

STRENGTHSQUEST

CURRICULUM OUTLINE AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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A NOTE TO FELLOW EDUCATORS

BY

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The StrengthsQuest Program asserts:

1. You have a group of talents within you.
2. Your greatest talents hold the key to high achievement, success, and progress to levels of personal excellence.
3. Becoming aware of your talents builds confidence and provides a basis for achievement.
4. Learning how to develop and apply strengths will improve your levels of achievement.
5. Each of your talents can be applied in many areas including relationships, learning, academics, leadership, service, and careers.
6. As you develop and apply strengths, your achievements will increase and you will experience greater and more frequent successes.

Developing and applying strengths results in reaching levels of personal excellence and becoming the person you have the potential to be -- and that is exciting!

Ultimately, StrengthsQuest is about achieving to the point where we become the persons we have the potential to be and do what we have the potential to do. Therein, StrengthsQuest is all about people fulfilling their vocation and sense of destiny.

As educators, our challenge and our joy is helping students move to levels of personal excellence by becoming the persons they have the potential to be. And the marvelous thing about this perspective is that in the process we also move toward our own levels of personal excellence, becoming the persons we have the potential to be.

During the summer of 2002, I was preparing a keynote presentation for the National Conference on College Student Retention in Washington D.C. As a part of my presentation, StrengthsQuest was being introduced to more than 1,100 educators from across the country. Since then, over 35,000 students at over 150 institutions have participated in the StrengthsQuest program.

When Don Clifton and I first began our collaboration on what has become the StrengthsQuest book and online program, our vision was to help current and prospective college students improve their academic performance and increase their persistence to graduation by helping them learn how to identify their greatest talents -- in essence, their most natural abilities -- then build upon those talents to develop and apply strengths. What has happened in the last year and a half has been amazing. StrengthsQuest has proven helpful to a far broader range of students than we imagined. We now have students using StrengthsQuest in doctoral degree programs, Masters

Degree programs, and degree completion programs, as well as traditional Bachelors degree programs. Students ranging from those as young as 8th and 9th graders to college prep programs, and all the way to graduate and professional schools are using StrengthsQuest. Even professional degree programs in teacher education, school administration, school counseling, school psychologists, and college student affairs are regularly using StrengthsQuest to train future professionals.

StrengthsQuest has been adopted as a text in courses ranging from freshman and new student seminars to courses in English composition, psychology, leadership, marketing, ethics, chemistry, vocation, and in core curriculum courses within humanities and social sciences. Some institutions are using StrengthsQuest in less formal settings such as community service, outreach programs, and organizational leadership training. The StrengthsQuest program is being used in mentoring programs, residential life, academic advising, career counseling, personal counseling, and student success programs of all types. Almost every state in the United States has at least one institution using StrengthsQuest, and the program is being put to international use in Canada, Lithuania, Africa, and China.

Beyond its use with students, StrengthsQuest is proving valuable in training professionals ranging from college and university faculty to elementary and secondary teachers and administrators. Besides in-service training for educators, StrengthsQuest is being used for team-building, leadership and staff development in departments throughout higher education as well as elementary and secondary schools, churches, and civic organizations. Training professionals from a strengths perspective have included president's cabinets, boards of trustees, superintendents of schools, and county boards of education.

From our experience, it is clear that people seem to find some very innovative ways of using StrengthsQuest. With this document, we want to really set people free to use their creativity in designing and developing programs that best serve students, educators and other professionals.

What follows is a curriculum outline for bringing StrengthsQuest into almost any educational or training setting where the goal is to increase learning, academic achievement, personal development, persistence, organizational efficiency, and/or leadership effectiveness.

There are a total of ten sessions outlined in this document. I suggest using the first three sessions for virtually any class or training program. The other seven sessions are designed as "stand alone" sessions. By this I mean that you can pick and choose the sessions that best fit your organizational and instructional goals.

I have designed each training session to last approximately two hours, serving a group of approximately twenty people. Of course you will want to modify the sessions to meet your educational needs and goals and those of your students. In some cases, you may want and need to spend two or more time periods to adequately address the material outlined in one of the sessions.

Each session outlined below has activities and worksheets for use during the class or training session. In addition, each session has two types of homework assignments. The first type of homework assignment is designed to reinforce and apply what was presented during the session. The second type of homework assignment prepares participants for the next session. Therefore, as you pick and choose which sessions you will build into your specific curriculum, you will

want to look at the homework assignments from the preceding sessions as you decide how you will make homework assignments. I realize that some of you will be using this curriculum in more formal, for-credit courses, while others will be using this curriculum in less formal non-credit workshops and training sessions. In some cases, you may not have an opportunity to give formal homework assignments. Nevertheless, you will want to look at the homework assignments and present them as follow-up suggestions to deepen learnings from the sessions and to help students prepare for subsequent sessions. Our experience is that when people are learning about their talents, they are more open to doing “homework assignments” because they can so readily see the benefits. Furthermore, most people enjoy learning about their talents, and are excited about developing and applying their strengths.

Finally, I must report to you that my dear friend and esteemed colleague Donald O. Clifton passed away in September of 2003. Throughout his last year fighting cancer, I called him almost daily to give him reports about where and how StrengthsQuest was being used. On several occasions, as I was conducting a training session with students or fellow educators, I’d ask the group if they wanted to talk to Don. Every time they would say “yes.” So I would joyously pull out my cell phone in front of as many as two or three hundred people, place the call to Don, tell him where I was and what I was doing. Then I would ask a question or two that came from the group. Time and time again the people in the group wanted to say something to Don more than they wanted to ask him a question. Every single time people would say “Thank you” for creating the StrengthsFinder talent assessment and for the way that focusing on their talents and strengths development was impacting their lives in such a positive manner.

From interactions with students, the research we conducted, and the hundreds of conversations that Don and I have had, we came up with a group of propositions that form an important perspective as you do your work as educators. We encourage you to think about these propositions and let them guide your work in promoting the achievement of students, and other professionals, and as you progress toward your own levels of excellence.

Here then, is a list of some of the most fundamental and most important propositions that educators who adopt a strengths perspective can use as they work to promote achievement to the levels of personal excellence.

1. Each and every person has a unique combination of talents.
2. Our particular combinations of talents make us unique individuals.
3. Our talents are the embodiment of our potential.
4. The key to achieving is found within a person’s greatest talents.
5. Achieving levels of excellence requires the discovery of one’s greatest talents, and the strategic development and application of strengths.
6. Each student already has a group of talents before they enter our educational, institutional, and training programs.
7. The talents within a student form the basis for students to learn, achieve, and persist in school, college, and professional training institutions.
8. To the extent that students develop and apply their talents to learning and achievement tasks, they will be empowered to achieve.
9. As students learn about their talents, they grow in confidence and become more willing to enter achievement activities. In essence, as students learn of their opportunity to develop and apply strengths, they become more “engaged” in the learning process.

10. As students learn how to apply their talents to learning and achievement tasks, they not only become more confident to enter, but also to persist in achievement activities.
11. To the extent that students do not learn how to identify their talents, and to develop and apply strengths, they will have less confidence and motivation to achieve and will become “disengaged” from the educational process.
12. Most students are not aware of their greatest talents, much less how to build upon them to develop and apply strengths for consistent, near-perfect performance.
13. The lack of student knowledge about their talents and the lack of student understanding about how to develop and apply strengths directly limits their achievements and literally prevents them from achieving to levels of excellence.
14. For the foregoing reasons, the most important task in promoting student achievement involves:
 - a. Helping students identify their greatest talents.
 - b. Helping students develop strengths.
 - c. Helping students learn how to apply their talents and strengths in learning and achievement tasks.
15. The future achievements and the quality of life students will experience, will in large measure be determined by the extent to which they discover their greatest talents, and they develop and apply their strengths.
16. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we as educators and that our educational institutions (from the most elementary to the most advanced graduate and professional programs) consider that our most critically important job is helping students discover talents and develop and apply strengths through the many courses, programs, services, and other opportunities we offer.

As Don and I formulated and clarified the foregoing propositions about the importance of students learning to identify talents and to develop and apply strengths, we would always say to one another “Yes, but we as educators need to do the same!”

Just like our students, we need to look upon ourselves and affirm that each of us has a unique set of talents; that our combination of strengths and talents is what makes us unique; that the key to us achieving is found within our strengths and talents; and so on. In fact, the last time I met with Don, the focus of our conversation was on developing a book with Dr. Laurie Schreiner in which we will be helping college and university faculty learn how to maximize their talents as they teach, advise, and mentor students. At this time, Dr. Schreiner and I are collecting data on how the most effective professors use their talents to facilitate student learning and to increase students’ academic performance and persistence.

While waiting for the publication of this book, tentatively titled Strengths-Based Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring, you do not need to wait to adopt a strengths perspective as you work with students. Begin where all of us start: with our strongest and most dominant theme of talent. Then begin intentionally using the greatest talents in that theme as you help students discover their own talents. You will undoubtedly help students and develop your strengths as you do so.

Finally I want to share with you my most revolutionary insight as an educator. I have come to see that what I assume about students **before** they come into my class or office determines everything! If I assume that students already have within them a group of talents and that those talents hold the key to achieving at levels of personal excellence, everything changes! After all, if the keys to achieving are already within the student, my first and most important task is to

discover what those keys (i.e., talents) are. I hope that you are grasping the profundity of this assumption. If I assume that the talents needed for students to achieve are already within them, then my focus and attention has to be on the student rather than on myself or what I may know or what I may want to teach them! After all, if students already have the talents to achieve then I need to be asking them questions, listening deeply, and trying to understand exactly what talents each student has so that I can support them in their achievements. If on the other hand I assume that I have the knowledge, wisdom, and understandings about what they must do to achieve, the attention shifts from them to me, to what I know, and to what I can teach them.

The assumption about talents already being within a person is even more profound when I think about you, my fellow educators. I am firmly convinced that you already have within you many magnificent talents, and that you have developed tremendous strengths. The keys to past, present, and future achievements are within your talents and strengths. Therefore, as I present to you the following curriculum outlines, I fully respect the fact that you have the talents and strengths to take what I put together and build a curriculum better than what I have set forth. Consequently, let what follows be a catalyst to your own thinking. Use whatever you want, then invent activities that best fit your talents and strengths and that best meet the needs of your students.

In closing, I bring you back to what I consider the two most important findings from the research by Donald O. Clifton and The Gallup Organization in their study of more than two million individuals as they tried to determine what makes the best of the best such top achievers:

1. The best of the best build their lives around their talents.
2. The best of the best invent ways of developing and applying strengths in areas where they want to improve, achieve, and become more effective.

So also with you, my fellow educators. First, build your teaching, advising, and mentoring around your greatest talents and the strengths you have already developed. Second, invent ways to take your talents and strengths into areas where you want to increase your effectiveness and improve the achievement of your students.

This being said, read through the curriculum outlines which follow. But always consider your own greatest talents to be the main ingredients as you teach and work with students. If you use your top talents, I am confident that students will achieve to levels of excellence that they have never known before. As I just wrote these last few words to you, I found myself smiling and full of joy because I am so totally confident that you will be positively revolutionary in the lives of students. As you use your talents to help students discover, develop, and apply theirs, the net result will be magnificent. Both you and your students will experience the joys of becoming the persons you have the potential to be and progressively moving more toward your sense of destiny.

Session One Overview

Subject: Introduction to the concept of strengths and the StrengthsQuest program, and get-acquainted activity.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Introducing the course and its purposes
- II. Introducing the concept of strengths and research on the top achievers
- III. Get acquainted activity: Your Greatest Success and Most Fulfilling Experience
- IV. Distribution and discussion of the course syllabus and sequence of instruction
- V. Expectations for involvement and participation
- VI. Instruction on how to take StrengthsFinder
- VII. Homework assignments

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session One:

- Read and reflect on the preface and first 21 pages of StrengthsQuest.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Two:

- Take StrengthsFinder and print Signature Themes and descriptions.
- Carefully read the description of each of your five Signature Themes. Then highlight or underline each word, phrase, or sentence that reminds you of yourself. These are indicators of your talents in those themes.
- Contact three people who know you and love you and read your Signature Themes and descriptions to them. Read each description, one at a time, and ask “Do you see this theme in me?” If the person says “Yes” then ask, “Can you give me an example of when you have seen this theme in me?”

Materials Needed:

- Your Greatest Success and Most Fulfilling Experience worksheet
- Course syllabus or sequence of instruction handout
- Instructions on how to take StrengthsFinder
- A handout listing homework assignments

Session One Instructional Outline

Subject: Introduction to the concept of strengths, the StrengthsQuest program and course of study, plus the get-acquainted activity.

Note to Instructors: *What follows in Sections I and II below, is a skeleton outline for a “mini-lecture on the concept of strengths. It is only a suggestion for how you might introduce the concept of strengths and the StrengthsQuest program. You are welcome to develop handouts and PowerPoint presentations using any or all of the following points. I have written what follows the way I tend to give lecturettes on the topic. Feel free to add to what follows making sure that you bring in your own experience and excitement concerning discovering your talents and building strengths.*

I. The Concept of Strengths

A. Assertions about the people who are in the class:

1. You have a group of talents within you.
2. Your greatest talents hold the key to high achievement, success, and progress to levels of personal excellence.
3. Becoming aware of your talents builds confidence and provides a basis for achievement.
4. Learning how to develop and apply strengths will improve your levels of achievement.
5. Each of your talents can be applied in many areas including relationships, learning, academics, leadership, service, and careers.
6. As you develop and apply strengths, your achievements will increase and you will experience greater and more frequent successes.
7. Developing and applying strengths results in reaching levels of personal excellence and becoming the person you have the potential to be -- and that is exciting!

B. The purpose of this course is:

1. To help you identify your greatest talents.
2. To show you how to develop and apply your strengths.
3. To teach you how to maximize your talents in academic learning and performance

4. To encourage you to apply your talents in career planning and decision making.
5. To help you apply your talents in areas beyond academics and careers, for example in leadership, service and relationship building of all types.

II. Introducing the Concept of Strengths and Research Findings on Top Achievers.

- A. The research of Don Clifton and The Gallup Organization on top achievers points to three basic findings: First, the best of the best build their lives upon their greatest talents. Second, they manage their weaknesses. Third, they invent ways to take their talents into areas where they want to improve and increase their performance.
- B. The Gallup research runs contrary to popular opinion about how to increase performance. Many people think that your greatest opportunity to improve your performance comes from focusing on your weaknesses. This is inaccurate. The key to success and the key to achieving to levels of excellence are found in the development and application of strengths, which are built upon your greatest talents -- the best of your natural self, rather than your weaknesses. The best that anyone can become by focusing on their weaknesses is mediocre.
- C. What is a strength?
 - A strength is the ability to provide consistent, near perfect performance in a specific given activity.
 - The key to building a strength is to identify your greatest talents, which are likely found within your Signature Themes, then refine them with knowledge and skills.
 - Some general examples of 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.
- D. The StrengthsQuest program is designed to build your awareness of your talents and then show you how to develop and apply your strengths in academics, careers, relationships, leadership, and the various adventures that lead to a fulfilling life.
- E. Research from using the StrengthsQuest program indicates that students improve in their confidence, motivation, sense of direction and compassion toward others as they become aware of their strengths and how to use them. Research investigations also indicate that by building upon their greatest talents, students can improve their academic performance and persistence to graduation.

III. Student Get-Acquainted

Using the worksheet titled “Your Greatest Success and What Caused It,” have the students fill in the two circles on the right. Ask them to identify both their greatest success and their most fulfilling experience. Encourage the students to draw from any aspect of their life. Their greatest success or their most fulfilling experience could come from athletics, academics, service, employment, family, etc.

After the students identify their greatest success and their most fulfilling experience, ask each student to introduce him/herself and identify either their greatest success or their most fulfilling experience. Of course, as the instructor/leader you will want to go first. Remember that as the leader, you will set the level of candor in the group. Therefore, honestly share your own greatest success and most fulfilling experience.

Ask the students to hold on to this worksheet because we will be using it in a subsequent session. At that time, we will be identifying primary causes and specifics that led to their greatest success and most fulfilling experience. In particular, students will later be asked to identify various talent themes that played a critical role in producing their greatest success and most fulfilling experience.

IV. Distributing and Discussing the Course Syllabus and Sequence of Instruction.

Note to Instructors: *In some classes, learning about strengths is the central focus of instruction while in other classes strengths is one of several topics. In either case, you will want to distribute a syllabus that spells out course objectives, your goals for the students, your expectations of the students, and the sequence of topics you will be covering. Even when conducting a non-credit course or training sessions on strengths, it is helpful to have a syllabus and sequence of instruction so that your students will be able to clearly see where the course is heading and what you are trying to accomplish. The most important reason to have a syllabus is so that students understand your expectations of them and they can have an opportunity to express their expectations of you.*

V. Expectations for Involvement and Participation.

Note to Instructors: *Here again, your expectations will depend upon the setting you are in, your style of instruction, and whether or not the students are receiving credit or some other form of compensation. The most important thing is to be clear. To gain maximum benefits, students need to actively participate in the class sessions and complete homework assignments. I have outlined this curriculum based upon learning theory and research by David Kolbe (1998) who emphasized four primary steps in the teaching-learning process. Step I: Presenting concepts and principles. Step II: Planning to use the concepts and principles in some real-life situation. Step III: Actually using the concepts and principles in some real-life situation. Step IV: Reflecting on the experience of actually using the concepts and principles in order to generate new understandings and insights. Through this process we also consider the accuracy and wisdom of the concepts and principles originally presented.*

VI. Instructions on How to Take StrengthsFinder.

Note to Instructors: *An instruction page on how to take StrengthsFinder is attached. Describe your own experience of taking StrengthsFinder and how the assessment is set up. Then express what you experienced when you first read through your own Signature Themes. When you distribute the StrengthsFinder instruction sheet, walk the students through the instructions emphasizing where they can gain assistance if they have any difficulty.*

VII. Homework Assignments.

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session One.

1. Read the Preface (pp. V-X) and Chapters I and II (pp. 5-15) from the StrengthsQuest book.
2. Write a one-page reflection paper on your most important learnings from the first session and from reading the above pages from the StrengthsQuest book.

B. Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Two.

1. Take StrengthsFinder and print your Signature Themes and their descriptions.
2. Carefully read the description for each of your five Signature Themes. Then highlight or underline each word, phrase, or sentence that reminds you of yourself. These are indicators of your talents.
3. Contact three people who know you and love you, and read your Signature Themes and descriptions to them. Read the descriptions one at a time and ask “Do you see this theme in me?” If the person says “Yes,” then ask, “Can you give me an example of when you have seen this theme in me?”

VIII. Materials Attached.

- Your Greatest Success and Most Fulfilling Experience Worksheet.
- Instructions on how to take StrengthsFinder.

Your Greatest Success and What Caused It

Primary Causes & Specifics

A diagram for reflecting on one's greatest success. On the left, there are three rectangular boxes, each followed by three horizontal lines for notes. Arrows point from each of these boxes to a large circle on the right. Inside the circle, the text 'My greatest success was:' is followed by eight horizontal lines for a detailed description.

My greatest success was:

Your Most Fulfilling Experience and What Caused It

Primary Causes & Specifics

A diagram for reflecting on one's most fulfilling experience. On the left, there are three rectangular boxes, each followed by three horizontal lines for notes. Arrows point from each of these boxes to a large circle on the right. Inside the circle, the text 'My most fulfilling experience was:' is followed by eight horizontal lines for a detailed description.

My most fulfilling experience was:

Can only be reproduced in conjunction with the StrengthsQuest text.



Information for Students

1. Students must have an e-mail address to register for access to StrengthsQuest. If you do not have an e-mail address, you may register for free e-mail accounts at www.hotmail.com, www.yahoo.com, or other sites.
2. Registering for the StrengthsQuest site and taking the StrengthsFinder assessment takes about 45-60 minutes.
3. When you take the StrengthsFinder assessment, choose the items that best describe you and indicate to what extent they are descriptive of you. Gallup encourages you to indicate a choice on as many items as possible. If you choose the mid-point or “neutral” option on too many items, Gallup will not have enough data to provide you with your StrengthsFinder results, and you will have to retake the assessment.
4. To encourage you to answer with a “top of mind” response, the StrengthsFinder assessment is programmed to give you a specific amount of time to respond to each item. Gallup will disable the timer in specific circumstances to help students who need more time to answer the items. To request that the timer be disabled, follow these steps:
 - Log on to the StrengthsQuest site and register as a user.
 - Once you have registered, you or your instructor may call the StrengthsQuest Help Desk toll-free number at 888-211-4049 to request that the StrengthsFinder item timer be disabled. Our Help Desk staff will reset the timer so you can continue with the assessment.

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The user of each ID code can begin the StrengthsQuest experience by registering at

<http://student.strengthsquest.com>

In doing so, he or she will

1. Go to the box that says First Time Users
 2. Click on validate ID code
- Step 1 Validate ID Code
Step 2 Create account
Step 3 Take StrengthsFinder™

Upon completion of the registration process, the user will have access to all components of the StrengthsQuest Web site.

Enjoy the StrengthsQuest experience!

Technical Information

Minimum system requirements for the StrengthsQuest Web site:

- 33.6K modem (56K modem or faster recommended)
- Internet Explorer 5.0 or Netscape Navigator 6.0

If you have technical problems please contact our help line (888) 211-4049, or email strengthsquest@gallup.com

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Session Two Overview

Subject: Understanding and Affirming Our Signature Themes

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Review and Reflection
- II. Agenda and Goals for this Session
- III. The Challenge of Identifying, Understanding and Affirming Talents
- IV. Focusing on Understanding Our Talents
- V. Building Awareness of Talents and Why They Are Talents

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Two:

- Read pp. 25 – 27 of the text.
- Read descriptions of your five Signature Themes in the text, pp. 30 – 74.
- Complete the “My Signature Themes and How I Use the Talents in Them” worksheet.
- Write a reflection page of learnings from the above.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Three:

- Complete the worksheet distributed in Session I titled “My Greatest Success and What Caused It.”
- Read Chapter IV of text (pp. 75 – 80).
- Write a reflection of learnings from the above.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the placard titled “Hello! My name is: - - - My five Signature Themes are:”
- Copies of the “My Signature Themes and How I Use the Talents in Them” worksheet.
- Copies of the “Building Awareness of Talents” two-page worksheet.
- A paper punch to make holes at the top of the placards.
- Ribbon or string to hang placards around the neck of each person.
- Marking pens with broad/wedge tip to use in writing on the placards.

Session Two Instructional Outline

Subject: Understanding and Affirming Our Signature Themes

I. Review and Reflection.

A. Ask students to pull out a sheet of paper and write their responses to the following questions:

1. What stood out the most to you from our first session? What was most memorable?
2. What stood out most from the reading assignment (V – X) and pp. 5 – 21?
3. What did you learn from taking StrengthsFinder and reviewing your results with the three people?

B. Taking each of the foregoing questions one at a time, ask for three people to volunteer their responses.

Note to Instructors: *Sometimes the students who volunteer do not represent the entire class. Therefore, after asking for two or three students to volunteer, call on two or three students and ask them for their response.*

As students are giving what stood out to them and what they learned, feel free to say what you learned and what stood out to you. You may also want to ask a more pointed question such as: “What was your reaction to the story about Angel Alcoster?” or “What was your reaction to the author’s first statement ‘I was wrong’” or “What did you think about the Kerri Strug story?”

C. Review

1. Review the concepts of talents and strengths. Discuss how talents are like “diamonds in the rough,” whereas strengths are like diamonds that have been “buffed-out” to their brilliance. Make sure that the students are clear about the definition of a talent (a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior) and that of a strength (the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a specific given task). Emphasize the enabling and empowering aspects of talents, and that talents in one theme can be applied in many areas to produce achievements.
2. Review the major findings from the research on the best of the best, the top achievers. Make sure students are clear about the following findings:
 - a. The best of the best are all alike in that they build their lives around their greatest talents. They capitalize on their talents by building strengths.

- b. The best of the best manage their weaknesses. Rather than focusing on weaknesses or trying to overcome weaknesses, the best of the best manage their weaknesses so that their weaknesses do not interfere with their performance and achievements.
- c. The best of the best ***invent*** ways of developing and applying strengths in areas where they want to improve.

II. Agenda and Goals for This Session.

- A. Become clear about the descriptions of the themes of talent measured by StrengthsFinder.
- B. Understand why each talent in each theme is beneficial.
- C. Come to know and understand others in the group in terms of their talents.

III. The Challenge of Identifying, Understanding, and Affirming Talents.

Note to Instructors: *What follows are a group of comments that you may choose to make concerning why people often experience difficulty coming to know, understand, and affirm their strengths and talents. You may decide to make these comments before proceeding with the rest of the agenda or include these points as students review their specific strengths and talents.*

- A. Your greatest talents are so automatic that you may not even be aware of using them. Or, you may assume that because they are so automatic, there isn't anything special about them, and you may assume that everyone else can do what you do with the same ease.
- B. Perhaps you have been put down or criticized for your talents. Sometimes other people are threatened by our talents, but rather than admitting that they are intimidated by us, they may put us down for one of our talents. Sadly, this may result in a person coming to think that one of his/her talents is a weakness simply because of the negative feedback from some insecure people.
- C. Many people try to exert power and control over others by focusing on weaknesses. This, combined with advertising that focuses on what is wrong with people in order to sell products, leaves most people more aware of their weaknesses than of their top talents.
- D. Some of us are reluctant to focus on our greatest talents because we are afraid of seeming too proud or arrogant.
- E. We live in a society that believes that the best way to improve is to overcome weaknesses. Therefore, far more organizations, institutions and individuals in society focus on weaknesses rather than focusing on strengths. Accordingly, people in this society have few, if any, places where they can learn about their talents.

- F. Sometimes people wish they were not as talented in certain themes and may consider those talents weaknesses rather than talents because they fail to understand what those talents enable and empower them to do. For example, people who are exceptionally talented in Empathy are often so sensitive to the pain of others that they become exhausted when they're around individuals who are in pain. Likewise, individuals with tremendous talents in Responsibility may feel overwhelmed because so many people come to them to do various tasks and because they know that the "responsible" person will get it done.

IV. Focusing on Understanding Our Signature Themes.

- A. Give each student a copy of the placard titled "Hello! My name is: __," with two holes punched at the top, and a ribbon so they can hang the placard around their neck. Distribute marking pens with broad/wedge type tips, and ask students to print their name and their top five strengths on the placard and hang it around their neck.
- B. Distribute the worksheet titled "My Signature Themes and How I Use Them." Ask the students to identify their five Signature Themes and to write a description of each theme in their own words in the appropriate boxes. Tell the students that during this session, their personal challenge is to clearly understand why each of their five Signature Themes is beneficial and to be able to explain what the talents in each of their Signature Themes enables/empowers them to do.

V. Building Awareness of Our Signature Themes.

- A. Distribute the two-paged worksheet titled "Building Awareness of Our Signature Themes" and ask each student to identify their five Signature Themes and be ready to explain how they experience each of those themes.
- B. Take the group through each of the 34 talent themes, one at a time in alphabetical order, using the "Building Awareness of Our Signature Themes" worksheet. Announce each theme one at a time and ask the group "Who has _____ in their Signature Themes?" If the group is small enough (fifty or less) ask each person in the group with the strength just announced to state his/her name so that everyone in the group can note who has that theme in their Signature Themes. Then ask one or two of those individuals this question: "What is it like to have _____ in your Signature Themes?"

Note to Instructors: *As you go down the alphabetical list of themes, encourage students to write in the names of each member of the group who has each theme among his/her Signature Themes. This will do wonders to build relationships among members of the class and forms a foundation for subsequent activities.*

The element of greatest importance in this exercise is for students to clearly understand what it is that makes the talents in each theme beneficial. To make this point clearer, refer the students to the descriptions of each of the themes beginning on page 30. Call the students' attention to the five boxes preceding

statements about each theme. These five boxes have been strategically organized.

The first three boxes give descriptive statements about the theme. The fourth box articulates the down side/negative aspect of being particularly talented in that theme.

The fifth box is the most important because it explains why talents in that theme are beneficial. This is where the students gain insight for completing the middle column on their worksheet titled “My Signature Themes and How I Use the Talents in Them.”

VI. Homework Assignments.

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Two.

1. Read pp. 25 – 27 of the StrengthsQuest text.
2. Read the descriptions and statements about each of your five Signature Themes and the benefits of them beginning on page 30.
3. Complete the worksheet titled “My Signature Themes and How I Use the Talents in Them.” Again emphasize the column where they are to record why the theme is beneficial and what the talents in it enables and empowers the person to do.
4. Have students write a one-page reflection paper on their most important learnings resulting from completing the foregoing worksheet.

B. Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Three.

1. Return to the worksheet from Session One titled “My Greatest Success and What Caused It.” Ask the students to identify the three themes that were most responsible for producing their greatest success and the three themes that were most responsible for producing their most fulfilling experience.
2. Read Chapter IV in the StrengthsQuest book titled “Seeing Through Strengths-Colored Glasses” (pp. 75 – 80).
3. Have students write a one-page reflection on the new insights they gained from the above activities.
4. **Announce that everyone should bring his/her placards to the next session.**

Note to Instructors: *Please note this session often takes a considerable amount of time. It is important to go through all 34 themes and to help students understand why each of the talents in each theme are beneficial. This level of*

understanding is all-important because everything in terms of learning to apply the talents in one's Signature Themes is dependent upon understanding what the talents in each theme enable and empower a person to do (i.e., why it's beneficial).

Another reason to take the time necessary to go through all 34 strengths is because each individual must understand that although we certainly have varying levels of talent in the various themes, we all have talents in more than five of the 34 themes. Feel free to encourage students to claim more than the five themes that were identified in their StrengthsFinder results.

It is entirely possible that Session Two will expand into being both Session Two and Three. In that event, you will need to modify the homework assignments for the sessions.

VII. Materials Attached.

- The placard titled “Hello! My Name Is _____, My Five Signature Themes are:”
- “My Signature Themes and How I Use the Talents in Them” worksheet.
- “Building Awareness of Talents” 2-page worksheet.

VIII. Additional Materials Needed.

- A paper punch to make holes at the top of the placards.
- Ribbon or string to put through the holes at the top of the placards so that the placards can be hung around the neck.
- Several marking pens with broad/wedge-type points so that participants can write their names and strengths on the placards.

Hello!

My Name is:

My Five Signature Themes are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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My Signature Themes and How I Use the Talents in Them

Theme	Description of the theme	Why this theme is beneficial (what it enables me to do)	When/Where I recently used talents in this theme
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Building Awareness of Our Signature Themes

Theme	Members with this theme in their “top five”	How we experience talents in this theme
Achiever		
Activator		
Adaptability		
Analytical		
Arranger		
Belief		
Command		
Communication		
Competition		
Connectedness		
Consistency		
Context		
Deliberative		
Developer		
Discipline		
Empathy		

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Focus		
Futuristic		
Harmony		
Ideation		
Includer		
Individualization		
Input		
Intellection		
Learner		
Maximizer		
Positivity		
Relator		
Responsibility		
Restorative		
Self-Assurance		
Significance		
Strategic		
Woo		

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Session Three Overview

Subject: Deepening Our Understanding of Our Signature Themes and Those of Others

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Review and Reflection
- II. Agenda and Goals for This Session
- III. How the Same Themes May Be Experienced Differently
- IV. Understanding and Respecting Differences in Talent

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Three:

- Pairs of students meet to review each of their Signature Themes with one another and interview each other according to the worksheets: “Signature Themes in Common -- Similar and Dissimilar Experiences” and “Understanding and Respecting Differences in Talent.”
- Go through the StrengthsQuest online site and complete the “Learning Center” activities for each of their top themes.
- Write a reflection paper of learnings from the above activities.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Four:

- Think about their Signature Theme combinations and which of their Signature Themes tend to work in combination most frequently.
- Analyze two important relationships in terms of your own Signature Themes and the themes of the other individuals with whom you relate. Think about the significant themes you share with these individuals and where there maybe conflicting Signature Themes or Signature Themes that do not tend to work together.
- Write a reflection paper of insights about relationships from a talent perspective.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the “Signature Themes in Common - - Similar and Dissimilar Experiences” worksheet
- Copies of the “Understanding and Respecting Talent Differences” worksheet

Session Three Instructional Outline

Subject: Deepening Our Understanding of Our Signature Themes and the Those of Others.

Note to Instructors: *During this session students will be interacting with one another regarding their Signature Themes. It will be important for the students to have a placard tied around their neck during this interaction. You can either choose to have the students put on their placards from the very beginning (which is my practice) or to put on the placards once they begin interacting about the strengths they have in common.*

I. Review and Reflection

- A. Have two people read their reflection papers out loud to the group. Focus on what they learned about why their Signature Themes are beneficial and what the talents in them enable and empower them to do.
- B. Ask an open-ended question regarding their most important insights and understandings about their Signature Themes.
- C. Ask if anyone has noted any differences in the ways they're thinking about themselves, previous experiences, or ways they're thinking about other people.
- D. Ask for one or two people to share what they learned from completing the worksheet titled "My Greatest Success and What Caused It." As a follow-up, ask someone to specifically indicate which of their Signature Themes was at work in causing both their greatest success and most fulfilling experience.
- E. Ask one or two people to share what they learned from reading the chapter titled "Seeing with Strengths-Colored Glasses" pp. 75 – 80.

II. Agenda and Goals for This Session.

- A. How the same themes are experienced similarly and differently.
- B. Understanding and respecting people with different Signature Themes.

III. How the Same Themes are Experienced Similarly and Differently.

- A. Distribute the worksheet titled "Signature Themes in Common -- Similar and Dissimilar Experiences."

- B. Explain that while we may have Signature Themes in common with other people, our specific talents within them may be quite different. One of the reasons may stem from the influence of talents in other themes. For example, a person who has Activator and Achiever among his or her Signature Themes may be quite different from a person who has Activator and Incluser in his or her top five. The point is that talents do not act in isolation. The talents in each of our themes influence and interact with our talents in all other themes.

In addition, our family traditions, culture, and society sends us many messages about what is considered appropriate and inappropriate for men, for women, and for people in general. Therefore, our families, culture, and society may influence how we experience our talents and the extent to which we feel free to express them. For example, some families may consider talents in Empathy very positive assets, while others may consider them a weakness or only appropriate for women. Similarly, Competition and Command talents may be thought of very positively within certain families or cultures, but considered negatively within others. Additional examples come to mind as we consider ethnic and cultural groups or religious groups. Within one culture or religious group, Harmony talents are looked upon very positively, while in another it might be considered a sign of a lack of courage.

- C. Ask the students to walk around the room and find someone with whom they have a Signature Theme in common. Then ask the pairs to sit down and have a discussion with one another about their experiences with the Signature Theme they have in common. Using the worksheet titled “Signature Themes in Common -- Similar and Dissimilar Experiences” Ask the pair to note on their worksheets who the person is with whom they share a Signature Theme, their similar experiences with the talents in it, how talents in their other themes influence the Signature Theme they have in common and how society, culture, and family have encouraged or discouraged their talents in this theme.
- D. After seven or eight minutes have the students move to someone else in the class with whom they share a Signature Theme and repeat the above discussion.
- E. After everyone has had two or three opportunities to discuss their Signature Themes, get feedback from the group by asking “What did you learn about your Signature Themes, and how you and others experience or express your talents in them?” Get several people to share about their experiences and their insights. Emphasize the fact that we should have compassion on people who have had their talents put down or devalued, or have been made to feel that their talents are weaknesses.

IV. Understanding and Respecting Differences in Talent

- A. Distribute the worksheet titled “Understanding and Respecting Differences in Talent”
- B. Introduce this activity by explaining that sometimes we fail to understand people because their talents are quite different from ours. There are even some cases where one person negatively judges another person and may consider the person “weird,” “defective,” or “abnormal” because that individual has talents that are very different from their own. For many reasons, not the least of which is our ability to provide leadership and assume future professional roles dealing with people much different from ourselves, we must learn to see each other more clearly. Part of seeing each other more clearly involves understanding talents within other people that are very different from our own. The following exercise is designed to help in this process.
- C. Ask students to walk around the room and find a person who has at least one Signature Themes that is not among their own top five. Then ask the individuals to address two questions as they fill in their worksheet titled “Understanding and Respecting Strengths Differences”: 1. What is the greatest challenge about your talents in this theme? 2. What is the greatest benefit of your talents in this theme? Give enough time for each person in the dyad to discuss one of their Signature Themes that they do not share. Then call time and ask the students to move to another person. Try to provide enough time so that each person can talk to at least three people who have Signature Themes different from their own.
- D. After each person has interacted with at least three people, call the group back together and get feedback by asking questions such as: “What did you discover about the Signature Themes of other people?” “What new understandings are you gaining about people as you learn about talents that are different than your own?” “In what ways are you coming to respect others as you see them through ‘strengths-colored glasses?’” and finally, “In what ways are you seeing yourself more clearly as you understand more about the talents of others?”

Note to Instructors: While the foregoing outline is set forth for one two-hour session, this session could easily be expanded to three or even four two-hour sessions. It all depends upon the outcomes you are trying to accomplish. One way the session could be expanded would be to have every student have conversations with someone in the group who has at least one of their Signature Themes in common. Ideally, each student would be able to talk with someone about each of his/her five Signature Themes. When studying topics such as cross-cultural communication or when working with multi-cultural groups, the topic of talents in common and how they may be experienced in uncommon ways can provide an excellent learning opportunity to gain insight on the power of culture as it influences how we experience and express our talents.

Likewise, the topic of differences in talent can easily be expanded into two two-hour sessions by providing more time for the students to meet with as many as ten individuals within the class who have Signature Themes different from their own. In classes such as group and inter-personal relationships, the psychology of individual differences, etc., helping students learn to see each other in a positive light when they have differences in talent can produce a powerful learning experience. Many additional learning activities can be set up around discussions such as: Who are the people that you most frequently misunderstand or have conflicts with? Is it possible that these misunderstandings and conflicts result from differences in talent? Finally, in leadership classes it would be profitable to expand the time where people interact with one another around their talents differences because the effectiveness of a leader is greatly enhanced when he/she has brought together individuals with different talents in order to accomplish important goals.

V. Homework Assignments

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Three.

1. Ask the students to meet with one member of the class and to review each of their Signature Themes with one another. The goal is for each person to talk about each of their Signature Themes, one at a time. If the individuals have any Signature Themes in common, have them fill out the “Signature Themes In Common” worksheet concerning the Signature Themes they share. Then the pair should go through each Signature Theme they do not share and add the information they gain to the “Understanding and Respecting Talent Differences” worksheet.
2. Have the students go into the StrengthsQuest online program and go through the animations and self-test within the “learning center” program for each of the five themes that were identified by StrengthsFinder. Encourage the students to also go through the animations and self-test for any other themes in which they believe they might be especially talented.
3. Ask the students to write a one-page reflection paper on what they learned about themselves as a result of the above activities.

B. Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Four.

1. Make sure the students understand that while we have been studying their Signature Themes one at a time, talents do not work in isolation. Rather, their talents in each theme are influenced by those in each of the other 33 themes. To make this point clearer, ask the students to think about two themes that seem to work together within them. Ask them to think about which of their Signature Themes seem to most frequently interact with one another. Finally,

ask them to think about where in their lives they can see combinations of themes working together.

2. Ask the students to think about two relationships in their lives right now that are very important to them. Ask the students to analyze why they believe those relationships are either working well or not working well in light of what they are learning about talents. For example, one student may be able to understand how his Signature Themes may be totally different and perhaps in conflict with the Signature Themes of another individual. To illustrate this, think about a person who has Harmony as a Signature Theme being in a relationship with a person who has Command in his or her Signature Themes.
3. Ask the students to write a one-page paper on insights they are having about the way talents work within relationships and how they can use their Signature Themes to make relationships stronger.

VI. Materials Attached

- “Signature Themes in Common --- Similar and Dissimilar Experiences” worksheet.
- “Understanding and Respecting Talent Differences” worksheet.

Signature Themes in Common - - - Similar and Dissimilar Experiences

Theme name	A person who has this theme as a Signature Theme	Our similar experiences with this theme	How other themes influence this theme and our experiences with it	How society, culture and family encourage or discourage talents in this theme.

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Understanding and Respecting Talent Differences

This activity is designed to help you deepen your understanding of the talents in your Signature Themes by learning about the Signature Themes of others. Your objective is to learn about themes that are not a part of your own top five. In doing so, you will begin to better understand the talents of others and your own.

Theme Name	Group Member's Name	The Challenges of Talents in this Theme	The Benefits of Talents in this Theme
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

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Session Four Overview

Subject: The Power of Theme Combinations.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Introducing the “Creative Expression of Theme Combinations” activity.
- II. Reflection and Review.
- III. Personal Uniqueness and Identity as a Reflection of Talents.
- IV. Preparing and Presenting Artistic Expressions of Themes and Theme Combinations.

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Four:

- Write a paper that articulates the artistic expression of their Signature Themes and theme combinations.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Five:

- Identify where and how the students are using talents from their Signature Themes in learning and academic activities.
- Write a reflection paper on how talents from their Signature Themes are being used to learn and achieve academically.

Materials Needed:

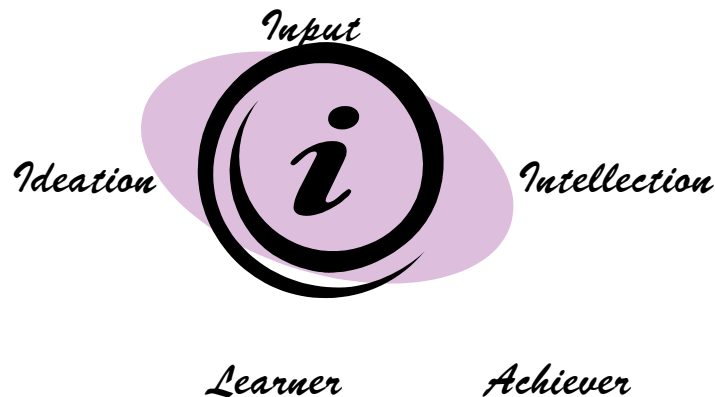
- Transparency films/paper and marking pens.
- Overhead projector and screen.

Session Four Instructional Outline

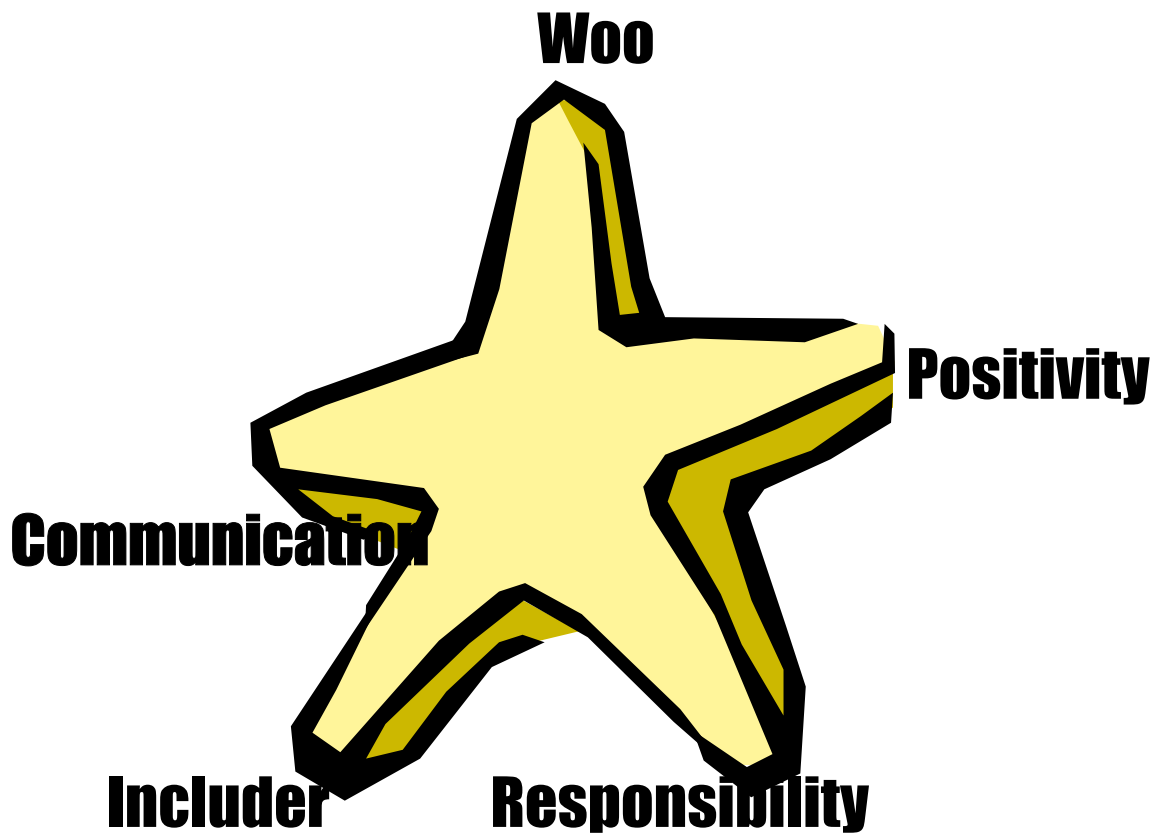
Subject: The Power of Theme Combinations.

Note to Instructors: *At the very start of this session announce to the students that they will each be producing a creative expression of their Signature Themes and how they work together. More specifically, at the end of today's session each student will stand in front of the class and use some type of a creative expression to communicate how they see their strengths working together. To help the students understand what you are asking them to do, you will need to set forth your own creative expression of how you see your Signature Themes work together. Some people represent their Signature Themes as a formula that expresses how one theme adds to another theme or how various themes seem to have a multiplier effect in terms of increasing the power and the potency of the talents they hold. Some people express their Signature Themes with drawings, diagrams, or figures.*

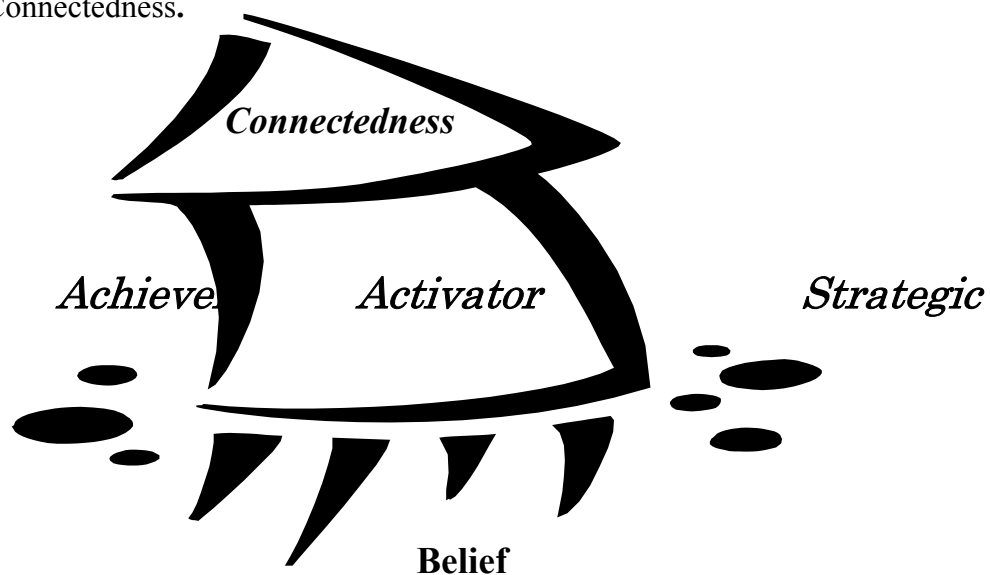
See the examples of several artistic ways various individuals have represented their Signature Themes. You will want to give two or three examples to stimulate the thinking of the students. And make sure that one of the examples you give is of yourself.



Information and learning is most important to me and I use all of my “I” themes to gather and process information and data then I use Learner and Achiever to make things happen with that information. I have to get things done and all that information helps me do great things.



Chip's Diagram (below)-- I have Belief, Strategic, Activator, Achiever and Connectedness as my Signature Themes. My visual image of how my talents in these themes work together is of a rocket standing upright on a launch pad. My Belief talents form a giant foundational launch pad. The fuselage of my rocket stands upright on the middle of the launch pad. This is my Activator theme. On each side of the fuselage are two booster rockets. One I call Strategic and the other Achiever. The nose cone on top of the main fuselage is Connectedness.



I. Introduce the Topic of Today.

- A. Referring to the above “**Note to Instructors**,” please introduce the topic of “The Power of Signature Theme Combinations” and tell the students that during this session they are to come up with a creative way of expressing their Signature Themes and how they work together. Give two or three illustrations of how these expressions might be given, including your own.
- B. Distribute transparency films and markers on which the students can draw their Signature Themes as a creative expression. Make this activity fun and non-threatening to the students by expressing how much difficulty you have had in coming up with a way of artistically describing your own Signature Themes. Tell the students that during the last half of today’s session, each person will come to the front of the room and show their strengths on the overhead projector using the transparency film that was just distributed.

Note to Instructors: If you are in a classroom or instructional setting where there is no transparency/overhead projector, you may want to give the students large pieces of paper or whatever other visual device is available so that the students can express the combination of their Signature Themes creatively.

Some students may be resistant, but don’t let this deter you. This is a very powerful learning experience that helps students see how their talents work together, and it helps the students to know each other on a deeper, more profound level. Most important, this activity helps students see how they and everyone else are uniquely talented.

II. Reflection and Review

- A. Ask the students to get out a piece of paper and respond to the following three questions:
 - 1. What are your two most dominant themes of talent?
 - 2. Where do you use your talents in these themes most frequently?
 - 3. What are the greatest benefits of having these two strengths and having them work together?
- B. Ask two students in the group to volunteer their answers to the three questions above.
- C. Put all the students into groups of three and ask the members in the groups to read what they wrote in response to the above three questions.

- D. After seven or eight minutes, get the whole group's attention and ask for two or three people to say what they learned from reading, listening and interacting in their groups.
- E. As a part of the homework in preparation for this session, students were asked to think about which of their Signature Themes seem to work together and where in their lives they can see combinations of talents working together. The students were also asked to think about two of their relationships and to analyze those relationships in terms of their talents and the talents of the other. Based upon this thinking, the students were asked to write a one-page paper of insights they're having about the way their talents work within relationships and how they can use their talents to make relationships stronger.

Ask three or four students to read their one-page reflection of insights on how their talents are working within relationships and how they can use their talents to make relationships stronger.

III. Personal Uniqueness and Identity as a Reflection of Our Talents.

- A. Help students get a sense of vision and appreciation for their individual uniqueness by pointing out the incredible number of combinations of talents found in each person. For example, if you consider both the combinations and the order of the 34 themes of talent measured by StrengthsFinder, more than 33,700,000 unique sets of Signature Themes ("top five" groupings) are possible. Write that number on the board to emphasize the point: More than 33,700,000 Signature Theme groupings are possible. Each individual is unique!
- B. To help students see how unique they are, inform them that among the first eight hundred thousand people (800,000) who took StrengthsFinder, less than twenty people had the same top five themes – without even considering the order of the themes.
- C. To make the point of uniqueness even stronger, indicate that The Gallup Organization has identified more than 420 themes of talent in its study of more than two million individuals. The 34 themes of talent measured by StrengthsFinder are those that were most prevalent among "the best of the best" in that study, which is why they were selected for StrengthsFinder. However, the other 386 themes also contain valuable talents that make each individual incredibly unique. When you consider the many themes of musical, athletic, artistic, and other talents that are not even measured by StrengthsFinder, you begin to get a vision of just how tremendously unique each individual is.
- D. Don Clifton used to say that one of the surest ways to talk about a person's individual uniqueness and identity is to talk about that person's talents. From Don's research over 50 years, he came to believe that each and every individual can do something better than the next ten thousand (10,000)

consecutive individuals. This means that each and every student in this class can do something better than the next ten thousand individuals. Now the question becomes: “Do you know what it is that you can do better than the next ten thousand individuals?” **One thing is for sure. The answer to what you can do better than the next ten thousand people is found in your talents and the development of strengths.**

IV. Preparation for the Artistic Expressions of Theme Combinations.

- A. Allow a few moments for the students to complete their artistic expressions of their Signature Themes and how they work together. Hopefully, the students have been making notes to themselves throughout the session so that they will need only a few moments to finalize their sketch, formula, drawing, diagram, or whatever they put together . . . while it is best to have something visual, some students write a poem and some have even made up jingles and lyrics which they sing.

V. Presenting Artistic Expressions of Theme Combinations.

- A. One at a time, have each student stand up in front of the group and show their artistic expression of their Signature Themes. If it is not obvious, ask students to explain how their Signature Themes work together.
- B. If time permits allow the students in the class to ask a question or comment on the student’s artistic expressions before the presenter sits down.

Note to the Instructors: *It is important that this presentation be a positive experience for each student. You may want to ask the student questions such as, “What does this combination of themes empower you to do?” or you might ask “Can you give me an example of when and where and how your combination of Signature Themes works together to help or make you more effective?”*

As each student returns to his/her seat, applaud for the person and help the group to also affirm each student.

VI. Homework Assignments.

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Four.

- 1. Ask the students to write a one-page reflection paper that verbalizes the artistic expression of their Signature Themes combination and where they most frequently use that combination.

B. Homework Assignment to Prepare for Session Five.

- 1. Ask the students to note how they are currently using the talents in their Signature Themes when they learn or are engaged in academic tasks and activities. The students need to be thinking in terms of

questions such as: Which of their Signature Themes are they using in the classroom? Which of their Signature Themes are they using when they are reading? Which of their Signature Themes are they using when they are doing homework?

2. Write a one-page reflection on what they are learning and observing as they are using the talents in their Signature Themes in learning activities and to complete academic tasks.

Session Five Overview

Subject: Applying Talents to Learning and Academic Achievement.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Reflection and Review.
- II. Agenda and Goals for This Session.
- III. Transition from Understanding to Applying Talents.
- IV. Assessment of This Strengths Awareness Program.
- V. Applying Talents to Learning.

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Five:

- Intentionally use talents from their top themes to complete a learning/academic task within the next 48 hours.
- Write a reflection paper of learnings derived from intentionally using their top themes in learning and academic tasks.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Six:

- Read pages 127 – 134 from the StrengthsQuest text.
- Write a reflection paper plus one pressing question based on reading pages 127 – 134 in the StrengthsQuest text.

Materials Needed:

- Students must bring their StrengthsQuest textbook to class.
- Copies of the “Assessment of This Strengths Awareness Program” inventory.

Session Five Instructional Outline

Subject: Applying Talents to Learning and Academic Achievement.

I. Reflection and Review.

- A. Ask two students to read their one-page reflection on learnings derived from Session Four.
- B. Ask two students to read their one-page reflection paper on learnings derived from the homework assignment in preparation for Session Five.

II. Agenda and Goals for This Session.

- A. Provide a transition from understanding our talents to applying them, first to academics then beyond academics.
- B. Conduct an assessment of what is being learned in this strengths training course and what students want and need to learn in the remaining sessions.
- C. Assess how students are currently applying their strengths and talents in learning and academics, and help students generate additional strategies for applying strengths to increase learning effectiveness and academic performance.

III. Transition from Understanding to Applying Talents.

- A. Distribute the “Assessment of This Strengths Awareness Program” inventory. Ask the students to candidly mark their responses to each item. The students do not need to put their names on the inventories.
- B. After the students have completed the inventory, ask them to get together in groups of three or four and discuss their responses. In particular, ask the groups to identify where they seem to be benefiting most and where they want to gain more from this program.
- C. After ten or fifteen minutes, ask volunteers from various groups to state the areas where students in their group seem to be experiencing the greatest benefits from this program. Then ask volunteers from various groups to state where people within their group want to experience more benefits from this strengths awareness program.

Note to Instructors: *In every group I have ever conducted, there is one thing that people want to know more than anything else. They want to know how to apply the talents in their Signature Themes.*

You will see that question items 22 – 45 of the inventory primarily focus on how to apply talents. These questions will most likely catch the

students' attention and stimulate them in the direction of wanting to know how to apply their talents.

After you've heard from several students regarding where they want to experience more benefits from the program, announce to the group how you will be focusing the next two or three sessions. For example, the focus of instruction in the session outlines that follow are specifically aimed at applying talents to learning, applying talents to increase academic achievement, and applying talents in future and career planning.

IV. Applying Talents to Learning.

- A. While the students are still in small groups, ask them to identify for each other their top theme and in what context they tend to use the talents most frequently.
- B. After the students have verbalized to each other their top theme, ask each student to turn to pages 148 – 207 in the StrengthsQuest text. Tell the group that what is listed on these pages are the results of interviewing **over two thousand highly successful college and university students**. These high-performing students first took StrengthsFinder, then were interviewed to determine how they used talents in their various Signature Themes to perform at such high levels. Their responses were then organized into categories such as: “General Academic Life,” “Study Techniques,” etc.
- C. Ask each student to first find their top theme in pages 148 – 207, which indicates how top achievers used specific talents from particular themes.

Ask each student to go down the list of each suggestion under their top theme and first identify which of the suggested strategies they are already implementing or have used in the past. Have the students mark each strategy they are currently using or have used with a checkmark.

Then have students go back through the list of strategies under their top theme, and identify additional strategies that they could see themselves using, and mark those strategies with a “plus” sign.

- D. The students' primary homework assignment for this week is to identify an academic task which they must complete within the next 48 hours and intentionally invent a way to apply talents from their top theme to complete this assignment. Therefore, you will want to introduce this homework assignment just after they have gone through the strategies for applying talents and strengths found in pages 148 – 207.

V. Homework Assignments.

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Five.

1. Instruct the students that they are to intentionally use their top theme to complete an academic task within the next 48 hours and to write a one-page paper describing what they did and what they learned from the process. The first step in this process is to write down how they plan to use their top theme to complete the academic task that they must complete in the next 48 hours. Second, they are to intentionally go about using their top theme in completing that task.
2. The one-page reflection should focus on how they intentionally used their top theme and what they learned in the process.

B. Homework Assignments in Preparation for Session Six.

1. Read pages 127 – 132 from the StrengthsQuest text.
2. Write a one-page reflection of learnings and insights plus their most pressing question based on reading pages 127 – 130 of StrengthsQuest.

VI. Materials Attached.

- “Assessment of This Strengths Awareness Program” inventory.

ASSESSMENT OF THIS STRENGTHS AWARENESS PROGRAM

Please answer each question using a 1 to 5 scale where:

- 1 Strongly Disagree (SD)
- 2 Disagree (D)
- 3 Neither Agree or Disagree (U)
- 4 Agree (A)
- 5 Strongly Agree (SA)

As a result of the StrengthsQuest program and this class:

	SD	D	U	A	SA
1. I have a clearer awareness of my strengths	1	2	3	4	5
2. I think about my strengths as I plan each day.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have learned words that help me describe strengths I've always known I had.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I've become clearer about who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I've become more confident.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I've become more positive about who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am realizing that I have more abilities than I thought I had.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I now understand that some of my greatest successes have been caused by strengths and talents within me.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am more confident of my abilities to build friendships.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am coming to see that I can do more than I thought I could do.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I find that I am respecting people more as I look at them in light of their strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My self-respect is increasing as I understand my strengths.	1	2	3	4	5

Can only be reproduced in conjunction with the StrengthsQuest text.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
13. I'm discovering strengths and talents I never knew I had.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am clearer now about who I really am as a person.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Learning about my strengths helps me analyze why relationships are or are not working.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I have become more aware of my individual uniqueness.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I understand how strengths are influenced by other strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have more respect for other people as a result of learning about my strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have a greater respect for cultural differences now that I see how culture influences strengths and the expression of strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am looking at people more positively.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I intentionally try to see people in light of their strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I now know how to apply my strengths to learn more efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I know how to use my strengths to achieve academically.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I know how to use my strengths to help me learn and achieve in areas where I once struggled.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I am an academically confident person.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I am certain that I can achieve both in college and graduate or professional school.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am more confident and more willing to enter academic achievement activities.	1	2	3	4	5

Can only be reproduced in conjunction with the StrengthsQuest text.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
28. Whereas I used to stop when I encountered academic difficulties, now I have more confidence and continue working.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Because I know how to apply my strengths to academic tasks, I procrastinate less often.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I am determined to help people around me learn about their strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am becoming more confident about the future.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am clearer about my life goals.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I am confident that I will rise to the top of the profession I choose.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Understanding my strengths is helping me be realistic about the future.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Understanding my strengths is helping me plan for the future and is giving me direction and reassurance about career decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I now know how to plan my career around my strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I know what I can do with excellence.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I am now forming some new goals for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I am feeling more hopeful about the future.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I am becoming more confident to pursue things I've always dreamed of doing.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I recognize that I have qualities within me that will empower me to achieve more than I have ever achieved before.	1	2	3	4	5
42. I now know where I can best invest my time and energy.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I know how to apply my strengths in leadership roles and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5

Can only be reproduced in conjunction with the StrengthsQuest text.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
44. I have learned how to apply my strengths in serving others.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I see how my strengths will help me fulfill my sense of destiny.	1	2	3	4	5

Can only be reproduced in conjunction with the StrengthsQuest text.

Session Six Overview

Subject: Applying talents to academic tasks.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Reflection and review.
- II. Agenda and Goals for This Session.
- III. Academic Tasks You Do With Ease and Academic Tasks with Which You Struggle.
- IV. How Top Achievers Apply Their Talents to Academic Tasks.
- V. Identifying and Inventing Strategies for Applying Talents to Academic Tasks.

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Six:

- Complete two academic tasks by intentionally using talents from two or three of your Signature Themes.
- Invent ways of applying your talents to complete an academic task with which you normally struggle.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Seven:

- Read the StrengthsQuest text pages 209 – 216.
- Write a reflection paper on insights gained from reading the above pages.

Materials Needed:

- Students must bring their StrengthsQuest textbook to class.
- Copies of the “Academic Tasks I Do with Ease” worksheet.

Session Six Instructional Outline

Subject: Applying talents to academic tasks.

I. Reflection and Review.

- A. Have students meet together in groups of three or four. Try to arrange the groups so that students who share a Signature Theme or have similar Signature Themes are together.
- B. One of the homework assignments was to intentionally use talents from their top themes to complete an academic task and to then write a paper reflecting on what they did, which theme they intentionally used, and what happened as a result. Ask each student in the groups to share with their small group how they invented ways of using their top theme to complete the academic learning task and what happened as a result.
- C. If time permits, ask two or three students to share with the whole group what they experienced when they applied their top themes to accomplish an academic task.

II. Agenda and Goals for This Session.

- A. Identify academic tasks students do with ease and academic tasks with which they struggle.
- B. Identify methods of applying each of the students' Signature Themes to successfully completing academic tasks.
- C. Identify how students are already applying their Signature Themes in the academic tasks they do with ease.
- D. Help students invent ways of applying their Signature Themes to complete academic tasks with which they struggle.

III. Academic Tasks You Do With Ease and Academic Tasks with Which You Struggle.

- A. Distribute the "Academic Tasks I Do with Ease" worksheet.
- B. Ask the students to identify three academic tasks they do with ease.

Note to the Instructors: *Explain to the students that an academic task could be an academic subject that they learn with ease (e.g. history, psychology, mathematics, chemistry, anthropology, etc.) or some specific academic activity that they do with ease (e.g. doing library research,*

studying for exams, taking objective exams, conducting scientific investigations, working with peers in study groups or on group projects, making oral presentations, etc.)

- C. In the spaces to the left of the center line, beginning at the top, ask students to write a note concerning three academic tasks they do with ease. Then ask the students to identify two academic tasks with which they struggle and write notes about how they struggle in the two spaces to the left of the center line on the bottom portion of the worksheet.

IV. How Top Achievers Apply Their Talents to Academic Tasks.

- A. In the last session, students were asked to identify their top themes and to read the suggestions from top achievers on how they use their talents to promote their learning and high academic achievement (pp. 148 – 207). The students were asked to place a “check” mark next to each suggestion they are already using or have used in the past, and to place a “plus” sign next to each suggestion they were not using but could see themselves using.
- B. This week we want the students to read and mark the suggestions for each of their other four Signature Themes listed on pages 148 – 207. In particular, ask the students to read the suggestions under the headings “General Academic Life” and “Study Techniques” for each of their five Signature Themes.

V. Identifying and Inventing Strategies for Applying Talents to Academic Tasks.

- A. Returning to the “Academic Tasks I Do with Ease” worksheet, ask the students to think about each of the three academic tasks they identified as ones they do with ease. Next, ask them to think about why they are able to do these academic tasks with such ease. More than likely, the reason they do these particular tasks with such ease is that they are using talents from one or more of their Signature Themes. Therefore, on the right side of the center line, ask the students to identify the themes that make them able to do each of the three academic tasks with such ease. Finally, ask them to write the specific themes that are enabling and empowering them to do the academic tasks on the right side of the center line.

Note to the Instructor: *The process of identifying which themes are causing a person to be able to do certain tasks with ease isn’t as easy as it may seem. Therefore, you may need to give an illustration from your own life or from your experience with other students.*

If time permits, ask students to share in the group as a whole or in small groups some specific task that they do with ease and which of their

Signature Themes are enabling and empowering them to do that task with ease. Encourage the students to be very specific in explaining exactly how they are using talents from their Signature Themes to do certain academic tasks with ease.

- B. Now turn to the “Academic Tasks with Which I Struggle” part of the worksheet. Here the challenge is to identify at least two themes that could be applied to each academic task with which the students are struggling. Of greatest importance is for the students to invent ways of applying their Signature Themes to the academic tasks with which they struggle.

Note to Instructor: *There are no easy answers at this point. But the marvelous thing is that when students focus on the themes that they know hold their greatest talents, and then they are challenged with inventing ways of applying those talents to tasks with which they struggle, it is amazing what happens and what students come up with. Most students find it very empowering to be reminded that they already have within them all of the talents necessary for them to achieve. All they need to do is to invent ways of taking their talents into areas where they want and need to improve.*

- C. Provide a quiet time where students can use their own creativity in inventing ways of applying their greatest talents to academic tasks with which they struggle. Encourage students to start with what they know is their top theme and begin the inventing process there. Then they can move to their second theme and use it to invent even more strategies for applying their talents to the academic tasks with which they struggle.

Remind the students that if they feel stuck, they can always turn to the suggestions from top achievers with similar Signature Themes and see how they use their talents in academics (pp. 148 – 207). But encourage the students to be inventive and to use the ideas of the top achievers as a stimulus and catalyst for their own thinking. This will empower the students.

Note to Instructors: *This session can easily be expanded to two, 2-hour sessions, and if at all possible, this should be done. In so doing, one session could be devoted to helping the students see in great detail which of their Signature Themes are at work in the academic tasks they do with ease. Then the second session could focus on ways of using talents in their Signature Themes to invent strategies for addressing areas where the students may struggle. Sometimes it is very effective for students to get together in small groups and honestly disclose where they are struggling. It is extremely helpful to get students together who have one or more Signature Theme in common so that they can use one another in the creative activity of inventing ways of applying talents from their top themes in academics.*

VI. Homework Assignments.

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Six.

1. Complete two academic tasks by intentionally using talents from two or three of your Signature Themes.
2. Invent ways of applying your Signature Themes to complete an academic task with which you normally struggle.

B. Homework Assignments in Preparation for Session Seven.

1. Read the StrengthsQuest text pages 209 – 216.
2. Write a reflection paper on insights gained from reading the above pages.

VII. Materials Attached.

- “Academic Tasks I Do With Ease” worksheet

Academic Tasks I Do With Ease

Please list three academic tasks you do with ease:

1.

2.

3.

Academic Tasks with Which I Struggle

Please list two specific academic tasks with which you struggle:

1.

2.

Can only be reproduced in conjunction with the StrengthsQuest text.

Session Seven Overview

Subject: A vision for you and your future.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Review and Reflection.
- II. A Vision for You: Becoming Your Own Best Educator and Learner.

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Seven:

- Experimentation with the vision of being your own best educator and learner.
- Write a reflection paper on being your own best educator and learner

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Eight:

- Go to the StrengthsQuest online program and complete the “action planning” exercise within the “Learning Center” for the student’s top theme.
- Write a reflection paper of insights gained through the above process.

Materials Needed:

- Students must bring their StrengthsQuest book to class.

Session Seven Instructional Outline

Subject: A vision for you and your future.

I. Review and Reflection

Note to Instructor: *I cannot over-emphasize the importance of thoroughly reviewing the homework assignments to reinforce Session Six and the homework assignments to prepare for this session. Therefore, please slow down and take your time in this “Review and Reflection” section. What is reviewed and reflected upon is so important that you may decide to do nothing else in this session than go through the review and reflection activities listed below. This will be particularly true if you are conducting this class for entering college students or for individuals who need increased academic confidence and motivation.*

A. Completing Academic Tasks Using Talents from Your Signature Themes.

To reinforce Session Six, students were given two homework assignments. First, they were asked to complete two academic tasks by intentionally applying two or three of their Signature Themes. Second, they were to identify an academic task with which they struggle and invent ways of applying their Signature Themes to complete the academic tasks with which they struggle. What follows are directions for taking students through a process of reviewing and reflecting upon these homework assignments.

1. Ask the students to get out a sheet of paper and identify the two academic tasks they completed by intentionally using talents from two or more of their Signature Themes. Ask the students to write notes to themselves that list (a) the two academic tasks they completed, (b) the two or three Signature Themes they intentionally used to complete those academic tasks, and (c) exactly what they did as they intentionally used their talents to complete the academic tasks.
2. After the students have had time to write notes to themselves about how they intentionally used talents from their Signature Themes, divide the group into sub-groups of three or four students. (Ideally, these groups would be formed around students who share the same or similar strengths). Once the students are in the groups, ask them to share with each other exactly how they use their Signature Themes to complete the two academic tasks.

3. While the class is divided into the sub-groups of three or four students, call the class to attention and pick one person from each group to share the academic task he/she completed and specifically how the individual applied his/her Signature Themes to complete the task.
4. Next, ask the students to get out another sheet of paper and identify the task with which they struggle and the ways they invented to use talents from one or more of their Signature Themes in addressing it.
5. Once again, have the students share with the three or four people in their sub-group the various strategies they invented to address the academic task with which they have struggled.
6. Finally, pick students from each sub-group to share the academic task with which they struggle and the specific strategies they invented for addressing that academic task using their Signature Themes.

Note to Instructor: *While it may seem that the above steps drag out the process, what you are doing is first creating a positive peer pressure towards being pro-active and helping them to see that everyone struggles with some academic tasks. Second, students will become encouraged in inventing ways in which they can apply their Signature Themes as they hear how other students are inventing ways of doing it. This all adds up to students becoming more confident and empowered as learners. At the same time, I must warn you that some students will be resistant to this process. But that does not take away from the validity of the process and what they can and need to gain from it.*

B. Reflecting on Homework to Prepare for Session Seven

1. The students were asked to read pages 209 – 216 from StrengthsQuest and to write a reflection paper on insights gained from reading those pages.

Before going over the reflection papers, ask someone to review the research investigation of Dr. Robert Rosenthal and the outcomes of his research.

Next, ask someone to articulate the idea advanced by Dr. Winston Doby concerning the need to be our own best teacher.

Finally, ask the students to tie together the research by Dr. Rosenthal and the idea by Dr. Doby.

2. Ask two or three students to read their reflection papers to the whole class based upon the readings from pages 209 – 216 of the StrengthsQuest text.

II. A Vision for You – Becoming Your Own Best Educator and Learner.

A. Brainstorming About the Best Educator.

1. Ask the students to identify in their own mind who has been the very best educator they have ever seen or experienced. Next, ask the students to write down on a sheet of paper the five qualities or behavior patterns that made that educator so outstanding. Emphasize that what you want to know is what this great educator actually did that caused the students to think of them so favorably.
2. In a brainstorming manner (without comments or critiques) ask the students to state the behavior patterns and qualities of the best educators they have ever known. As the students identify these qualities/behavior patterns, write them on the board. Make sure every student in the group has read his/her list of five. When qualities or behavior patterns are repeated, record it with a slash mark so that it can be tallied later.
3. After every student has verbalized his/her list, tally their comments and identify the top seven qualities/behavior patterns they have found among the best of the best educators they have known.

B. Brainstorming the Behaviors and Qualities of the Best Learner

Repeat the steps listed above for the best educator, only this time have the students list and then brainstorm the qualities and behavior patterns of the best learner they have ever known.

Emphasize the specific behavior patterns of the best learners.

Once again, tabulate the most frequently mentioned behaviors of the best learners and identify the top seven behavior patterns.

C. Personalizing the Concept of Being Your Own Best Educator and Learner.

Ask the students to consider being their own very best educator.

Next, ask the students which of their Signature Themes could be used to make them their own best educator. Refer back to the list of behaviors and qualities the students have seen in the great educators that they have known. Also, refer back to Rosenthal's study and the qualities/behavior patterns of great educators listed on pages 214 & 215.

Ask the students to consider being their own best learners.

Then ask the students which of their Signature Themes could be used to make them their own best learner. Refer back to the list of qualities and behaviors they have seen in the best learners they have known. And again ask: Which of your Signature Themes could be applied to make you your own best learner?

Note to Instructor: *The idea of being your own best educator and your own best learner may be very foreign to many students and at first, hard for them to grasp. But in reality it is a very simple idea. After all, they are always thinking and planning and trying to find faster and more efficient ways of getting from one point to another. Likewise, they are trying to figure out the fastest and most efficient ways of completing class assignments and tasks at their work. When they are engaged in this type of thinking it is as if they are teaching and learning within themselves. Today's lesson is attempting to get the students to become more intentional and to become more responsible for their own learning by encouraging them to use their Signature Themes to be great learners by being great educators to themselves. Of course the concept of being an educator is actually a leadership term. It literally means to "draw out." And when students are being great educators they are drawing out the best that is within them. That is why great educators tend to draw out and help students capitalize on their greatest talents.*

III. Homework Assignments

A. Homework to Reinforce Session Seven.

1. Ask the students to experiment with the vision of being their own best educator and their own best learner. In particular, encourage the students to continue applying talents from their Signature Themes to complete academic tasks. Also suggest that students encourage themselves as an act of being their own best educators. Likewise, encourage the students to take on the qualities of the best learners by being actively involved and engaged in classes, and completing assignments.
2. Write a reflection paper of learnings and insights gained in the process of being their own best educator and learner.

B. Homework Assignments in Preparation for Session Eight.

1. Go to the StrengthsQuest online site and enter the “Learning Center.” Complete the action plan for their top two Signature Themes by pointing and clicking each relevant item on the action plan. Print out the results of these two action plans and bring them to the next class session.

Session Eight Overview

Subject: Future planning and college outcomes.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Review and Reflection.
- II. Agenda and Goals for This Session.
- III. Future Planning Activity.
- IV. Forming a Vision for College.
- V. Developing Strengths.
- VI. College Outcomes.

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Eight:

- Read pages 81 through 87 titled “Insights on Strengths Development” in the StrengthsQuest text.
- Read the suggestions for developing talents from each of their Signature Themes found on pages 90 through 123 and identify at least two suggestions that they can see themselves implementing.
- Complete the “College Outcomes Worksheet” identifying the seven desired outcomes ten years after college and the seven desired immediate outcomes of college.
- Write a reflection paper on personal goals, desired outcomes of the college experience, and the importance of developing strengths.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Nine:

- Read pages 217 through 224 of the StrengthsQuest text.
- Fill in the blanks on pages 263 and 264 of the StrengthsQuest text.
- Read page 265 of StrengthsQuest and identify your top six values.
- Write a reflection paper on the foregoing activities.

Materials Needed:

- Students must bring copies of the StrengthsQuest text.
- Copies of the “Future Planning” worksheet
- Copies of the “College Outcomes Worksheet.”

Materials Attached:

- “Future Planning” worksheet.
- “College Outcomes Worksheet.”

Session Eight Instructional Outline

Subject: Future planning and college outcomes.

I. Reflection and Review.

- A. Ask two students to describe what they did since the last session to be their own best educator.
- B. Ask two students to describe what they did since the last session to be their own best learner.
- C. Ask two students to read their reflection paper on being their own best learner and educator.
- D. Ask two students to read their reflection paper resulting from going on-line and doing the action planning exercise on their top two themes.

II. Agenda and Goals for this Session.

- A. Identify what students would love to do and have a sense of destiny about doing.
- B. See connections between the students' Signature Themes and both what they would love to do and have a sense of destiny about doing.
- C. Generate a vision about college outcomes that focuses on strengths development and learning how to apply strengths in academics, relationships, leadership, service, and career, plus learning how to identify talents in others.

III. Future Planning.

- A. Distribute the handout titled "Future Planning Worksheet."
- B. Go through instructions for the "Future Planning Worksheet" as follows:
 - 1. First focus on the top circle on the right hand side of the worksheet.
 - 2. Ask the students to push out of their minds all of the expectations that other people have of them - - - Push away the expectations of parents, other family members, friends, husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends, etc. Then ask the students to push out of their minds their own fears and anxieties. Push aside thoughts,

expectations and pressures from others and fears and anxieties or self-doubts from within.

Now here is the question: “What would you really love to do?”

In the top circle write something, draw something, or put a note that reflects what you would really love to do.

As the students write, tell them that they will not be asked to reveal what they put in the circle. It could be something that they would love to do, such as some place they would love to go. It could be something they would love to achieve or accomplish. Or it could be something that they would love to be - - - some type of a person they would love to be. It could be some position, some role, some career, or some profession in which they would love to be. The only criteria is that it must be something that they would love - - - and they choose more than one thing that they would love to do, be, or achieve.

Note to Instructors: *Give the students a few minutes to write or draw something in the top circle. But don't spend a lot of time. The focus is on what they would simply love to do or love to be. This is not and in depth self-analysis.*

3. Now call the students' attention to the second circle on the right side of the worksheet towards the bottom and focus on this second circle.
4. In this circle ask the students to again write a word, a sentence, draw a figure, or make some kind of note that makes sense to them around this theme: What you have a sense of destiny about doing, and sense of mission about doing with your life.

Some students will find this even more difficult than identifying what they would love to do. And for others, it will be easier. For some, what they feel a sense of destiny about doing is almost the same as they would love to do.

Here are some prompts or some ideas that might help the students: Your sense of destiny may include what you believe you were meant to do. Or, it could be what you believe you need to get done in your life. Your sense of destiny may be like a personal mission and something you need to do. Your sense of destiny is intuitive; it is like you were born to do something or something you just need to do and get done before you die. It may be something that you have always known you're supposed to do.

Some people realize what their sense of destiny is by thinking about what they need to get done before they die.

Your sense of destiny, your sense of mission, what you were meant to do, or what you need to get done, is like a faint image and an intuitive idea of the person you need to be, the role you need to perform and the contribution you need to make.

Whatever it is, ask them to write a note to themselves and put it in the second circle on the right hand side.

5. Next, ask the students to write each of their five Signature Themes in the five rectangles on the left hand side of the worksheet, placing one of their Signature Themes in each rectangle.
6. Next, ask the students if they see connections between their Signature Themes and what they would really love to do; and between their Signature Themes and what they have a sense of destiny to do. Each time they see a connection ask them to draw a line with an arrow tip pointing to either the circle on the top or the circle on the bottom. They should feel free to make connections with as many themes as are relevant. Therefore, a student may connect the first theme with both what he or she would love to do and his or her sense of destiny. There may be cases where one theme is connected only with what they would love to do and not with what they have a sense of destiny about doing or vice-versa.
7. Finally, after the students have had a chance to draw lines connecting their Signature Themes with what they would love to do and what they have a sense of destiny about doing, ask the students to indicate by show of hands, how many of their Signature Themes are connected to the various circles. Here is how you might state it: “How many of you see a connection between at least one of your Signature Themes and what you would really love to do?” “How many see a connection between two of your Signature Themes and what you would really love to do?” “How many of you see a connection between three of your Signature Themes and what you would really love to do?” “How many of you see a connection between four or five of your Signature Themes and what you would really love to do?”

Now go to the second circle and ask questions in the following manner: “How many of you see a connection between one of your Signature Themes and your sense of destiny?” “How many of you see a connection between two of your Signature Themes and your

sense of destiny?” - - - continue through all five of their Signature Themes and their sense of destiny.

8. Engage the students in a time of reflection about the connections that they see between their talents, which are naturally in them already, with what they would really love to do and their personal sense of destiny. This can be a marvelous time of reflection particularly when you grasp that you already have within you the materials necessary to do what you would love to do and fulfill your sense of destiny. It might be beneficial for you, as the leader, to go first. You may decide to share something specific that you would love to do and how your various Signature Themes connect with that or you may want to share your sense of destiny and which themes connect with that. Or you may share your personal experience in seeing how your Signature Themes connect with the things that are very, very, important to you.

The bottom line of this exercise is two-fold. **First, we want the students to have the marvelous experience of realizing that they already have within them talents that are relevant to what they would love to do and feel a sense of destiny about doing. Second, we want to reinforce a major lesson of the whole StrengthsQuest program: We should treat our talents with the greatest respect and in fact, cherish them! Accordingly, we should treat other people with respect because they also have talents that are related to their personal sense of destiny and what they would love to do.**

IV. Forming a Vision for College.

- A. Indicate to the students that if you can see a connection between what you would love to do and your Signature Themes, and if you can see a connection between your sense of destiny (what you were meant to do), and your Signature Themes, then focusing on fully developing and learning how to apply your Signature Themes should be one of your highest priorities. In a very real sense, a person's talents hold not only the key to achieving and achieving to levels of excellence; they also hold the key to doing and being what they would love to do and be, and to fulfilling their sense of destiny.
- B. Since the Signature Themes of students are directly linked to what they would love to do and since the Signature Themes of students are directly linked to their sense of destiny, it only makes sense that developing talents from their Signature Themes should be one of the highest priorities in a student's college education and college experience.

- C. Help the students to understand that talents are like muscles. If you exercise a muscle, you can make it stronger and more powerful. Also, with proper exercise, you can make a muscle react faster and be more responsive. Finally, with proper exercise you can make a muscle more flexible and more agile.

The same is true of talents. If you properly develop your talents, you can make them strong. Likewise, if you properly develop your talents, you can make them faster and quicker to respond. And if properly developed, you can make talents more flexible and able to be applied in a variety of situations.

- D. A vision for college.

A college education provides magnificent opportunities for learning facts, information, concepts, principles, literature, culture, arts, effective modes of communication, mathematics and problem solving skills.

Equally important is the full development of students as persons.

When we think about the full development of students as persons, we must think in terms of students developing strengths and learning how to apply them.

Here is our vision of a college education. By the time students leave college, they will have learned a body of substantive knowledge, qualitative and scientific skills, sensitivity to culture and the arts, and communication skills. But also, students would have learned and developed in the following ways:

- 1. Developed strengths related to talents in each of their Signature Themes, making each theme more powerful and responsive.**
- 2. Learned how to apply their Signature Themes in learning and academic achievement.**
- 3. Learned how to apply their Signature Themes in building and sustaining healthy relationships.**
- 4. Learned how to apply their Signature Themes in serving others.**
- 5. Learned how to apply their Signature Themes in leadership roles and responsibilities.**

6. Learned how to apply their Signature Themes in careers and professions.

7. Learned how to identify talents and strengths in others.

Here is our ultimate vision: Just think about what kind of a society we would have if everyone knew their Signature Themes. Think about what kind of a society we would have if everyone could apply their greatest talents productively. Think what kind of a society we would have if everyone could see the talents of other people and knew how to bring out those talents in others. Just think what kind of parents, what kind of supervisors, what kind of teachers, and what kind of political leaders we would have if everyone knew their greatest talents, knew how to develop and apply strengths, and then knew how to see and bring out the talents in others. This is what we hope will result from people completing and using the StrengthsQuest program.

V. Developing Your Strengths.

- A. Ask the students to turn to page 89 in their StrengthsQuest text. In this section there are suggestions for how to build strengths based on talents from each of the 34 themes of talent measured by StrengthsFinder.
- B. Ask the students to find their top theme and read the suggestions for developing strengths and find one or two suggestions that fits them (pp. 90 – 123).
- C. Ask two or three students to read a suggestion that fits them for developing strengths related to their top theme.

VI. College Outcomes.

- A. Distribute the “College Outcomes Worksheet.”
- B. You will need to explain the thinking behind the College Outcomes Worksheet and you may want to either make a transparency for an overhead projector or draw the diagram on the board. The basic idea (on the left-hand side, under “Input”) is that people come to college already having a group of qualities and characteristics. They already have knowledge and skills, and they also have a group of talents when they go to college. So the arrow going up to the college and the environment of college indicates when a person goes to college they go through various experiences over a four or five year period. Then on the right hand side of that box is the “Output,” and again there is the person inside of that box.

The question here is: “How do students change between the time they go to college (the Input box) and when they leave college (the Output box)?”

Of even greater importance is for students to determine what they want their college outcomes to be.

Thus, below that box there is a place to write in “Desired Immediate Outcomes of College” and there are spaces for seven entries (but the students may have even more).

The dotted lines to the right of the Output box with the two person figures are meant to depict five-year intervals. So the question is: “Five years after college and then ten years after college, what will be important to a person ten years after college?” and “What will be the desired outcomes ten years after college to an individual at that point in their life?”

- C. Focus the students’ attention on the bottom right side of the worksheet. Then ask them to think about how old they will be ten years after graduating from college. Then ask the students to identify the seven most important things that they want to see in their lives at that point in time. For some, they may want to be in a particular profession, or be living in a home, or be married, or have a family, or perhaps have a certain income. For some, being of service, making a certain contribution, doing something important, may be the desired outcome ten years after college. Now pull the students’ attention back to the “Future Planning Worksheet.” Ask the students to remind themselves about what they said they would love to do and remind themselves about what they identified as their sense of destiny.

So the question is this: “Ten years after graduating from college what would you love to be doing?” “Ten years after graduating from college what would you love to accomplish?” “Ten years after graduating from college, what aspects of your sense of destiny would you like to be fulfilling?”

- D. Challenge the students to identify at least seven desired immediate outcomes of college and to do so within the perspective of what they ultimately would like ten years after they graduate from college. Ask the students to think about their Signature Themes and the specific talents -- naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior -- within them. Then, have them think about a strength -- an ability to produce consistent, near-perfect performance in a given task -- that they want to develop. Ask the students to think about where they want to be able to apply their greatest talents; for example in leadership, in careers, in learning, in academic achievement.

VII. Homework Assignments.

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Eight.

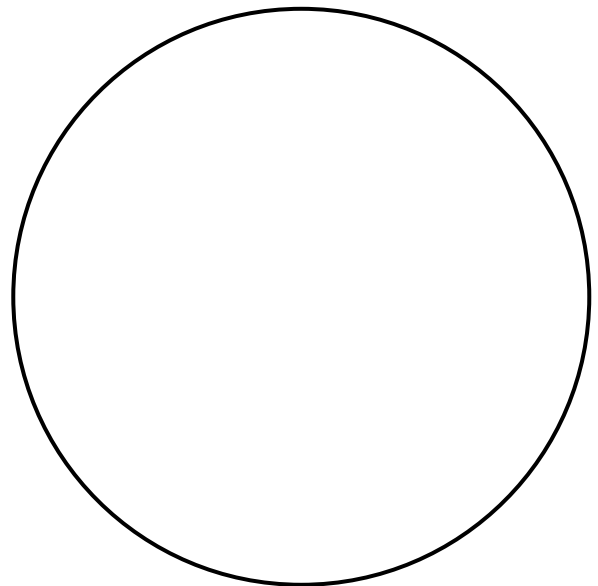
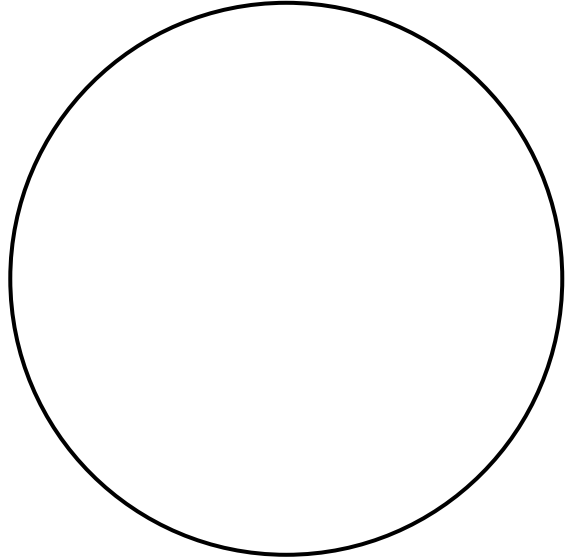
1. Read pages 81 through 87 titled “Insights on Strengths Development” in the StrengthsQuest text.
2. Read the suggestions for developing strengths built on talents from their five Signature Themes (found in pages 90 through 123), and identify at least two suggestions that they can see themselves implementing.
3. Complete the “College Outcomes Worksheet” identifying the seven desired outcomes ten years after college and the seven desired immediate outcomes of college.
4. Write a reflection paper on personal goals, desired outcomes of the college experience, and the importance of developing strengths.

B. Homework in Preparation for Session Nine.

1. Read pages 217 through 224 of the StrengthsQuest text.
2. Fill in the blanks on pages 263 and 264 of the StrengthsQuest text.
3. Read page 265 of StrengthsQuest and identify your top six values.
4. Write a reflection paper on the foregoing activities.

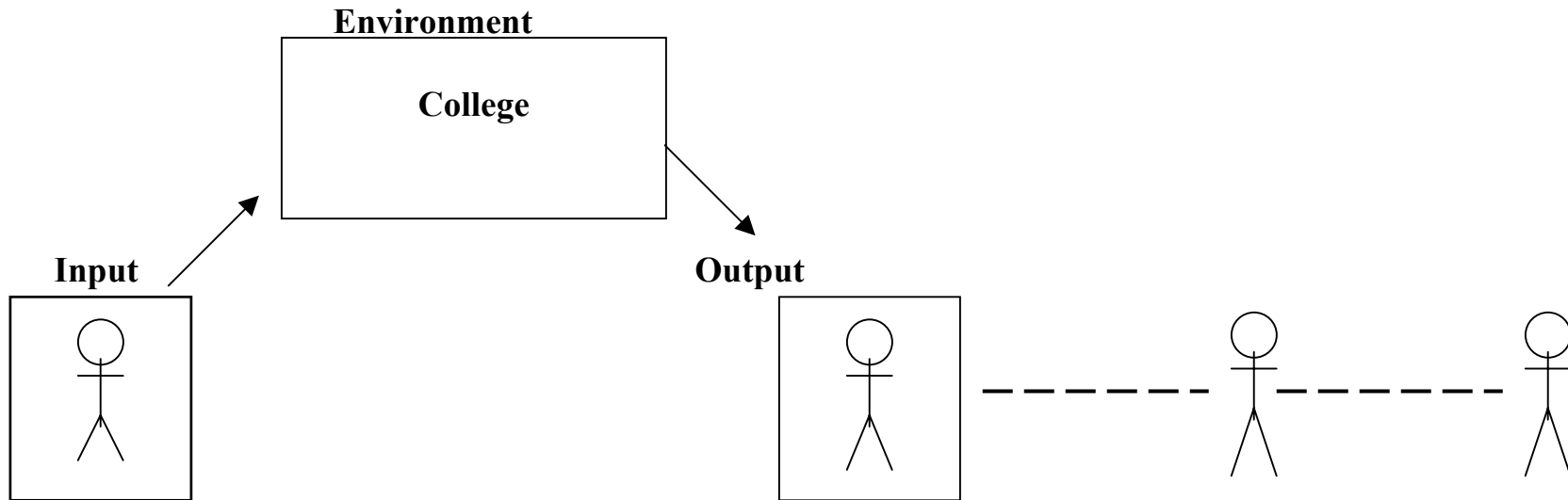
Note to Instructors: *Once again, this lesson has such sufficient material and activities that it could easily be expanded into two if not three sessions. In fact if educational planning and/or career planning are a central focus, then this session should be expanded to at least two if not three sessions. Accordingly, you will need to use your judgment in deciding how to make homework assignments. As you review the homework assignments, you will find that there are many topics for discussion and information that should provide a basis for students to do some important thinking, reflecting and planning.*

FUTURE PLANNING WORKSHEET



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College Outcomes Worksheet



Desired Immediate Outcomes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Desired Outcomes 10 Years Later

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

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Session Nine Overview

Subject: Career Planning and Preparation.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Reflection and Review.
- II. Goals for This Session.
- III. The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making.
- IV. Doing What You Do Best.
- V. Careers Consistent With Values and Beliefs.
- VI. Careers and Doing What You Do Best.
- VII. Careers and Fulfilling Your Sense of Destiny.
- VIII. Emphasizing the Importance of Strengths Development in Career Success.
- IX. Developing and Applying Strengths in College.
- X. Homework Assignments.

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Nine:

- Complete “The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making” worksheet
- Complete the “Doing What You Do Best” worksheet.
- Complete the “Developing and Applying Strengths in College” worksheet.
- Write a reflection paper explaining why it is so important in terms of career preparation to develop strengths while in college.

Homework Assignments to Prepare for Session Ten:

- Read the suggestions for applying each of your five Signature Themes in careers as found on pages 226 – 259 in the StrengthsQuest text.
- Go on-line and complete the action plans for each of your Signature Themes as found in the learning center section of the StrengthsQuest online program. Print out the results from all five action plans and bring them to class.
- Write a reflection paper on learnings from the foregoing activities.

Materials Needed:

- Bring StrengthsQuest text to class.
- Copies of the “Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making” worksheet.
- Copies of the “Doing What You Do Best” worksheet.
- Copies of the “Developing and Applying Strengths in College” worksheet.
- Bring copies of “Action Planning” printouts for all five Signature Themes.

Session Nine Instructional Outline

Subject: Career Planning and Preparation.

I. Reflection and Review.

Note to Instructor: *In this week's outline, I am making very little time for reflection and review of the homework assignment during the first part of the session. However, throughout the session, students will be asked to refer to various homework assignments given at the end of session eight. Therefore, ask the students to have their homework out and explain that we will review the homework throughout the session rather than at the first.*

The one thing that needs reflection from the very beginning is the reading assignment of pages 217 – 224 from StrengthsQuest.

A. Reflecting on StrengthsQuest pages 217 – 224.

Ask the students what they thought about this section of the text. Ask for a show of hands as you ask the following questions: “How many of you are struggling with career planning?” and, “How many of you are struggling with deciding on a career?”

Help the students to see that they are not alone. Virtually everyone struggles with these issues during and after college. Most of those who do not struggle with career decisions have simply gone along with what someone else thinks that they ought to do and ought to be, or they have given up and taken the attitude: “I’ll just see what happens.”

Have the students refer to the section on pages 220 & 221 titled, “What Makes Career Planning so Difficult?” Engage the students in a discussion about which of the things listed make career planning so difficult for them, other college students they know, family members, or so difficult for people in general. Ask if there are other things that they think makes career planning so difficult.

This discussion may be depressing and overwhelming to the students. Therefore, introduce the direction of today’s session as one that provides them with an approach to career planning that is both positive and practical.

II. Goals for This Session.

- A. To present a practical and positive approach to career planning and career decision making.
- B. To help students understand what they are doing when they are doing what they do best.

C. To give direction for developing strengths while in college.

III. The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making.

Note to the Instructor: *You may want to give a short lecture about the five most important factors in career planning and career decision making. Or you may want to distribute the worksheet with that title and then talk and walk the students through the worksheet (Personally, I prefer the second alternative). Whichever option you choose, please walk the students through the entire two-page worksheet first, and then have them begin filling out the various blanks on the worksheet.*

- A. Distribute the worksheet titled “The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making” (It is two pages).
- B. Read and take the students through the worksheet almost line by line. Make sure that you slow down and specifically read what is written below the dotted lines on the second page. Drive home the point that by virtue of this program and the work we have been doing, they will have five questions to ask themselves when they are considering a potential career both now or any time in the future. Slowly read those five questions at the bottom of the second page.
- C. Call the students’ attention back to the first page of the worksheet and start with the first factor, Roman numeral one (I). Talk about the importance of being able to use their greatest talents on a regular basis in their career. Remember that the key to success and the key to achievement are found in building and applying our strengths on a regular basis. Therefore, the question they must answer for themselves is “Which of their Signature Themes do they want to use on a regular basis in their career?” Next, ask the students to write the Signature Themes they want to regularly use in their careers on the lines under Roman numeral one (I) and to write these themes in rank order - - - listing the theme they want to use most often first.

Note to instructor: *Tell the students that you realize that this is a radical and somewhat revolutionary approach to career planning. Acknowledge that most people don’t ask themselves these types of questions. But then again, how many people in society really have successful and fulfilling careers? Yes, this approach is different. But assert that by focusing on strengths we are convinced that issues of success (including monetary success) and fulfillment will likely follow since developing and applying strengths is the key to achieving. Moreover, in the study of the best of the best, the top achievers were all alike in this most important respect: They built their lives upon their greatest talents! They capitalized on their greatest talents! They invented ways of applying their greatest talents in areas where they wanted to achieve and improve!*

IV. Doing What You Do Best.

- A. Here is a challenging, but very important question: “What are you doing when you are doing what you do best?”
- B. To help students answer the above question, please distribute the worksheet titled: “Doing What You Do Best.”
- C. Take the students through the worksheet on page 1 in the following manner:
 1. On the first page there are some statements which students can fill in. Ask the students to be spontaneous. Tell them that you will read each statement twice and then pause so that they can spontaneously write a word or two on the space provided.
 2. After reading each statement on the first page, ask the students to go back and read what they have written and add whatever notes will help them understand what they are doing when they are doing what they do best.
 3. Ask the students if they see any patterns in what they wrote about the times when they are at their best.
 4. Now ask the students to turn to page 2 and to respond to the first three questions. These questions include:
 - Which of your Signature Themes are you using when you are doing your best?
 - Which of your Signature Themes are you using when you are feeling your best or having your best experiences?
 - Which of your Signature Themes are you using when you are doing what you do best?
 5. Finally, return to the worksheet titled: “The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making.” Ask the students to write a response under Roman numeral two (II) regarding the Signature Themes that they want to use in their career in order to do what they do naturally best.

V. Careers Consistent With Values and Beliefs.

- A. Our values and beliefs give us focus and direction. When we work in roles and settings which are consistent with our values and beliefs, we become more motivated. And when our careers provide opportunities to express or advance our most deeply held values and beliefs, we become motivated to give our very best and to perform at optimal levels. This is the third of the five most important factors in career planning and career decision making.

- B. Call the students' attention to Roman numeral number three (III) (3) "The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making."
- C. As a part of their homework assignments for this session, the students were asked to complete an exercise on page 265 of the StrengthsQuest text. On that page they were asked to identify their six most important values. Our values reflect what is most important to us. Beliefs are similar to values because of their importance, but beliefs include what we think is true, most noble, and those things that are most important for us to do. Our beliefs and values are those things which we hold most dear and those things to which we are willing to give our time, our energy, and our resources. Our beliefs and values represent the judgments we make about how important different things are to us as individuals. The things that we hold most important, and thus reflect our values and beliefs, may include family, God, community, freedom, or various personal qualities such as honesty and integrity, love, compassion, education, church, extending opportunities to the poor, disenfranchised groups or individuals, etc., etc.
- D. Ask the students to write at least three values and beliefs that are very important to them on the worksheet in the space provided below Roman numeral three (III).
- E. Ask two or three students to share a couple of their most important values and beliefs, and share some of your own most important values and beliefs.
- F. Engage the students in a discussion concerning the relationships they see between careers and values and beliefs. For example, if a person greatly values having a strong love relationship with his or her spouse and having positive relationships with his or her children, how might those values impact career plans and career decisions? Similarly, what if a person had strong beliefs about God and wanted to do something with his or her life that honored God or advanced the "Kingdom of God," how might those values and beliefs impact career planning and career decision making?

VI. Careers and Doing What You Love to Do.

- A. In an earlier session, students completed a worksheet titled "Future Planning" worksheet. Through that worksheet and exercise, students were asked to identify what they would love to do. Then they were asked to find and draw connections between their five Signature Themes and what they would love to do. In career planning and career decision making, it is important for our careers to provide opportunities for us to do what we love to do either in a career or because of being in a certain career.

Ideally our careers involve roles in which we get to do what we love to do while we are working in that career. If that is not possible, the career must provide time and funds to do what we love to do when we are not working.

- B. Ask the students to write at least one of the things they would love to do either within or because of their career on the line under Roman numeral four (IV) on the second page of the worksheet titled: “The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making.”

VII. Careers and Fulfilling Your Sense of Destiny.

- A. When the students did the “Future Planning” worksheet, they were also asked to identify their sense of destiny and then see if they could see connections between their Signature Themes and that sense of destiny.
- B. Ask the students to write down at least one of the things involved in their sense of destiny or their sense of personal mission. In particular, ask the students to record those aspects of their sense of destiny or those aspects of their personal mission that they would like to pursue either in their career or because of the career they enter.

VIII. Emphasizing the Importance of Strengths Development in Being Successful in a Career.

- A. Make sure that the students have a very clear picture about the importance of strengths in career success.
- B. Make sure that the students see that **at least four** of the five most important factors in career planning and career decision-making **are directly related to talents and strengths**. These include:
 - 1. Career success depends on being able to regularly use your greatest talents and the strengths you develop (I).
 - 2. Career success depends on being able to do what you do best -- which again is directly related to your greatest talents and the strengths you develop (II).
 - 3. Career success depends on doing what you love to do -- which again directly reflects your greatest talents and the strengths you develop (IV).
 - 4. Career success depends on fulfilling your sense of destiny -- which again directly relates to and extends from your greatest talents and the strengths you develop (V).
- C. **Therefore, it is of utmost importance to career success that students follow and fully maximize their greatest talents by developing and applying strengths while they are in college.**

IX. Developing and Applying Strengths in College.

- A. In previous sessions and homework assignments we emphasized the importance of developing strengths in college. We have asked students to identify what they see as their most important outcomes of college, both immediately after graduating and ten years after graduation.
- B. Remind the students about the homework assignment after Session Eight to read the suggestions for developing each of their top five strengths (pp. 90 – 123). Also remind the students about what they read on pages 81 – 87 concerning the process of developing strengths.
- C. The most important principle about developing strengths is the simplest:
Your greatest talents become more effective when you use them!
- D. Because strengths are developed when you refine your greatest talents with skills and knowledge, and because strengths are so important in career planning and preparation, it is essential to fully use the college experience to develop strengths both to prepare for careers and in order to achieve in college!
- E. Introducing the “Developing and Applying Strengths in College” worksheet.

This worksheet provides an opportunity to write each of the students’ Signature Themes in the rectangles at the top. Down the left hand side are nine dimensions of the college experience. The challenge is to identify where and how students plan to apply their Signature Themes and develop strengths. The beauty is that as they apply their Signature Themes in various aspects of their college experience, they will also be developing strengths. And as they develop strengths in college, they will be preparing themselves for their careers.

Help the students to see and understand that while there are very few college majors that directly connect to specific careers, this does not mean that a college education is irrelevant to career preparation. Quite the opposite! **A college education provides excellent career preparation when we realize that the most important outcome of college is the full development of a student intellectually and personally! And clearly, developing strengths is at the center of both their intellectual and their personal development!**

Note to Instructor: Challenge the students to fill in as many rectangles as possible on the worksheet titled “Developing and Applying Strengths in College.” As the students fill in this worksheet, encourage them to be very specific and to identify organizations/activities that they either are engaged in at present or are planning to undertake in order to increase their achievements or to develop strengths related to each of their Signature Themes. The goal is to have at least three areas where talents

from each of their Signature Themes are being applied and/or developed within the college experience. Emphasize to the students that as they apply their Signature Themes within these dimensions of the college experience, two things will result. Number one, it will increase the likelihood that they will achieve to higher and higher levels during college. Number two, they will be developing strengths and that will prepare them for their future careers and professions.

X. Homework Assignments.

A. Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Nine.

1. Complete the worksheet titled: “The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making.”
2. Complete the worksheet titled: “Doing What You Do Best.”
3. Complete the worksheet titled: “Developing and Applying Strengths and College” by having at least three specific actions under each of the five Signature Themes for developing strengths related to them.
4. Write a reflection paper on possible careers in which they could use talents from their various Signature Themes.

B. Homework Assignments in Preparation for Session Ten.

1. Read the suggestions for applying strengths to careers on pp. 226 – 259 for each of their five Signature Themes.
2. Go to the StrengthsQuest online site and enter the StrengthsQuest Learning Center. Complete and print the action plan for each of their five Signature Themes. Ask the students to bring the print-outs of their action plans on their Signature Themes to the next class session.
3. Write a reflection paper on the career patterns that emerge from their Signature Themes.

Note to Instructor: *Once again, this session can easily be expanded to at least two 2-hour meetings. Please feel free to pick and choose from the exercises and activities, and use the ones that are best suited to your purposes.*

The Five Most Important Factors In Career Planning and Career Decision Making

I. Opportunities to Regularly Use Your Signature Themes in Your Career

Since the key to achieving to levels of excellence comes from maximizing our greatest talents, it is important that we have opportunities to use our Signature Themes within our careers.

- **Therefore, I want to regularly use the following themes in my career:**

II. Opportunities to Do What You Do Best On a Regular Basis In Your Career.

Doing what we do best brings a sense of fulfillment, joy and satisfaction. What we do best is a reflection of our greatest talents, and the knowledge and skills we add to build strengths.

- **Therefore, I want to do what I do best on a regular basis by applying my greatest talents in the following types of activities:**

III. Opportunities to Work in a Career that is Consistent with Your Values and Beliefs.

When we work in roles and settings that are consistent with our most deeply held values and beliefs or provide opportunities to advance them, we are more motivated to succeed.

- **Therefore, I want to be in a career or profession that is consistent with and is a reflection of the following values and beliefs:**

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IV. Opportunities to Work in a Career and Do What You Love to Do.

When we do what we love to do, we come alive and are more energized to achieve. A career or profession needs to provide opportunities for individuals to do what they love to do either within or because of their career or profession.

- **Therefore, either in my career or because of my career, I want to do the following things that I love to do:**

V. Opportunities to Work in a Career and Fulfill Your Sense of Destiny and Mission.

When we are fulfilling our sense of personal destiny and mission, we move beyond the need for external motivators and are empowered to overcome hardships and negative influences. Individuals who are in careers and professions tied to their sense of destiny and mission are unstoppable.

- **Therefore, it is essential that I be in a career or profession that provides opportunities for me to fulfill the following aspects of my sense of destiny and mission:**

Please note how many times and in how many ways your five strengths and talents are related to the foregoing factors in career planning and career decision making.

You now have five questions **to ask yourself when you are considering potential careers:**

1. Will I be able to use my greatest talents on a regular basis in this career?
2. Will I be able to build strengths in this career?
3. Is this career consistent with my deepest values and beliefs?
4. Will I have an opportunity to do what I love to do in this career or because of this career?
5. Will I have an opportunity to fulfill my sense of destiny and my sense of personal mission because of this career?

**If you can't answer "Yes!" to each of the foregoing questions, you have to ask yourself:
"What business do I have even considering this career?"**

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Doing What You Do Best!

Directions: Please do this worksheet spontaneously. Read each item and quickly write the first thing that comes to your mind. If the same answer comes to mind more than once, that's fine, write it down.

- I feel best when _____
- When I'm at my best, I feel _____
- The time when I was at my best was _____
- The best thing about me is _____
- The time I did my best was _____
- I'm being my best when _____
- The best time in my life was _____
- I earn my best grades when I _____
- The best job I've ever had was _____
- The best thing I've ever done was _____
- The thing I do best is _____
- I'm doing what I do best when I'm _____

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Your Signature Themes and Being at Your Best

Directions: Please go back and read your responses to what being at your best means to you. As you read what you have written, see if you can detect how your Signature Themes relate to when you are at your best. Determine what themes are at work when you are doing what you do best.

Now, please respond to the following questions based upon reading your responses.

- A. Which of your Signature Themes are you using when you are doing your best?

- B. Which of your Signature Themes are you using when you are feeling your best or having your best experiences?

- C. Which of your Signature Themes are you using when you are doing what you do best?

- D. Exactly how are you using your Signature Themes when you do what you do best?

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Developing and Applying Strengths in College

Dimensions of the College Experience	1 st Signature Theme	2 nd Signature Theme	3 rd Signature Theme	4 th Signature Theme	5 th Signature Theme
Course Selection					
Classroom & Professor Inter-actions					
Learning & Studying					
Extra-Curricular Involvements					
Employment & Logistical Responsibilities					
Social/Interpersonal Love Relationships					
Family Relations & Responsibilities					
Values-Driven Commitments					
Career Planning & Preparation					

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Session Ten Overview

Subject: Applying Talents and Strengths in Careers and Beyond.

Topics and Sequence of Instruction:

- I. Reflection and Review.
- II. Goals for this Session.
- III. Integrating the “Five Most Critical Factors in Career Planning and Decision Making” With the College Experience.
- IV. How to Develop and Apply Strengths Related to Each Theme for Career Success While Still in College.
- V. Applying Strengths Beyond College and Careers.
- VI. Building Your Life Upon Your Greatest Talents.
- VII. A Revolutionary Perspective on College Student Achievement and Success.

Homework Assignments to Reinforce Session Ten:

- Complete the “Developing and Applying Talents and Strengths in College” worksheet.
- Complete the “Building Your Life Upon Your Greatest Talents” worksheet.
- Reflect on the “A Revolutionary Perspective on College Student Achievement and Success” statement.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the StrengthsQuest text.
- Copies of the “Developing and Applying Strengths and Talents in College” worksheet.
- “Action-Planning” printouts for all five strengths.
- Copies of “Building Your Life Around Your Strongest and Most Predominant Strengths” worksheet.
- Copies of “A Revolutionary Perspective on College Student Achievement and Success” statement.

Session Ten Instructional Outline

Subject: Applying Talents and Strengths in Careers and Beyond.

I. Reflection and Review.

- A. Reflecting on the five most important factors in career planning and career decision making.

Ask the students to get out a clean sheet of paper and the worksheet they completed titled “The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making.”

Ask the students to review “The Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making” worksheet and respond to the following questions on the clean sheet of paper.

1. What patterns do you see as most important to you in career planning and career decision making?
2. If you were to build your career around one or two of your Signature Themes, which themes would they be?

After the students have had a short time to write notes to themselves, ask them to share which of their Signature Themes they want to build their careers around and why.

Note to Instructor: *This will be an excellent time to affirm students in terms of the themes they want to build their careers upon and an excellent time for you to affirm the students’ Signature Themes based upon your observation of them in the class, through their homework assignments and in other interactions outside of class with yourself or others in the class. Also take this opportunity to reinforce various principles of a strengths-based approach to learning and achievement such as: the best of the best build their lives around their greatest talents, the best of the best invent ways of applying those talents in areas where they want to improve, excellence results from maximizing your greatest talents by developing and applying strengths, etc.*

- B. Reflecting on applying strengths to careers.

On pages 226-259 and in the StrengthsQuest online action planning program, students have the opportunity to identify potential career

implications for each of their Signature Themes. Ask the students to identify patterns that they see among their Signature Themes. For example, do the career suggestions seem to emphasize “people-oriented” careers, “tasks-oriented” careers, etc.? Once again, ask if these suggestions from the text and online program reflect career directions they are considering. Also, ask the students to share their thinking about the career suggestions.

II. Goals for this Session.

- A. To help students see connections between the college experience and the “Five Most Important Factors in Career Planning and Career Decision Making.”
- B. To help students identify specific ways they can develop strengths related to their Signature Themes in college as a means of preparing for career success.
- C. To help students gain a vision of how to apply their Signature Themes beyond college and even beyond careers.
- D. To encourage the students to build their lives around their greatest talents.

III. Connecting the College Experience to Career Planning and Career Decision Making.

Based upon the earlier discussion regarding which of their Signature Themes will be most critical in their careers, ask the students to identify when and how they are currently applying their Signature Themes in college. More specifically, ask the students to get out the worksheet they did for homework titled “Developing and Applying Talents and Strengths in College.” Then ask the students to go down the column under the Signature Themes they plan to build their career around and tell the group how they are using those themes.

IV. Specific Ways of Developing Strengths for Career Success While in College.

Distribute clean copies of the worksheet titled “Developing and Applying Talents and Strengths in College.” Ask the students to write their five Signature Themes in the rectangles across the top and to circle the one or two themes around which they plan to build their career success. Then ask the students to identify at least five aspects of the college experience they plan to use in developing strengths related to those themes.

Ask the students to get together in small groups based upon career interests and then ask the students to share with each other the Signature Themes they will be building their careers upon. Next, ask the students to share with one another how they plan to use the various aspects of the college experience to develop strengths related to those themes. Encourage students to learn from one another and to encourage each other in using the college experience to maximize their Signature Themes for career success.

Ask two or three groups to share how they are planning to develop strengths for career success through various aspects of the college experience.

V. Applying Your Signature Themes Beyond College.

The sub-title of the StrengthsQuest book says, “Discover and Develop Your Strengths in Academics, Career, and Beyond.” Now it’s time to talk about what we mean when we say “beyond.” **Our vision is that people will develop a lifestyle of strengths-based living!**

A lifestyle of strengths-base living begins with how we see ourselves and see other people. **Strengths-based “seeing” is an intentional effort to look at ourselves and to look at other people in order to see what is really there in terms of talents that can be used for productive ends.**

When we began seeing ourselves and other people in terms of talents, our vision moves beyond academics and careers to strengths-based leadership. Our vision moves beyond academics and careers to imagine strengths-based loving relationships. Our vision moves beyond academics and careers to see strengths-based serving and ministering. And when we see ourselves and others in terms of the talents that are within us, we gain a glimpse of what it would be like to have a “vocation” and sense of destiny based upon the full utilization and application of talents.

I have plans for writing more curriculum outlines and have already begun writing on topics such as developing strengths-based leadership, developing strengths-based loving relationships, strengths-based serving, strengths-based ministering, and a strengths-based approach to vocation and one’s sense of destiny. When completed, these outlines will be available on the StrengthsQuest Web site.

For now, let me simply say that each and every one of your greatest talents and those of your students can be applied in leading, loving, relating, serving, ministry, and vocation. And from my vantage point, fully maximizing those talents is fundamental to fulfilling your sense of destiny.

VI. Where Do We Go From Here?

The answer to the question of “Where do we go from here?” is simple and direct: Number one, build your life around your greatest talents! And second, adopt a revolutionary perspective on achieving and succeeding in college.

Regarding these two assertions, I have two attachments. First, please find a worksheet titled, “Building Your Life Around Your Greatest Talents.” Please urge your students to not only fill out this worksheet but to keep it close to them so they will see it often. Encourage them to keep going back to it over and over again. The key to success and fulfillment is found within a person’s greatest talents.

The second attachment is also something for the students to frequently read and reflect upon. It is titled, “A Revolutionary Perspective on College Student Achievement and Success.” This statement is a type of summary of everything contained in this course of study. I hope your students will reflect on it often because it will help them remain focused so that they will gain maximum benefits from their college experience and hopefully become the persons they have the potential to be.

Building Your Life Around Your Greatest Talents

Directions: Slowly read the description of your strongest and most dominant theme of talent. Your Signature Themes are a clue to your top theme, but you will also recognize your most dominant theme because your talents in it are so automatic, bring so much joy and energy, and are fundamental to your greatest successes and your most fulfilling experiences.

As you read the description of your most dominant theme, underline or highlight each word or phrase that reminds you of yourself.

After reading and reflecting upon the description of your top theme, please respond to the following questions about how you currently use your talents in that theme and how you could do so in the future.

- My most dominant theme of talent is: _____
- 1. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in building and maintaining relationships?
- 2. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in preventing and solving problems?
- 3. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in getting things done more efficiently?
- 4. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in overcoming discouragements and building confidence?
- 5. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in gaining a sense of direction and forming goals?

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6. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in learning?
7. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in achieving and performing to levels of excellence?
8. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in providing leadership and/or performing leadership functions?
9. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in helping and serving others?
10. How do you and how could you use your talents in this theme in fulfilling your vocation, sense of destiny and/or fulfill God's "call" on your life.

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A Revolutionary Perspective On College Student Achievement and Success

- 1. Each and every entering student already has all of the talents needed to achieve and persist in college.**
- 2. Each entering student has a unique set of talents that can enable and empower him/her to do certain things very well in college and beyond.**
- 3. The key to achieving is within a person's talents; achieving to levels of excellence requires development and application of strengths.**
- 4. Most students do not know what their greatest talents are; even fewer know how to develop or apply strengths.**
- 5. The most important steps in students becoming successful include:**
 - a. Students identifying their greatest talents.**
 - b. Students developing strengths based upon those talents.**
 - c. Students applying strengths in academic learning and achievement tasks.**
- 6. The future achievements and quality of life of students will in large measure be determined by the extent to which they discover their greatest talents, and develop and apply strengths in college.**
- 7. Therefore, the most critically important job for students is to discover their greatest talents, then develop and apply strengths in the many courses, programs, services, and opportunities available through a college education.**

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