



Strengths Academy

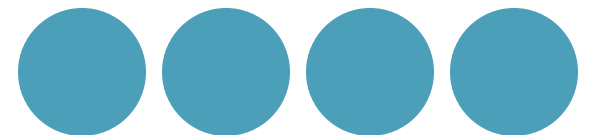
# Best Practices for Developing a Strengths Approach to Student Development

Azusa Pacific University



# Session Overview

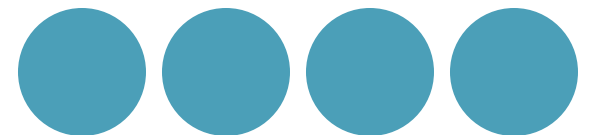
- Strengths Overview
- 10 Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming
  - University examples
  - Created by advice from current users
- Your Questions





# Strengths-Based Education: A Paradigm Shift

- “Survival of the fittest”
- “Deficit remediation”
- “Strengths-based education”

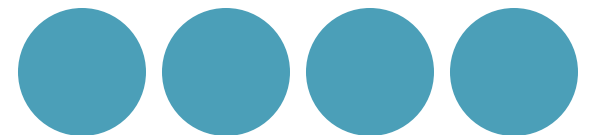




# Strengths Philosophy

“Individuals gain more when they build on their talents, than when they make comparable efforts to improve their areas of weakness.”

--Clifton & Harter, 2003, p. 112

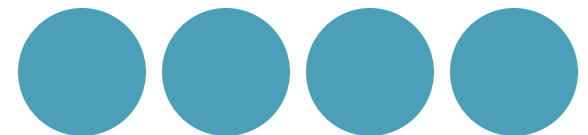




## What Are Strengths?

- Talent + Knowledge + Skill = **Strength**
- Talents are naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied
- By refining our dominant talents with skill and knowledge, we can create strength: the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity.

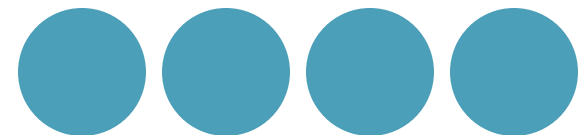
--Clifton & Harter, 2003





# The Highest Achievers

- Spend most of their time in their areas of strength
- Have learned to delegate or partner with someone to tackle areas that are not strengths
- Use their strengths to overcome obstacles
- Invent ways of capitalizing on their strengths in new situations





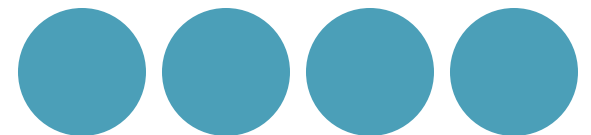
## The Focus Changes

### **FROM:**

Problems  
Attendance  
Preparation  
Putting into the  
student  
Average

### **TO:**

Possibilities  
Engagement  
Motivation  
Drawing out  
from  
the student  
Excellence

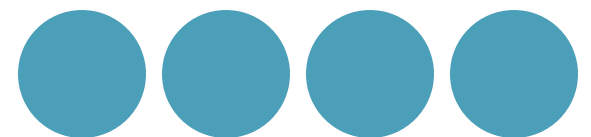




# How Do We Identify Strengths?

## One way: StrengthsFinder – Gallup’s Tool

- StrengthsFinder was created by Gallup through a systematic study of excellence.
- 34 themes describing the most prevalent talents of individuals in an expansive range of fields and professions emerged from two million interviews.
- Web-based tool that takes approximately 30 - 45 minutes to complete and generates a report listing the top five strengths.







# Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

## Principle #1: Begin with the end in mind

- Have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish
- Establish outcomes that are of importance to your university, division and/or department
  - Lee & Baylor University – tied to their initiatives to help students discover a sense of calling funded by the Lilly foundation





# Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

## Principle #1: Begin with the end in mind

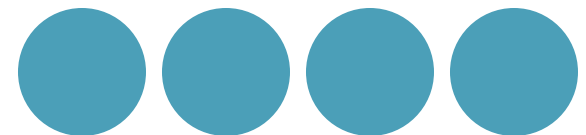
- Have an assessment plan in place before you begin your program

- SMU

- APU



- Noel Academy has a few small grants that we can award to help you move your assessment forward

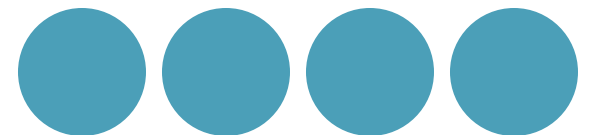




## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

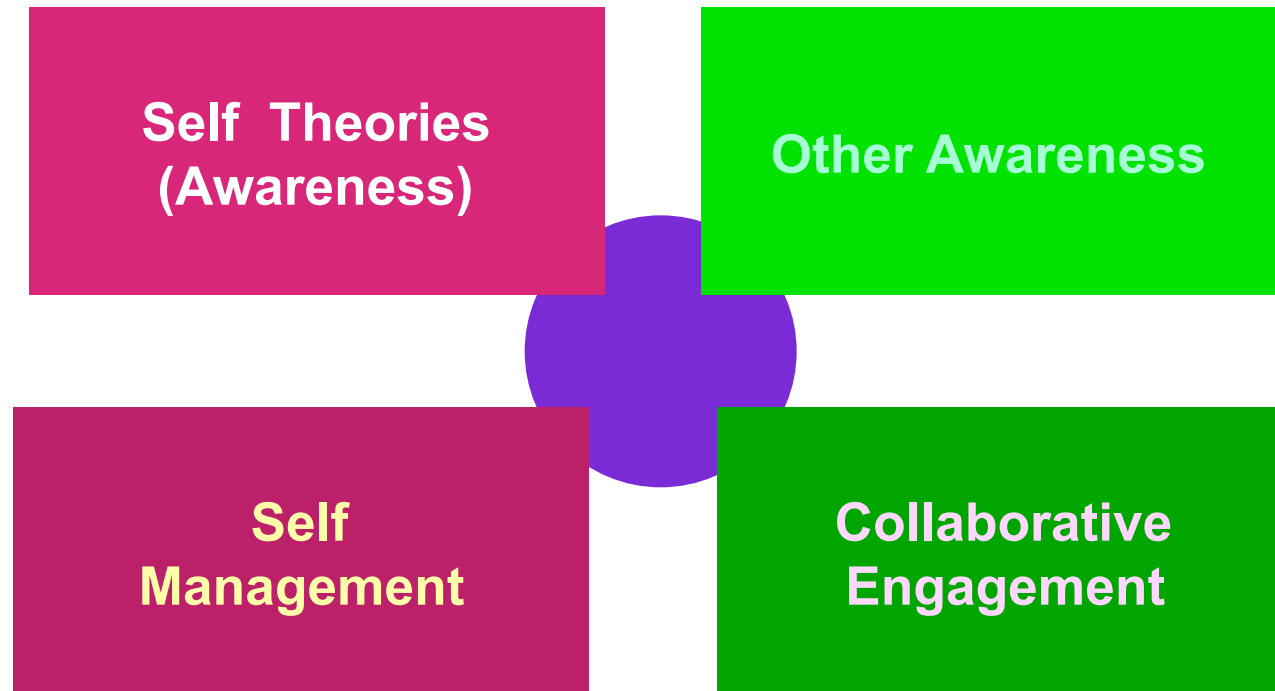
### Principle #2: Design a program that utilizes a developmental path

- One hit wonders don't appear to have the same developmental affect as programs that have multiple "touches."
- Important to move students through a process of strengths development because their natural developmental processes greatly affect their utilization of strengths.
- Many schools are saying: "I gave them StrengthsQuest, now what?"



■

# Noel Academy for Strengths-Based Leadership and Educations' Strengths Development Model



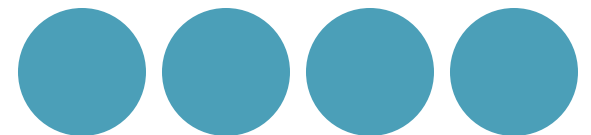


## Self Theory Is the Theory of Attention

“Individuals choose what they will attend to, ignoring all other stimuli in order to focus on one conversation, one string of printed characters, or ... one breath in and one breath out.”

(Schwartz, 2002, p. 17)

William James argues that the ability to fix one’s attention on a stimulus or a thought and “hold it fast before the mind” was the act that constituted “the essential achievement of the will.”

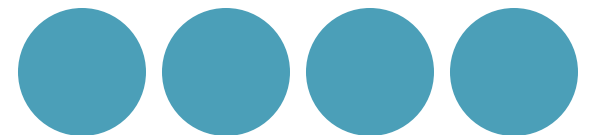




# Self Theory Is the Theory of Attention

What we focus on changes the biological structure of our brains and creates a biological self-fulfilling prophecy.

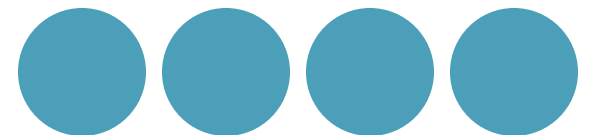
- “I propose that the time has come for science to confront the serious implications of the fact that directed, willed mental activity can clearly and systematically alter brain function, that *the exertion of willful effort generates a physical force that has the power to change how the brain works and even its physical structure.*” Schwartz, 2002, pp 17-18





# Self-Theory

- Our students have a theory about intelligence that shapes their motivation and academic behavior
- Mindsets
  - Developed by Carol Dweck, Professor, Stanford University
  - Two varying views of intelligence: Growth or Fixed
    - Fixed – inherent and needs to be demonstrated
    - Growth – something that can be developed
- Teach Strengths through a growth mindset
  - Talent + Knowledge + Skill = **Strength**





## Other Awareness

- What we focus on in others affects how we interact with them.
  - John Gottman's work on successful marriages
- We sort people according to our mental categories. Our categories create our stereotypes of people and influence our judgments of those people.
- Strengths may increase a person's ability to take another's perspective.

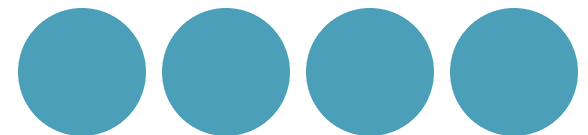


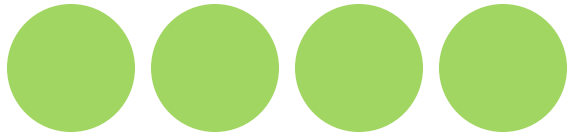




## Other Awareness

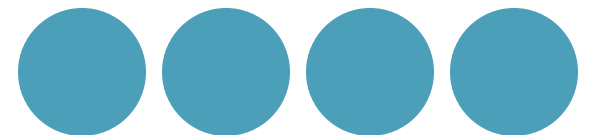
- We often ascribe motives out of our lens and values.
- Our strengths shape our values.
  - “Responsibility” people tend to feel that people who are late to meetings are disrespectful of others’ time.
  - “Achievers” may tend to feel that people who don’t work as hard as they do are not as committed or lazy.





# Self Management

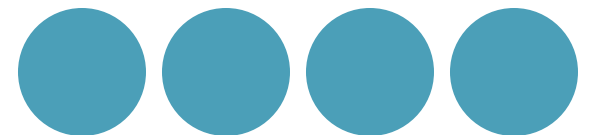
- There is a difference between our weaknesses and the shadow side of our strengths.
- Managing our weaknesses includes:
  - Using our strengths to develop new approaches
  - Partnering with others
  - Delegating to others
  - Learning the skills and/or knowledge needed.
- Addressing the shadow side includes:
  - Recognition when our strengths are hindering excellence
  - Developing techniques to utilize our strengths in positive ways





# Collaborative Engagement

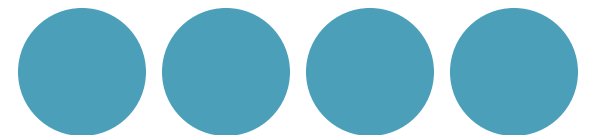
- Team Dynamics
  - Change
  - Communication
  - Trust





## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

- **Principle #3: Begin with developing buy-in by providing excellent, on-going training for faculty and staff**

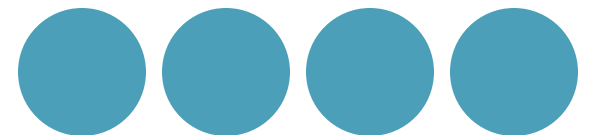




# Staff Development

## The University of Missouri – Columbia

- Faculty members complete the assessment and discuss their results with colleagues
- The University of Missouri faculty members will present strengths information at the Wakonse Conference on College Teaching in May
- Eventually, the University of Missouri faculty members will be encouraged to develop strengths programs for students in their departments



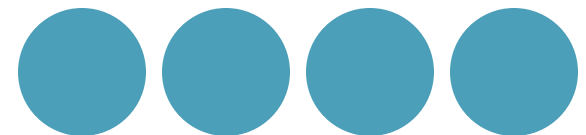


# Staff Development

## Texas A&M University

Staff members who work closely with students are trained by “strengths facilitators”

The facilitator leads a 2-hour session with the group of staff members





# Staff Development

## Texas Christian University

- Campus units utilizing Strengths for their respective staffs:

- Greek Life
- Division of Student Affairs
- Inclusiveness & Intercultural Services
  - Campus Recreation
  - Career Services
  - Residential Services
  - Academic Services

*Identified by TCU staff as one of the most successful components of their strengths programming!*





## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

**Principle #4: Utilize student leaders to  
create a tipping point**





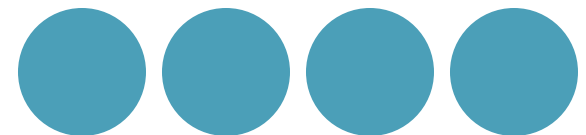


Baylor University

# Leadership Initiatives

## BaylorBound Leaders

- Twelve students selected to serve during Orientation, Baylor Line Camp, and Welcome Week
- These students receive stipend, plus room and board for the summer (Requirement to live together in campus housing)
- Strengths affirmed through working together
- Strengths explained in mediating conflict in community living
- Strengths emphasized throughout leader learning experience
  - Staff trains BaylorBound Leaders (Orientation)
  - BaylorBound Leaders lead new students (Baylor Line Camp)
  - BaylorBound Leaders train upperclass students to lead new students (Welcome Week)





# Leadership Initiatives

## Pepperdine University

- RA Training – RAs take the assessment and spend time talking with their fellow staff members about their results
- Leadership Training Day – All student leaders spend time discussing their results from the assessment

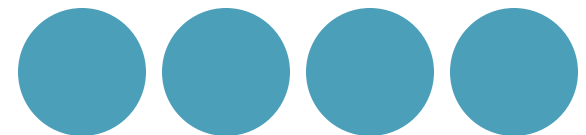




# Leadership Initiatives

## Texas Christian University

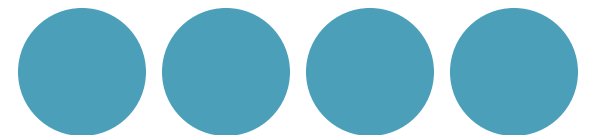
- Chancellor's Leadership Program (CLP)
  - *Strengths programming initiated with this program in Fall 2003*
- Leadership classes:
  - Foundations of Leadership
  - CLP Seminar
  - CLP Seminar II – Ethics Forum
  - CLP Seminar II – Responsible Citizenship in Action
    - Inward Bound
    - Community Action
    - Ethical Leadership in Practice
    - Global Leadership
    - Women who Lead





## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

- **Principle # 5: Plan for individual  
conversations**

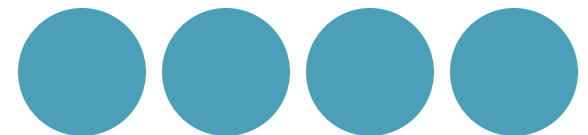




# Advising and Counseling



- Recipient of the Lilly Vocations Grant in 2003
- Strengths Vocational Advising and Career Counseling
  - Faculty volunteers serve as Strengths Vocational Advisors, conducting individual strengths talks for students who request those through the Center for Calling and Career
- Strengths Advising Template in packet



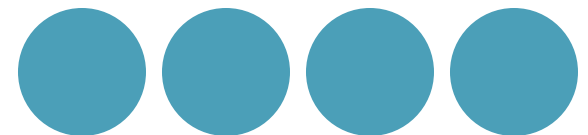


# Advising and Counseling

## Texas Christian University



- Individual coaching is available to any student/staff member on campus by Strengths-trained coaches
- *Identified by TCU staff as one of the most successful components of their strengths programming!*

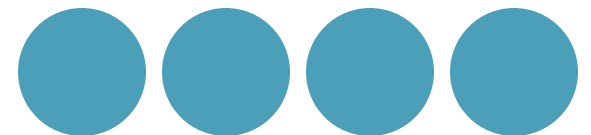




# Advising and Counseling

## Azusa Pacific University

- Strengths Coaches Program
  - Each first year student is provided a 45 minute to 1 hour conversation regarding his/her strengths during their first semester





## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

- **Principle # 6: Integrate into existing program and courses**



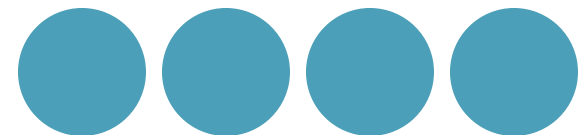


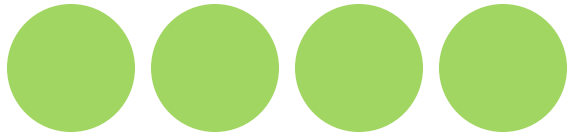


# First Year Programs

## Pepperdine University

- Uses StrengthsFinder in the First Year Experience Course
- Students take the assessment and spend six weeks discussing their results with their classmates and professor
- Students report that they learn a lot about themselves and their life's calling

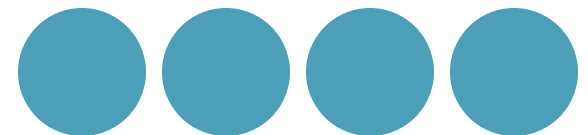




# First Year Programs

University of Nebraska, University of Texas – Austin,  
Texas A&M

- Every freshman in the College of Business is required to take a course in Business Leadership Development. As a part of the class, the students are introduced to the StrengthsFinder assessment
- The students spend time discussing their strengths in class and complete reflection assignments related to their strengths
- Students learn about the strengths of others and have an opportunity to connect with students who have similar strengths
- Students engage in discussions about how their strengths can impact their major, their courses, and their future careers





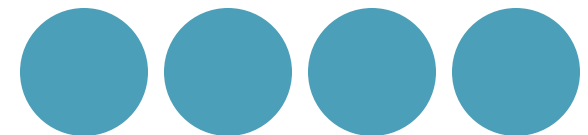
# First Year Programs

Southern Methodist University



## Mustang Corral

- Three day, two night off campus retreat for new students
- Approx 700 students attend out of first year class of 1350
- Students are sent codes to take StrengthsFinder before retreat
- Overview of 34 strengths given at SMU campus before leaving for retreat site
- Student strengths listed on nametags and incorporated into reflection questions and small group discussion
- Students who attended Mustang Corral in 2006 were given pre-test to calculate academic self-efficacy and hope; post-test portion to be administered this semester





# Teaching and Learning

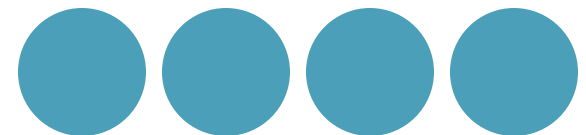
## Texas Christian University

- Strengths codes provided to students in academic courses:

- Foundations in Business – BUSI 20173
- Applied Sociology – SOCI 30213
- Psychology
- Center for Academic Services classes
  - UNPR 10001
- Survey of Professional Nursing
  - NURS 10043



*Identified by TCU staff as one of the most successful components of their strengths programming!*





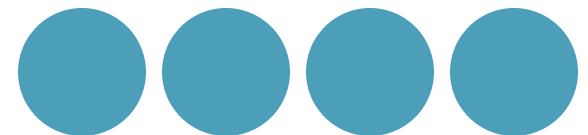
# Teaching and Learning

## Texas A&M

- Various professors have integrated the StrengthsFinder into their curriculum

## Texas Tech

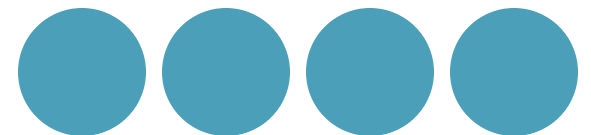
- Professors contact strengths coordinator to provide training in their classes





# Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

## Principle # 7: Go with the energy

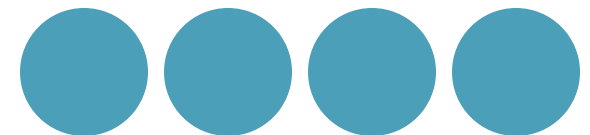




# Go With The Energy

## Texas A&M University

- Any faculty, staff, or student can request a group training session with a “Strengths Facilitator”
- The trained facilitator spends at least two hours working with the group to explore individual strengths and the ways they manifest themselves in different people
- The facilitator also schedules follow-up training sessions if necessary





# Go With The Energy

## Texas Christian University

Provide custom designed strengths consulting/  
coaching for:

- Student Organizations
  - Leadership Council
  - Program Council
  - Student Organization Training
  - Frog House (Habitat for Humanity)
  - Student Government Association
  - La Universidad de las Americas  
(sister institution in Puebla, Mexico)
- Resident Assistant training



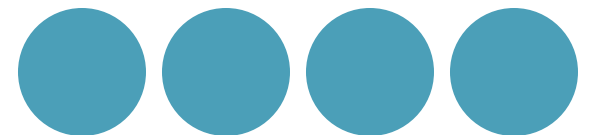


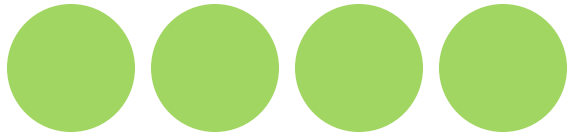


# Go With The Energy

## Texas Christian University

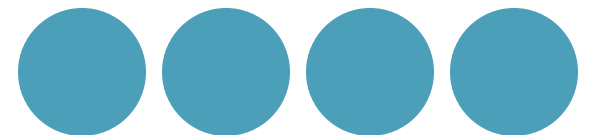
- Provide custom designed strengths consulting/ coaching for community entities including:
  - City of Fort Worth Youth Advisory Board
  - Conference Planning Meeting (Municipal League)
  - Boys and Girls Club
  - Junior League
  - Directors of Volunteers in local service agencies
  - University Christian Church
  - Fort Worth's Office of Community Relations
- *Identified by TCU staff as one of the most successful components of their Strengths programming!*





## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

- **Principle # 8: Use a variety of delivery systems**

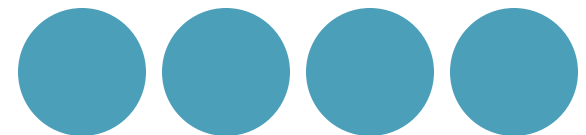




# Diverse Delivery Systems

## Baylor University

- Strengths emails sent to students before final exams
- Interest session at Orientation
  - You and Your Strengths: Discovering Your Divine Design
  - How to maximize strengths in and out of the classroom
- Student Life Advising
- Peer Mentoring
- Photojournalism Project
- Calling and Strengths Website [www.baylor.edu/strengths](http://www.baylor.edu/strengths)
  - Tips for... Getting a Better Grade, Living with Your Roommate, Spiritual Growth
  - Strengths Dictionary
  - Strengths Directory



# Become



▶ A Person of Strength



▶ A Person of Influence



▶ A Person To Impact The World



watch movie  
calling & strengths

A journey that shapes the heart and soul...

[GET A BETTER GRADE](#)



[GET TO KNOW PEOPLE](#)



[GROW SPIRITUALLY](#)



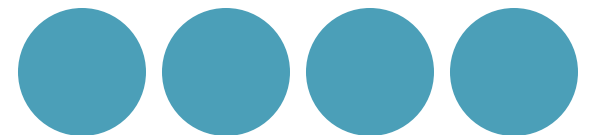
[GET ALONG WITH MY ROOMMATE](#)





## Diverse Delivery Systems

- Texas Tech's web site highlights the strengths of their staff.
- [http://www.depts.ttu.edu/strengthsquest/SQ\\_DirectorsPage1.html](http://www.depts.ttu.edu/strengthsquest/SQ_DirectorsPage1.html)





## Michael Shonrock, Ph. D - *Vice President for Student Affairs*



What strengths describe you best?

**Strategic** — creates alternative ways to proceed.

**Achiever** — a great deal of stamina.

**Arranger** — figures out how pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.

**Activator** — makes things happen.

**Responsibility** — seeks psychological ownership.

**Focus** — stays on tract and prioritize.

What's one piece of advice you would share with students and their strengths?

There are 60 minutes in each hour, 24 hours in each day, 7 days in each week, and 52 weeks in each year—time is your most precious gift and, as such, a gift to you is believing, focusing, and allocating your time on your strengths.

How do your strengths benefit you as a Director at Texas Tech?

While “impatient” as an activator, I turn thoughts into action daily, gain great satisfaction from being productive as an achiever, and faced with any given scenario as a strategic can quickly spot relevant patterns and issues.

Additional comments regarding strengths?

Don't just complete the online StrengthsFinder Program—go the next step to understand and appreciate your strengths and the diversity of strengths around you and make your strengths work for you.

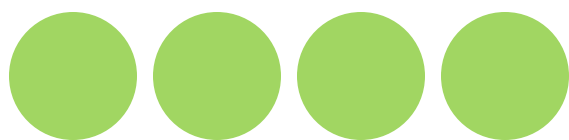
## Jim Burkhalter, Ed. D - *Associate Vice President for Student Affairs*



What strengths describe you best?

**Context • Input • Learner • Strategic • Maximizer**

What's one piece of advice you would share with students and their strengths?



## Training Ideas!

- Strengths Picture Scavenger Hunt





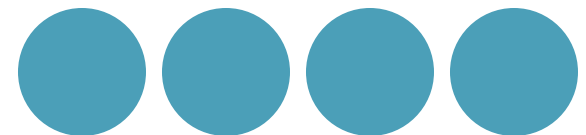


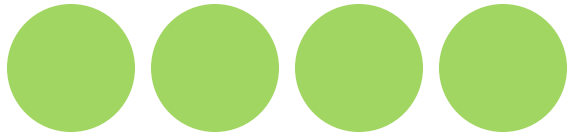


## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

### Principle #9: Establish steering committees

- Ivy Tech Community College Strengths Steering Committee
  - Cross-divisional

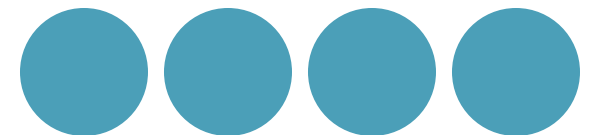




## Principles for Achieving Excellence in Strengths Programming

### Principle #10: Keep the executive level of the division/institution informed

- Executive Training
  - Connect with what they care about
  - Bring data
  - Learn their strengths before approaching them



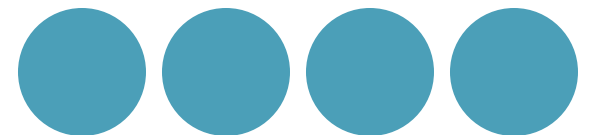


# Noel Strengths Academy

We provide:

- Training
- Resources/Interventions
- Assessment/Research
- Dissemination

[www.apu.edu/strengthsacademy](http://www.apu.edu/strengthsacademy)



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