

Creative Ideas to Create a Strengths Culture

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Strengths Art Show

Purpose:

- To build a campus-wide awareness of the strengths philosophy
- To encourage artistic expression and creativity among students

Instructions:

Ask 34 different artists (faculty members in the art department can help you choose art students) to use a piece of art to depict an assigned strength. Display the art in a prominent location on campus.

Suggestions:

Partner with a faculty member who would be willing to award students course credit or extra credit for this assignment.

Program Variations:

- Instead of assigning strengths to certain artists, allow each artist to choose one of their strengths to create
- Invite students, faculty, and staff to participate in the art show and make it a competition
- Require student leaders to capture the essence of strength in art

Materials Needed:

- Art supplies
- Nametags to place next to the art informing the viewer which strength is being depicted

Recommended Use:

- An art class
- Leadership training
- In a student union building

Bilingual Circumlocution

Purpose:

- To promote self-reflection
- To encourage the use of strengths in all cultures
- To build strengths consciousness on the college campus
- To increase knowledge of the 34 strengths
- To allow students to use problem-solving and critical thinking when discussing strengths in a different language

Instructions:

Have students take turns speaking in a certain foreign language while trying to explain certain strength. The other students should be trying to guess which strength the person is trying to describe.

Materials Needed:

- A list of the 34 strengths

Recommended Use:

- This activity is most useful in a setting where all students are expected to have a basic knowledge of the same foreign language (For example:
 - A foreign language class
 - A foreign language wing of a particular residence hall
 - A training program for students who are participating in a study abroad program

BLOG

Purpose:

- To use technology to connect with students
- To promote self-awareness and self-reflection
- To build strengths consciousness on the college campus

Instructions:

Create a link from the university website to a strengths blog. Post random facts about strengths online. (Example: *Did you know that (name a person on campus) has the strength of empathy? Did you know that the most-represented strength in the freshman class is achiever? Etc.*) Also post open-ended questions and

encourage students to respond to these questions on the blog. (Example: *How do your strengths affect your relationships? What is the purpose of the strengths philosophy?* Etc.) Create a section on the blog for students to ask strengths questions.

Notes:

- Make sure you keep the blog updated!
- Assign a blog moderator to ensure that the posts are appropriate and non-threatening.

Materials Needed:

- Someone who is technology savvy!

Recommended Use:

- A campus-wide conversation that is open to anyone

Capture Your Strengths

Purpose:

- To give students the opportunity to be active and creative as they display their knowledge of the strengths
- To build strengths awareness across the campus
- To create a campus culture that understands the importance of strengths-based education

Instructions:

Pass out a disposable camera to each individual who is completing the assignment. Instruct the students to use the camera to capture “strengths in action” or the “essence of strengths” on the college campus. Give them about a week to complete the assignment. When the students turn the cameras in, go develop the film. Post the pictures on a campus-wide strengths website or create a bulletin board display showcasing the strengths pictures.

Materials Needed:

- Disposable cameras
- A prominent place to display the pictures
- Decorations for the bulletin board

Recommended Use:

- A leadership development class with a focus on strengths
- A photography class

-Student leadership training

Charades

Purpose:

- To encourage teamwork
- To promote an understanding of the 34 strengths
- To create a fun and relaxed environment for a group of people

Instructions:

Split the students into two groups. Have the students take turns acting out a particular strength while their teammates try to guess which strength they are acting out.

Variations on the Program:

-Instead of having students act out the strength, you can have the students try to draw the strengths while their teammates guess strengths (A Pictionary-esque game).

Materials Needed:

- A list of the 34 strengths

Recommended Use:

- Student leader training
- Freshman experience course
- Senior experience course
- Freshman orientation
- Any type of academic course

The logo for CinemaStrengths features the word "CinemaStrengths" in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. The word "Cinema" is in a smaller font size than "Strengths". Below the main text, there is a stylized, horizontal, wavy graphic element that resembles a film strip or a series of overlapping lines.

Purpose:

- To encourage students to look at their worlds through “strengths-colored” glasses
- To teach students to recognize strengths in other people

- To promote knowledge of the 34 strengths

Instructions:

Choose a movie with an underlying (or obvious) strengths-theme and show it to a group of students who are familiar with the StrengthsFinder. Notify the students of the purpose of the movie-viewing and ask them to be aware of each character's individual strengths and the way strengths are depicted in the film.

Design questions for reflection and discussion after the movie-viewing. Break students up into small groups with a facilitator. Instruct the facilitator to lead a discussion based on the questions provided.

Movie Suggestions:

1. Remember the Titans
2. Hoosiers
3. The Sandlot
4. Shrek
5. Finding Nemo
6. A League of their Own
7. Miracle
8. Forrest Gump
9. Toy Story
10. Babe

Sample questions:

1. What strengths do you think (insert character's name) has?
2. How does (insert character's name) develop his/her strengths throughout the film?
3. What message does the film send about strengths?
4. Did you see a reflection of yourself in any of the characters? Explain.
5. What thoughts or questions about strengths-based leadership do you have after watching this movie?

Variations on this program:

In order to create energy and enthusiasm about this event, choose an interesting venue for the movie-viewing. (Show the movie outdoors, rent out a movie theater for the showing, create a "dive-in movie" and allow students to watch the movie from a pool, etc.)

Materials Needed:

- Movie
- Screen
- Projector
- Venue
- Snacks
- Handouts with discussion questions for discussion facilitators

Recommended Use:

- Student leader training (especially useful if the student leaders will be working closely with other students)
- Leadership development class
- New student experience course
- Senior seminar class
- All-University event (free movie-viewing and snacks!)

Crazy Ideas

Purpose:

- To encourage students to think “outside the box” in terms of strengths programming and integration
- To promote a deeper understanding of the 34 strengths

Instructions:

Have students come up with the craziest, wildest, most out-of-the box ideas they can think of to use their strengths together in order to accomplish something great. Also have the students imagine ideas for creating strengths programs on-campus. The key is to get students to think BIG and think outside the box.

Variations on the Program:

- Give awards to the students who come up with the craziest idea

Materials Needed:

- None

Recommended Use:

- This activity is helpful for student leaders who will be creating strengths-based program for other students
- Faculty/staff strengths training

Crossword Puzzle

Purpose:

- To promote a campus-wide understanding of the 34 strengths
- To integrate strengths into many areas of campus life

Instructions:

Integrate strengths into the school newspaper's crossword puzzle. Create a "regular" crossword puzzle with a few strengths-based words included. (For example: A clue could read "Students with this particular strength like to search for answers by trying to understand the past." The answer to that clue would be "Context.")

Variations on the Program:

-If the school newspaper does not include a crossword puzzle, try to incorporate one into a class setting or create a crossword puzzle and post it on the school website.

Materials Needed:

- A crossword puzzle that can be added to

Recommended Use:

- The school newspaper
- An English course
- Student leader training
- A campus-wide contest or activity

Facebook

Purpose:

- To use technology to connect with students
- To encourage self-awareness and self-reflection
- To build strengths consciousness on the college campus
- To promote a campus-wide understanding of the 34 strengths

Instructions:

Create facebook groups for individual strengths and encourage students to join these groups. Make sure each facebook group is monitored by a student affairs professional in order to ensure appropriate use of the website. Students should have the freedom to express their own opinions and questions about strengths.

Variations on the Program:

-You can also use MySpace.com to create a strengths profile

Materials Needed:

- A person with an in-depth knowledge of strengths as well as facebook

Recommended Use:

-Anyone who is a facebook member can be a part of this activity!

Famous Leader Strengths Analysis

Purpose:

- To identify strengths in other people
- To recognize differences among people and gain an appreciation for different styles of leadership
- To build awareness and understanding of the 34 strengths

Instructions:

Ask the students to think of famous world leaders (past and present) and try to identify their strengths. Give the students ample time to research a particular leader and ask them to write a reflective paper comparing their own strengths to the perceived strengths of a particular leader.

Variations on the Program:

-Instead of asking the students to write a paper, you can assign them to small discussion groups and require each discussion group to identify strengths of a few different world leaders and converse about their perceived effectiveness as a leader study

Materials:

- A list of suggested famous leaders to research
- Clearly written assignment instructions

Recommended Use:

-This activity is particularly effective in the classroom setting (Leadership Development Course, Freshman or Senior Year Experience Course, History Course, English/Writing Course, etc.)

Guess Who?

Purpose:

- To promote an understanding of the 34 strengths
- To create a fun and relaxed environment for a group of people
- To encourage students to mix and mingle with one another
- To provide an opportunity for students to be active while learning

Instructions:

Place a nametag with a strength written on it on the back of each student. Have the students mingle around the room and ask their peers a series of yes or no questions in an attempt to figure out the name of the strength on their back.

Materials Needed:

- Nametags with strength on them

Recommended Use:

-This activity is a great ice-breaker for all types of groups!

Individual Awareness Week

Purpose:

- To build a campus-wide awareness of the 34 strengths
- To promote self-reflection among students
- To encourage strengths-based conversations in the campus community

Instructions:

Assign each strength to one week during the school year (or select a few strengths/year). During each week, implement creative programs raise awareness and teach students about the particular strength that was chosen. Send out a campus-wide email, print information about the strength in the school newspaper, post flyers around campus, and create programs to increase knowledge about a particular strength.

Materials Needed:

-To be determined by the programs implemented

Recommended Use:

- Campus-wide implementation

Interviews

Purpose:

- To encourage self-reflection among students
- To identify strengths in other people
- To build awareness and understanding of the 34 strengths
- To provide opportunities for members of the campus community to integrate strengths into their conversations

Instructions:

Have each student choose a professor, staff member, fellow student, etc. who has taken the StrengthsFinder test. Instruct each student to conduct an interview with that person in an effort to better understand how different people work out of their strengths. After the interview, have each student write a reflection paper about the many ways a person can use their strengths to be successful.

Variations on the Program:

-Instead of writing a paper, you can have students conduct a strengths interview and break up into discussion groups to converse about their findings.

Materials Needed:

- A list of possible faculty, staff, or students to interview about strengths
- Guidelines for the reflection paper

Recommended Use:

- Any type of leadership course
- Student leader training
- First year experience course
- Senior experience course

Magazine Activity

Purpose:

- To encourage students to look at their worlds through “strengths-colored” glasses
- To teach students to recognize strengths in everyday life
- To promote knowledge of the 34 strengths
- To promote self-reflection and self-awareness

Instructions:

Pass out heaps of magazines and instruct students to look through the magazines to find pictures that represent each one of their strengths. Have the students glue the pictures to a piece of paper and have them share it with a small group of students.

Variations on the Program:

-Instead of having the students create their own depictions of the strengths, encourage each student to find pictures that represent strengths and glue each picture to a poster board with the name of the strength on the top of it. This variation makes the project more of a group effort instead of an individual reflection piece.

Materials Needed:

- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue
- Construction paper (or 34 pieces of poster board)

Recommended Use:

- Freshman experience course
- Freshman orientation
- Senior experience course
- Career counseling appointments
- Faculty/staff training
- Student leader training
- Leadership development course

Ropes Course

Purpose:

- To encourage teamwork
- To build confidence among students
- To develop effective communication skills
- To promote critical thinking and problem-solving in a group setting
- To gain an appreciation of individual differences and strengths

Instructions:

Take a group of students off-campus to a Ropes Course and hire a professional facilitator to lead them through a series of physical challenges/obstacles. After each challenge, lead the students in debriefing the activity. Debriefing questions should allow students to vent frustrations, encourage one another, and reflect on the importance of individual strengths on a team.

Examples:

-Team members may identify how other team members are using their strengths (for example: identifying a person with positivity who is constantly encouraging people, someone with harmony who is keeping the peace, someone with strategic or ideation who comes up with plans to accomplish the task as hand)

Variations on the Program:

1. If you are unable to take students off-campus, create a series of challenges in a large field on-campus or find an empty gymnasium to set up a makeshift ropes course
2. If you are having time finding a certified ropes course facilitator, contact the Outdoor Recreation department at the university and ask for recommendations of students who may be able to facilitate for your group

Materials Needed:

If you are taking students to a ropes course facility, the facility will most likely provide equipment for the group. Be sure to contact the facilitator directly to see if the students need to bring anything in particular.

Recommended Use:

-This activity works well for all groups of people, especially teams who will be working together for an extended period of time

Scavenger Hunt

Purpose:

- To promote a campus-wide awareness of strengths
- To encourage understanding of the 34 strengths
- To provide an opportunity for students to be active
- To give students the chance to invent creative ways to incorporate strengths into everyday activities
- To emphasize the importance of teamwork

Instructions:

Create a strengths-based scavenger hunt. Give students clues to particular places on-campus where they will have to answer questions, solve riddles, complete physical challenges before given their next strengths-related clue to complete the scavenger hunt.

Materials Needed:

- Clues for the scavenger hunt
- Prizes for the scavenger hunt winners

Recommended Use:

-This activity works well for all groups of people, especially teams who will be working together for an extended period of time

THE SHADOW SIDE

Purpose:

- To promote self-reflection among students
- To raise awareness of the possible downfalls of each strength
- To encourage a campus-wide conversation about the many facets of each individual strength

Instructions:

Ask students to write comments about managing the “shadow side” (the negative aspects) of their strengths. Post these tips to avoiding the “shadow side” on the campus-wide strengths website, in the school newspaper, on bulletin boards, or other prominent places on campus.

Material Needed:

-To be determined by the activity choices of the student affairs professional

Recommended Use:

- A campus-wide conversation

Strengths Appreciation Month

Purpose:

- To build a campus-wide awareness of strengths
- To provide opportunities for members of the campus community to integrate strengths into their conversations

Instructions:

BE CREATIVE. Encourage RAs to create strengths-based programming in the Residence Halls, facilitate strengths discussions and forums, decorate bulletin

boards on campus with strengths themes, include strengths articles in the school newspaper, assist professors as they think of innovative ways to address strengths in their classes.

Materials Needed:

-To be determined by your activity choices for the month

Recommended Use:

- Include the entire campus in this activity/group of activities

Student Case Study

Purpose:

- To encourage critical thinking skills among students
- To foster an appreciation of strengths
- To identify strengths in other people
- To promote an understanding of the 34 strengths

Instructions:

Split students up into small discussion groups. Give each group a number of case studies of individual students and ask them to identify their strengths from the information in the case study. Have the students come up with an action plan for conversing with the student mentioned in the case study.

Materials Needed:

- Written descriptions of each case study

Recommended Use:

-This activity is particularly helpful for people who will have extended contact with students (RAs, Orientation leaders, Peer mentors, etc.)
-Faculty/staff training

Thesaurus Assignment

Purpose:

- To promote self-awareness and self-reflection among students

Instructions:

Ask each student to find a thesaurus (an online thesaurus is ok) and find a list of 5 synonyms for each of their “Top 5” strengths. This may be a bit tricky with words that aren’t in the thesaurus, like Woo or Positivity. Be creative in how to include students with those strengths. Students can look up root words of the strengths (For example: People with the strength of Includer can look up “Include”).

After researching synonyms of their strengths, students should write a reflection paper about the newly-found information. The paper can include a discussion about whether or not they feel like the synonyms accurately describe their strengths. Once students have completed their papers, split them up into discussion groups based on similar strengths and have them report their findings.

Variations on the Program:

- Instead of writing a paper, students can spend more time in discussion groups
- Students can also look up their strengths in the dictionary and complete a similar assignment

Materials Needed:

- None

Recommended Use:

- This activity is particularly effective in the classroom setting (Leadership Development Course, Freshman or Senior Year Experience Course, History Course, English/Writing Course, etc.)