

Cultivating and Capitalizing on the Strengths of First-Gen Students

Presented at the 36th Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience

Resources for Identifying the Strengths of First-Generation College Students

StrengthsQuest - <http://www.strengthsquest.com/home.aspx>

Gallup StrengthsQuest is based on Clifton Strengths. While this assessment requires purchase, it has the support of many institutions across the nation. This interactive assessment categorizes strength and offers resources to understand and apply strengths from any perspective.

VIA Strengths Assessment - <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths-Survey>

The VIA Institute on Character is a non-profit organization, based in Cincinnati, Ohio, dedicated to bringing the science of character strengths to the world through supporting research, creating and validating surveys of character, and developing practical tools for individuals and practitioners. The VIA Strengths Assessment is a FREE assessment that provides insight to individual strengths with explanations and resources for strength improvement

Appreciative Advising Model

Appreciative Advising is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials. The model is comprised of six phases.

1. Disarm: make a positive first impression with the student, build rapport, and create a safe, welcoming space.
2. Discover: ask positive open-ended questions that help advisors learn about students' strengths, skills, and abilities.
3. Dream: Inquire about students' hopes and dreams for their futures.
4. Design: Co-create a plan for making their dreams a reality.
5. Deliver: the student delivers on the plan created during the Design phase and the advisor is available to encourage and support students.
6. Don't Settle: Advisors and students determine to set their own internal bars of expectations high.

The Science of Character - <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/The-Science-of-Character-Video>

This is the video that was shown during the session to introduce the identification and application of our unique character strengths. Taken from the VIA Strengths website, it can provide a great introduction to that assessment.

Want more information?

Contact us!

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Visit www.ohio.edu/uc/firstgen/index.cfm for information about the OHIO First Scholars and its "First Gen? Me Too!" awareness campaign.



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References

Byrd, K. L. & MacDonald, G. (2005). Defining College Readiness from the Inside Out: First-Generation College Student Perspectives. *Community College Review*, 33(1), 22-37.

This article contributes to literature on the strengths of first-generation colleges students entering institutions of higher education and advocates to the recognition of these strengths rather than a focus potential academic disadvantages, though they are also apparent.

Gardner, M. A., & Toope, D. F. (2011). A Social Justice Perspective on Strengths-Based Approaches: Exploring Educators' Perspectives and Practice. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 34(3), 86-102.

This article explores utilizing a strengths-based approach to work with youth experiences social and educational barriers. The authors use data from qualitative interviews of educators to gather conceptual knowledge of strengths-based, social justice approaches. Findings concluded that this work involves at least four interconnecting sets of practices: recognizing students-in-context, critically engaging strengths and positivity, nurturing democratic relations, and enacting creative and flexible pedagogies.

Garrison N. J. & Gardner, D. S. (2012). Assets First Generation College Students Bring to the Higher Education Setting. *Online Submission*

This qualitative research explored first generation college students (FGCS) from a holistic perspective. The study investigated students' personal assets and provided the field of higher education an alternative to the pervasive deficit-orientation of this underserved population. The data revealed there were 13 contributing strengths that supported the asset development: resourcefulness, strategic thinking, self-reliance, practical realism, flexibility, persistence, positivity, hopefulness, self-confidence, insightfulness, compassion, gratitude and balance. Implications based on the study's findings suggest higher education institutions could provide faculty development and augment student services to recognize first generation college students' assets.

Green, D. (2006). Historically Underserved Students: What We Know, What We Still Need to Know. *New Directors For Community Colleges, 2006 (135)*, 21-28. Doi: 10.1002/cc.244

This article highlights key components of underserved students. A key aspect the author argued is the overutilization of a deficit model. The author argues that a future focus on positive qualities should be taken when collecting data and learning about underserved students in order to provide necessary support in order to foster success.

Garriott, P. O., Hudyma, A., Keene, C., & Santiago, D. (2015). Social cognitive predictors of first-and non-first-generation college students' academic and life satisfaction. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 62(2), 253.

Within this article, Lent's (2004) social-cognitive model of normative well-being was utilized. A model depicting relationships between: positive affect, environmental supports, college self-efficacy, college outcome expectations, academic progress, academic satisfaction, and life satisfaction was examined and found to be supported through the authors research. Conclusions supported that environmental supports predicted college self-efficacy, college outcome expectations, and academic satisfaction. Furthermore, college self-efficacy predicted academic progress while college outcome expectations predicted academic satisfaction. Academic satisfaction, but not academic progress predicted life. The results are in favor of applying the normative model of well-being to promote first- and non-first-generation college students' academic and life satisfaction.

Fenton, A., Walsh, K., Wong, S., & Cumming, T. (2015). Using strengths-based approaches in early years practice and research. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 47(1), 27-52.

The purpose of this paper was to examine a potential promise of innovative uses of strengths-based approaches in early years practice and research in Australia, and to consider implications for application in other national contexts. In this paper, we present three cases depicting different applications of the Strengths Approach, under pinned by collaborative inquiry at the interface between practice and research. Analysis revealed three key themes across the cases: (i) enactment of strengths-based principles, (ii) the bi-directional and transformational influences of the Strengths Approach (research into practice/ practice into research), and (iii) heightened practitioner and researcher awareness of, and responsiveness to, the operation of power.