Talents refined with knowledge and skill
  - requires purposeful effort

Talents + Skills + Knowledge = Strengths
Knowledge + Skills take effort
Talent X Effort = Strengths!
Another way of looking at it...

- Strengths strengthen you
- Weaknesses weaken you
  - Can you be competent at a weakness?
“Despite the American myth, I cannot be or do whatever I desire – a truism, to be sure, but a truism we often defy.

Our created natures make us like organisms in an ecosystem: There are some roles and relationships in which we thrive and others in which we wither and die.”

Parker Palmer, Let Your Life Speak
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Parker Palmer,
Let Your Life Speak
What Gives you Energy?

You're expected to attend a party
There will be around 50 people there
You won't know anyone and can't take a friend

You can’t wait
You would rather hit yourself in the head with a hammer
Your closet:
Is organized by sleeve length and color
Is piles of clothes
Strengths are the lens through which you see the world
You are required to attend a “brainstorming” session to dream up new ideas.

Love it  Loathe it

You are directed to analyze the past 4 years of student retention and success data for a University accreditation report.

You want me to do WHAT???? Thanks, I will start TODAY!!
What Do You Do?

The next time you are asked,

“What do you do?”

Rather than simply sharing your title, try and integrate some of your signature themes into your answer
Live your strengths!

Know your top 5
Be proud of your top 5
Post them
Bring them!
Scott’s Themes

Activator
Command
Strategic
Ideation
Relator
Frequently Asked Questions
I can’t ignore my weaknesses, so what do I do?

- Difference between a “non-strength” and a “weakness.”

- Weaknesses interfere with your own ability to perform to expected levels—or interfere with others’ ability to do their work

- Stop doing it and see if it matters

- Find a partner who has strength in your area of weakness

- Look at the weakness through the lens of your strengths
Is my talent really that special or unique?

- Over 33 million combinations of the top 5 themes
- You can do one thing better than the next 10,000 people
- Strengths come so naturally that we may not know they are “special”
Overall CSF Database
SF II 06
2,136,755 respondents

- Achiever 750,461
- Relator 708,942
- Learner 691,476
- Responsibility 627,315
- Strategic 550,601
- Input 451,636
- Maximizer 412,487
- Focus 374,261
- Arranger 370,616
- Harmony 350,853
- Woo 312,928
- Adaptability 306,408
- Restorative 299,107
- Ideation 290,513
- Empathy 274,663
- Positivity 264,304
- Developer 260,611
- Analytical 252,658
- Competition 252,612
- Activator 248,405
- Communication 243,164
- Connectedness 239,765
- Includer 230,971
- Intellection 227,064
- Individualization 218,354
- Belief 212,943
- Deliberative 196,475
- Futuristic 182,123
- Consistency 176,271
- Context 175,860
- Self-Assurance 159,684
- Significance 137,157
- Command 113,937
- Discipline 111,070
Why do I only get my top 5?

- Focus on strength not weakness
- You own your strengths, pick out 5 more
- Feel free to replace one with another
- No one knows your talents like you do!!
Your questions?
One of my Signature Themes that I want to learn more about and consciously apply more often:

One thing I will do differently starting tomorrow: