STRENGTHS AT THE U: CREATING A STRENGTHS-BASED UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

STRENGTHS INITIATIVE FRAMEWORK

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

Strengths Integration Strategies

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Academic and Personal Growth

In addition to these strategies, colleges and units are encouraged to integrate a Strengths-based approach into their own programs, learning experiences and curricula.

INCREASED:
- Student Outcomes
- Career Fit
- Well-being

*Capstone: a final project, culmination of experiences and resources, reflection, or other experience that relates to preparing to transition from undergraduate student to graduated student.
GOALS FOR THE STRENGTHS INITIATIVE

**Pre-Arrival**
*At the start of the first year, students will...*
- Be familiar with the U of M strengths initiative and why we are doing it.
- Understand how they will take the assessment and how to access their reports.
- Have taken the assessment and be able to recall one or two of their Talent Themes.
- Be introduced to StrengthsFinder® and have a basic understanding of a Strengths-approach.

**1st Year**
*At the end of the first year, students will...*
- Be able to recall all of their five Talent Themes.
- Be able to articulate their Talent Themes in their own words.
- Have engaged in and initiated discussions about their own Talent Themes with others and learned about different types of Talent Themes.
- Understand ways in which their Talent Themes can apply to their student experience.

**2nd Year**
*At the end of the second year, students will...*
- Understand the difference between Talent Themes and Strengths.
- Use their Strengths to contribute to their academic success including group work, studying, time management, etc.
- Be able to apply their Strengths to their engagement experiences.
- Understand how their Strengths relate to their career and major exploration and decisions.
- Be aware of what happens when their Strengths aren’t lived in healthy ways (aka, shadow side, barrier labels).

**3rd Year**
*At the end of the third year, students will...*
- Continue to integrate Strengths into their engagement opportunities.
- Integrate their Strengths into the career and post-graduation planning process.
- Utilize Strengths as they reflect upon their overall learning and development in relation to the Student Learning Outcomes and Student Development Outcomes.

**4th Year**
*At the end of the fourth year, students will...*
- Utilize Strengths as they reflect upon their overall learning and development in relation to the Student Learning Outcomes and Student Development Outcomes.
- Be able to apply and articulate Strengths to the post-graduation implementation process (interviews, applications, etc.)

**Post-Graduation**
*After graduation, alumni will...*
- Have advanced in their demonstration of the Student Learning and Development Outcomes.
- Experience greater well-being due to living in their Strengths.
- Experience greater post-graduation satisfaction by doing what they do best every day.

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**Clarifying Language**

Talent Theme: A naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied. There are 34 talent themes associated with StrengthsFinder®.

Knowledge: What you know as a result of either formal or informal education.

Skill: The basic ability to move through the fundamental steps of specific task.

Time: Time spent practicing and developing your skills, and building your knowledge base.

Strength: The ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity – reached only by applying and investing skill and knowledge to Themes.