2011-2012 Strengths
First-Year International Student Report

May 2013

ACHIEVER
ACTIVATOR
ADAPTABILITY
CONTEXT
DELIBERATIVE
INCLUDER
ANALYTICAL
DISCIPLINE
DEVELOPER
INDIVIDUALIZATION
INPUT
INTELLECTION
ARRANGER
BELIEF
COMMAND
EMPATHY
FOCUS
FUTURISTIC
LEARNER
MAXIMIZER
POSITIVITY
COMMUNICATION
HARMONY
RELATOR
RESTORATIVE
SELF-ASSURANCE
SIGNIFICANCE
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### Survey Response Rates

**Class of 2015 (n = 5368)**  
**Pre-Survey (n = 1434*)**  
**Mid-Year Survey (n = 1489*)**  
**End-of-Year Survey (n = 570*)**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Mid-Year Survey</th>
<th>End-of-Year Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When taken</strong></td>
<td>September 2011</td>
<td>Mid-December 2011</td>
<td>Late April to early May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>All first-year students</td>
<td>All first-year students</td>
<td>Random sample of 50% of first-year students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response rate</strong></td>
<td>n = 2007* (37.4%)</td>
<td>n = 1501** (28%)</td>
<td>n = 571*** (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*573 students who began the Pre-Survey completed less than half, so there were 1434 completed surveys.  
**13 students who began the Mid-Year Survey completed less than half, so there were 1489 completed surveys.  
***1 student who began the End-of-Year Survey completed less than half, so there were 570 completed surveys.  

Since surveys contain sporadic item non-response, the total n may change, and is often reported as a range.

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### International students were somewhat over-represented in the Pre-Survey and under-represented in the Mid-Year and End-of-Year Surveys.

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### Executive Summary

Researchers sought to determine whether international students reported different impacts of Strengths compared with all non-international students. Students were asked survey questions measuring their hope, engagement, and academic self-efficacy, Strengths awareness, and perceived impacts of Strengths. Results show that international first-year students, who have lower senses of hope, engagement, and academic self-efficacy than their non-international counterparts, reported that Strengths impacted them to a greater extent than non-international students reported.
## Scale Differences

### Scale Information

Permission was obtained to use each of the following scales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Information</th>
<th>Adult Trait Hope Scale</th>
<th>Academic Self-Efficacy Scale</th>
<th>Strengths Awareness Scale</th>
<th>College Student Engagement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Items</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item Response Range</td>
<td>1 - 8 (Definitely False to Definitely True)</td>
<td>1 - 7 (Very Untrue to Very True)</td>
<td>1 - 5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)</td>
<td>1 - 5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Score Range</td>
<td>8 to 64</td>
<td>8 to 56</td>
<td>10 to 50</td>
<td>12 to 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example Items</td>
<td>• I can think of many ways to get out of a jam. • I meet the goals that I set for myself.</td>
<td>• I am a very good student. • I am very capable of succeeding at this university.</td>
<td>• I can name my top five strengths. • I know how to apply my strengths to achieve academic success.</td>
<td>• At this school, my opinions seem to count. • There is someone at school who encourages my development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### International first-year students were more aware of Strengths at the beginning of the year than their non-international counterparts, but scored lower on measures of hope and engagement, and academic self-efficacy.

### Difference in Hope, Engagement, and Strengths Awareness

The following are first-year students’ scores on measures of hope, engagement, and Strengths awareness from the pre-survey. All results are statistically significant. Effect sizes† are small to medium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-International Students</th>
<th>International Students</th>
<th>Effect Size†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m</td>
<td>sd</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>52.27</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>1277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>45.34</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>1314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths Awareness</td>
<td>33.26</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>1249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>42.24</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>1333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant to p<0.05  **Significant to p<0.01  ***Significant to p<0.001

†Effect size is the practical significance of the differences between the means of the two groups. It is calculated by dividing the difference between the means by the standard deviation of the comparison group, so it calculates how many standard deviations different the two groups are. An effect size of .2 is considered small, .5 medium, and .8 large. A negative effect size suggests that the mean of the group in question is smaller than the comparison’s.
How Students Thought Knowing Their Strengths Could Help Them in College

Of the 94 international students who responded to the Pre-Survey, 64 provided qualitative responses to the following question: “Explain how knowing your Strengths might influence your academic skills or performance in college.” Their responses followed these major themes (in order of frequency):

1. Knowing my Strengths will help me guide my major, career path, and interests.
2. Knowing my Strengths will help me to improve my study skills and academic performance.
3. Knowing my Strengths will increase my self-awareness.
4. Knowing my Strengths will increase my self-confidence.

Representative Quotes

- Helps me to develop my strong points by directing my activities and interests.
- Knowing about my strengths will help me determine what kind of a career will be appropriate for me.
- I can focus better and push myself to great achievements.
- It might help me do my studies in the way that will allow me to get most out of it, like learning habits.
- It makes my future more clear for me since it show me what I am good at.
- It helps me better understand what subject I might be good at.
- It gives me a better understanding about myself.
- I am more confident when I’m using my strengths in every way in life.

At the beginning of the year, international students believed Strengths would help guide their academic and career paths, improve their study skills, and increase their self-awareness.

Negative or Neutral Responses

Of the 64 international students who provided qualitative responses indicating how Strengths might help them in college, only four provided negative or neutral responses, which are as follows:

- I don’t think it will have that much of an effect.
- I already knew my strengths, so I didn’t really need the strength quest [sic] to reaffirm this.
- I honestly do not know what my strengths stand for. I have never been explained of such strengths.
- I feel limited by this knowledge: while I do know what I am good at, I also know what I am weak at. I did not get “woo” at all, and this gives me bad confidence with regards to meeting new people. I wish I did not know this; it makes it challenging for me to meet new people and discourages social interaction. Thanks to strength quest, I now have a tougher year in front of me, and I am now a less motivated self. Hopefully these negative thoughts will go over, but I am sure my performance in college this first year will be severely weakened.
What Students Would Like to Know About Strengths

Of the 94 international students who responded to the Pre-Survey, 52 provided qualitative responses to the following question: “What else would you like to know about Strengths, or how to apply Strengths in the future?” Their responses followed these themes (in order of frequency):

1. How do I apply each Strengths, generally?
2. How does Strengths relate to job skills?
3. How do I develop my Strengths?

International students were interested in learning about how to apply Strengths and relate them to future careers.

Representative Quotes

- I would like to know how each individual strength can be applied to academic life and what it means for my future.
- I want to know how to apply my strengths in the future.
- I would like to join in some workshop that teaches me how to use my strength.
- I would like to know the strengths required for different types of jobs to compare whether I have the capability to perform that kind of a job.
- I wish to know how and where my strengths will guide me in my academic work and life in the future.
- I will take advantages of my strength and try to find a job which is done by using my strength.
- In what ways can you improve the strengths given?

Other Comments

Students were asked to “provide additional comments about Strengths,” and 21 international students provided responses to this prompt. No major themes emerged among the responses, so following is a sampling of their responses, categorized into positive and negative comments:

Positive
- It is a good way for one to fully understand oneself.
- I think that it is correctly find the real me.

Negative
- Strengths seem to be vague.
- I don’t believe in them, agree with them or identify with them, and I feel that the entire StrengthsQuest is a waste of my time.
Mid-Year Survey Results

Differences in Impacts of Strengths at the End of the First Semester
Results suggest statistically significant differences between international and non-international students in 11 of 13 areas when they were asked to rate the impact on a 1-5 scale. Effect sizes range from small to medium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas Strengths Positively Impacted Students</th>
<th>Non-International Students m sd n</th>
<th>International Students m sd n</th>
<th>Effect Size d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved on campus (i.e. student orgs)**</td>
<td>3.08 0.94 1430</td>
<td>3.58 1.00 60</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved in community service or volunteering**</td>
<td>3.07 0.92 1428</td>
<td>3.52 1.03 60</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with my undergraduate experience**</td>
<td>3.14 0.93 1436</td>
<td>3.59 0.97 59</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling like I belong on campus**</td>
<td>3.05 0.97 1434</td>
<td>3.51 0.97 59</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about potential career paths**</td>
<td>3.33 1.04 1432</td>
<td>3.8 0.99 60</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing my appreciation of others**</td>
<td>3.33 1.01 1429</td>
<td>3.76 0.93 59</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting a major**</td>
<td>3.11 1.04 1435</td>
<td>3.55 1.16 60</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying, defining, and solving problems**</td>
<td>3.26 0.98 1437</td>
<td>3.65 1.04 60</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement**</td>
<td>3.31 0.96 1435</td>
<td>3.68 1.07 60</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating effectively with others**</td>
<td>3.28 1.00 1436</td>
<td>3.66 1.01 59</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding others*</td>
<td>3.42 1.02 1431</td>
<td>3.77 0.95 60</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing as a leader</td>
<td>3.36 1.02 1432</td>
<td>3.59 1.07 59</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing my self-awareness</td>
<td>3.64 1.05 1437</td>
<td>3.78 1.04 60</td>
<td>0.14</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at p<.05  **Significant at p<.01
Note: Effect sizes are typically considered small if they are around 0.2 to 0.3, medium if they are around 0.5, and large if they are 0.8 or higher.

International students reported greater impacts than non-international students.

How Strengths Benefitted International Students’ First Year Experience
The following are representative quotes from International students (out of 11 total responses):

- During my first interview, I told my manager about my strengths and how they are related to the job that I was applying to. She was very impressed.
- It help me know more about my ability and help me work more efficiency with group.
- I know what kind of person I am, so I can contribute my talents in the most proper way for my study group/organizations.
- I think the most important thing for me is that it develops my self-identification.
- Knowing that responsibility and futuristic has helped me to stay determined and focused while adjusting to college surprises and challenges, for example keeping up with assignments.
- My ability to adapt well in new environments…I was able to adapt well to a completely new environment and made new friends.
- I am willing to present a presentation in class.
- I am an arranger and I think that when writing my papers and planning how I will do my work, this strength helps me. Though sometimes things don’t always go as planned.
### Differences in Impacts of Strengths at the End of the Year

Results suggest statistically significant differences between international and non-international students in 12 of 17 areas when they were asked to rate the impact on a 1-5 scale. Effect sizes range from small to moderately large.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas Strengths Positively Impacted Students</th>
<th>Non-International Students</th>
<th>International Students</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m</td>
<td>sd</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making decisions about everyday things**</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement**</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making decisions regarding major life events**</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved on campus (i.e. student orgs)**</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying, defining and solving problems*</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating effectively with others*</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting a major*</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling like I belong on campus*</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing my overall self-confidence*</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding others*</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing my appreciation of others*</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling like I would like to return to campus next year*</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved in community service or volunteering</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with my undergraduate experience</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing my self-awareness</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about potential career paths</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing as a leader</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at p<.05  **Significant at p<.01

Note: Effect sizes are typically considered small if they are around 0.2 to 0.3, medium if they are around 0.5, and large if they are 0.8 or higher.

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**International students were more positive about Strengths than their non-international counterparts.**

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[Chart: Differences in Perceived Value of Strengths]

*Significant at p<.05