

Assessment of StrengthsQuest Initiative in Career Advising at Winona State University
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Background

- Spring 2008 Grant
- Funded by the WSU Foundation for \$1200
- Pilot project so successful funds were appropriated for the 2009-10 budget to continue utilizing StrengthsQuest

Shingleton Award

- Based on success of StrengthsQuest, WSU awarded \$600 from Midwest ACE
- Part of grant used to send staff to annual SQ conference
- Majority helped fund purchase of additional SQ codes

What is StrengthsQuest?

- Discover and develop their greatest talents
- Use their strengths to improve their grades and increase their learning
- Strategically determine a rewarding career path
- Focus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses

Steps: Identify, Affirm, Envision, Plan, Teach

Purpose & Goals

- Increase student awareness of their strengths, talents, and abilities, and how to apply them in careers and academics
- Reinforce a student's motivation to achieve in college
- Build students' confidence by increased awareness of their strengths and how to take that information and move forward
- Strategically determine a rewarding career path
- Utilize their strengths in job preparation including job/internship interviews
- Focus on strengths rather than their weaknesses

Pre & Post Surveys

- Measure particular learning outcomes related to the career development process
- Students meet for extended appointments with a WSU career advisor
- Do both surveys immediately before and after assessment

Goals of the Initial Assessment

- Motivations for taking StrengthsQuest assessment
- Gather information about each student (year, age, etc.)
- Check awareness of strengths, talents, and abilities
- Develop strengths, talents, and abilities to a level of excellence
- Increase motivation to achieve in college
- Gain awareness of strengths and abilities that contribute to success
- Capitalize on strengths, talents, and abilities in career and life planning
- Apply strengths, talents, and abilities to new areas of achievement where previously been less successful
- Utilize strengths in order to improve grades and increase learning
- Strategically determine a rewarding career path

Results

- 74% reported an increase in level of awareness of strengths, talents, and abilities
- 55% reported an increase in desire to develop strengths, talents, and abilities to a level of excellence
- 55% reported an increased awareness of their strengths and abilities that have contributed to their success
- 79% reported an increased understanding of how to capitalize on their strengths, talents, and abilities in career and life planning
- 97% of students reported an increased understanding of how to apply their strengths, talents, & abilities to new areas of achievement & to areas where previously less successful

- 90% of students reported they believe they can utilize their strengths to improve their grades and increase their learning
- 95% of students reported they believe taking StrengthsQuest will help them strategically determine a rewarding career path
- 100% of students who completed StrengthsQuest would recommend it to other students
- 100% of students reported they achieved what they hoped to through taking StrengthsQuest and discussing with a career advisor

Counselor Observations

- Recognition of how strengths can be utilized in decision-making and other areas of students' lives (academics, personal, etc.)
- Use in interviewing will be very powerful, especially if examples of strengths can be cited
- Noticeable improvement in students' abilities to articulate their strengths and provide examples of situations they have utilized their strengths
- Don't just get a "job"
- Clarification of the types of work environments that will be good fits
- Validated what they already thought about themselves, and it was OK to talk about their strengths as a "good thing"
- Significant changes in enthusiasm and self-confidence were evident with students in Rochester between first advising sessions and second

Benefits for Career Services

- Offers tool that assists in student preparation
- Potentially benefits employers in ensuring the right "fit" for new hires
- Engages both traditional and nontraditional students.

Benefits for Students

- Identify areas of talent that can be developed into strengths
- Affirm students' talents and raise their awareness
- Help students "envision" their future
- Help students "plan" to reach goals and map them out
- Teach students how to apply their talents and strengths
 - Useful for career planning as well as academic success

Practical Applications

- What are ways you have used SQ?
- How would you like to use it?

Advantages

- Strong research behind it
- Easy to use and apply
- Focused results
- Students find learning strengths beneficial
- Useful for resume/interview prep
- Emphasizes the positive

Disadvantages

- Cost: \$15 per student
- Need for campus "cheerleader"
 - Become trained
 - Advocate for training, workshops, follow up, etc.
- Does not relate results back to suggested careers/majors (i.e. Strong)

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