

Cultivating and Capitalizing on the Strengths of First-Gen Students

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OHIO
UNIVERSITY

Session Abstract

First-generation students have gained much attention recently, but some areas, such as strengths, have been overlooked due to a deficit approach to research on this population. This interactive session seeks to provide knowledge and strategies to support first-generation students in their college environments through a strengths-based approach. It is particularly important that we understand how to assist the positive growth and development of first-generation students, who may struggle with belonging and academic self-efficacy. Strategies for ascertaining the strengths of first-generation students, assisting in self-discovery, and techniques for classrooms and program development will be discussed.

Session Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will garner strategies to facilitate strengths-based conversations with first-gen students to assist them in identifying their personal strengths.
2. Participants will know and understand the strengths of first-generation college students.
3. Participants will develop strategies to incorporate strengths-based approaches into first-gen programs and classroom experiences.

Session Outline

- Introductions
- Science of Character (Video)
- Discussion:
 - What are our strengths and how do we use them in our work with first-gen students?
 - What tools can we use to help our students identify their strengths?
- The Strengths of FG Students (Activity)
- Discussion:
 - How do you incorporate a strengths-based approach into your programmatic work and classroom practice?
 - How does OHIO First Scholars incorporate a strengths-based approach at Ohio University?

Introductions, Us

Angela Lash

- Associate Director
Allen Student Advising Ctr
- Director, OHIO First Scholars
- Ohio U, Bachelor' s in 2004
First-Generation Graduate!
- Ohio U, Master' s in 2010

Taylor Snider

- Graduate Assistant
OHIO First Scholars
- Bowling Green State University,
bachelor' s in 2015
First-Generation Graduate!
- Currently pursuing a Master' s
of Education in College Student
Personnel at Ohio University
(April 2017)

Introductions, Us

Ohio University

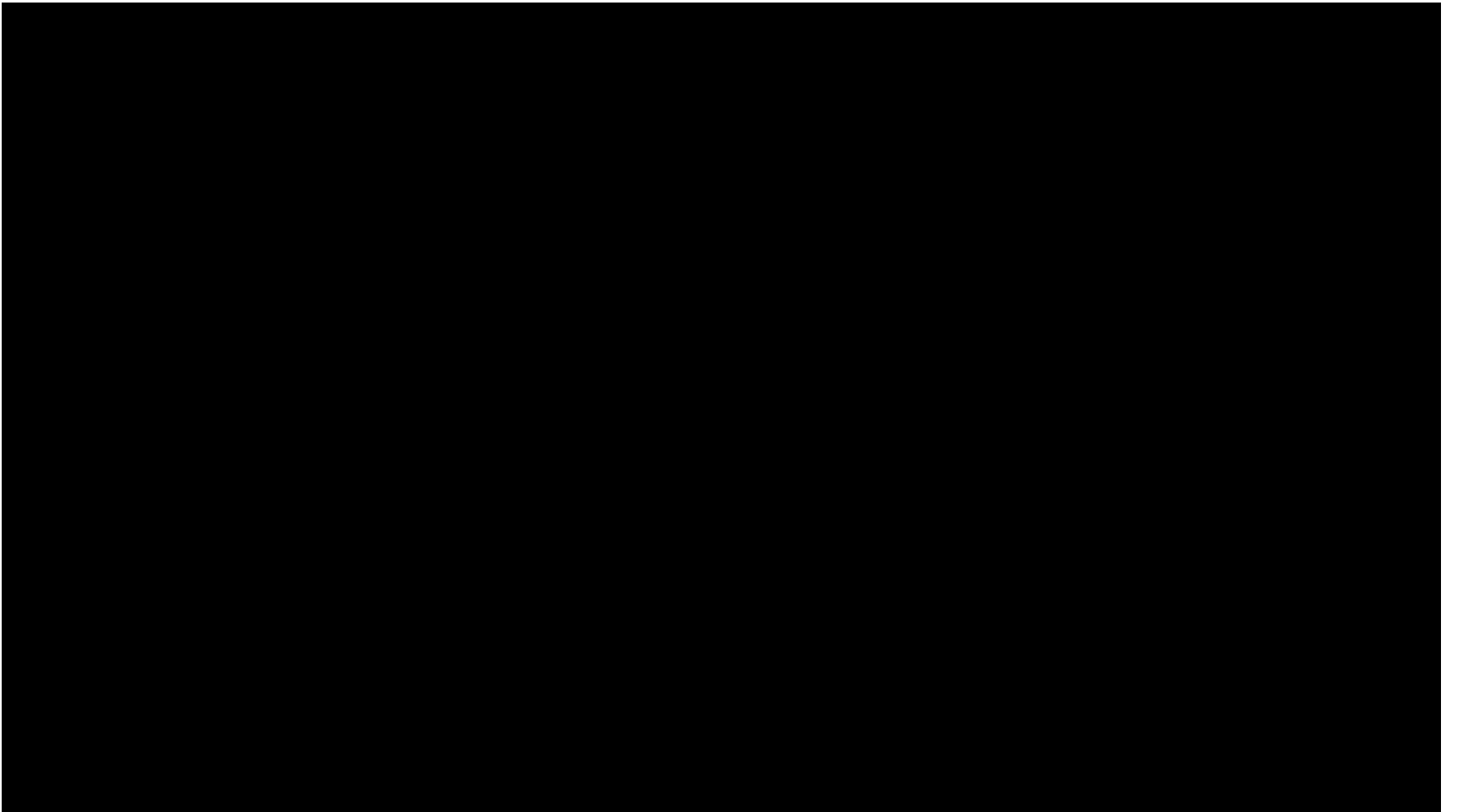
- Established in 1804
- 4 year public institution in Ohio
- More than 17,000 undergraduate students on the Athens Campus
- Over 4,000 new first-year students each year
- 25% of new first-year students are first-generation
- Increase in first-gen retention from 73% (2012-13) to 77% (2015-16)

OHIO First Scholars

- Established in 2015
- Committed to supporting the success, persistence, and engagement of first-gen students
- Focuses primarily on students in their first-year, but includes upper class students in some components
- Includes supplemental advising, proactive outreach and communication, mentoring program, seminar course, specialized living experience, student organization, first-gen awareness campaign

Introductions, You

The Science of Character



Identifying Strengths and Facilitating Strengths-Based Conversations

- What are your top strengths? How/when did you identify them?
- How do you utilize the strengths to support your students?
- Does one of your strengths ever get in the way of your work with students? How do you navigate this challenge?

Resources to Assist Students in Strength Identification

- Questions from video
 - Who do you admire and why?
 - Finish this sentence: “I want to be...”
- Strengths Finder
- VIA Strengths Assessment
- Appreciative Advising Model
- Other ideas?

What are the Strengths of First-Generation Students?

- Individually, use the Post-it notes on your table to list adjectives or anecdotes that illustrate the strengths of first-gen students.
- Post the notes on the wall under the appropriate category from our video.
- Review anecdotes as a group and discuss ways that we can help students notice and utilize these strengths.

How do YOU Incorporate a Strengths-Based Approach?

- What strengths-based strategies do you incorporate into your work with first-gen students?
- How do you implement a strengths-based practice in the classroom?

OHIO' s Strengths-Based Approach for First-Generation Student Programming

- Orientation Session
- Weekly Communication and Proactive Outreach
- Mentoring Program
- Student Organization
- Seminar Class
- Awareness Campaign

Thank You

“What great leaders have in common is that each truly knows his or her strengths – and can call on the right strength at the right time.”

— Tom Rath, Strengths Based
Leadership

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