



UNC
COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES

Examining the Use of Strengths-Based Self-Assessments to Promote First- Generation College Student Success

*National Conference on Students in Transition
October 15-17, 2016*

Gonzalez, C., Levine, S., Demetriou, C., & Panter, A.
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Goals

- Explore how self-assessments can support First-Generation College Students
- Offer an overview of self-assessment programming at UNC-Chapel Hill
- Reflect on ways *your* campuses could incorporate self-assessment programming

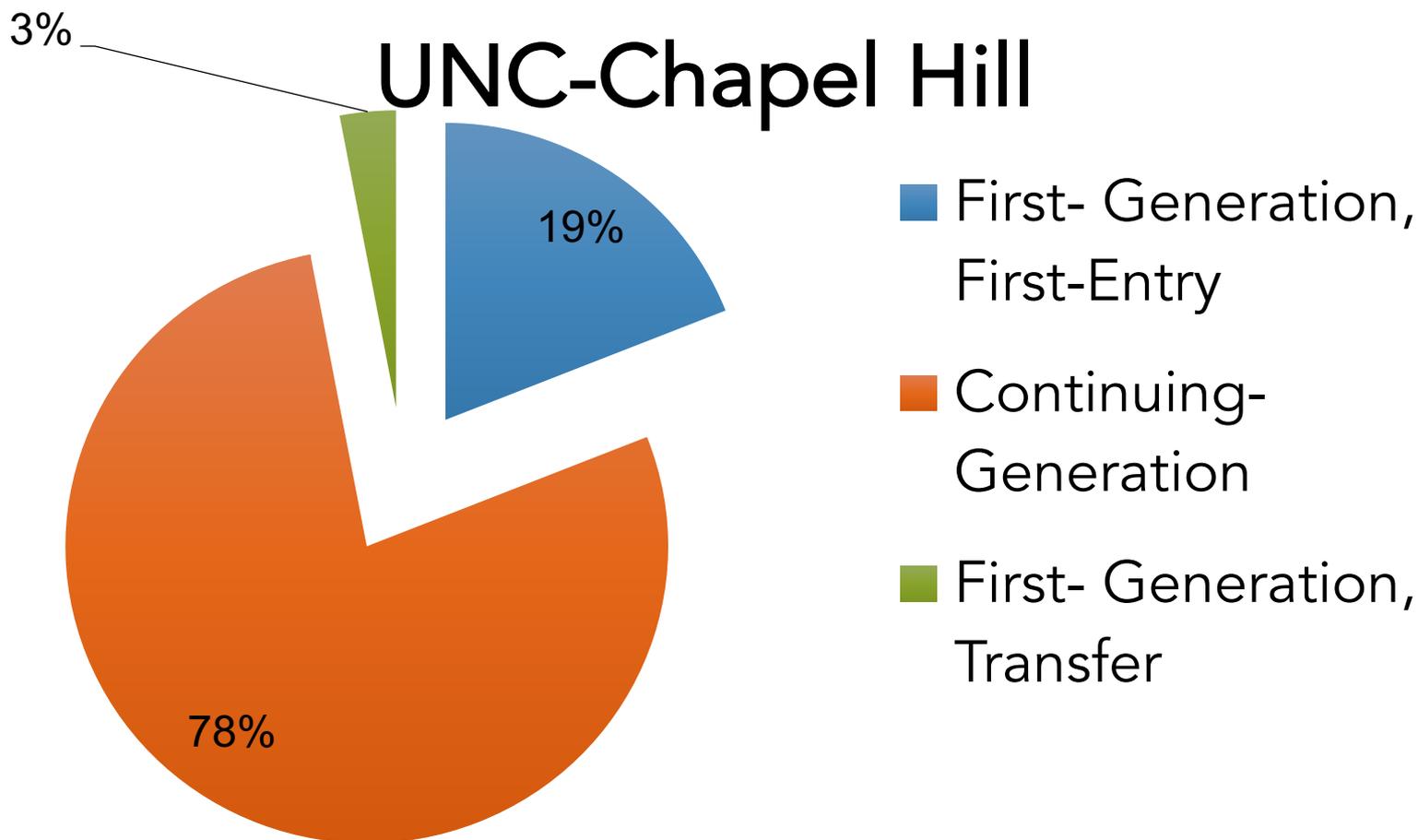


Agenda

- Overview of The Finish Line Project
- StrengthsFinder® & Strong Interest Inventory®
- Program Development
- Program Assessment
- Challenges
- Application to Your Work
- Q&A/Discussion



First-Generation Students at UNC-Chapel Hill





The Finish Line Project

Research and practice to help first generation college students succeed. Our program initiates and evaluates innovative programs for student success at UNC that will form future practices here and across the nation.



About the Project

On average, 3,000 undergraduate FGCS enroll in UNC-CH each year. FGCS are more likely to come from historically underrepresented groups and low-income families who encounter significant barriers on their path to a degree.

[READ MORE...](#)

Initiatives

The Finish Line Project includes innovative and evidence-based strategies to help students earn four-year undergraduate degrees in a timely and affordable manner. The project contains supports and structures for students of all majors.

[READ MORE...](#)

Project Team

The implementation of multifaceted programs and supports is a collaborative effort and involves many key partners. The project leaders are Dr. Abigail T. Panter, Principal Investigator, and Project Director and Dr. Cynthia Demetriou, Executive Director.

[READ MORE...](#)

Evaluation & Research

The project includes a robust research portfolio. The goal of our evaluation and research is to develop an evidence base of effective practices to improve educational outcomes for first-generation college students.

[READ MORE...](#)



The Finish Line Project

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE TO HELP FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS SUCCEED

Funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant, The Finish Line Project initiates and evaluates innovative programs for student success at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Project findings will inform future practices at the University and across the nation.

INITIATIVES TO HELP FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

CAROLINA FIRSTS

First-generation college students are from a family in which neither parent has a four-year undergraduate degree. At UNC, we proudly call these students "Carolina Firsts." The Finish Line Project supports all Carolina Firsts including:

RURAL STUDENTS
Eighty of the 100 counties in NC are rural. Studies indicate the number of rural students going to college is increasing.

NATIVE AMERICANS
American Indians in higher education have more than doubled in the last 30 years. Universities must intentionally engage students, families and communities.

UNDERREPRESENTED MALES
Underrepresented males are among the least likely to graduate. In particular, African American, Latino, and Multiracial males experience unique challenges on their path to graduation.

TRANSFER STUDENTS
Innovative, educational programming is needed to support transfer students especially community college transfers.

1 Connect And Communicate With First-Generation Students



SELF-ASSESSMENTS
Strengths-based assessments to enhance college knowledge and expectations.



COMMUNITY BUILDING
Cohort models to foster communication and share common experiences among underrepresented males.



PARTNERSHIPS
Partner with American Indian tribes to help support Native American students attending UNC.



NEW PROGRAMS
Develop programs and support to assist rural student access and transition to college.

THE CAROLINA FIRSTS EXPERIENCE



Efforts begin prior to enrollment to build college knowledge, set helpful expectations, and build resources for success.

Students connect with supportive communities of students with similar backgrounds and experiences.

2 Enhance Curriculum Through Active Learning



TRANSITION COURSES
Offer multiple courses to help students navigate critical transitions.



GATEWAY COURSES
Review and redesign gateway STEM courses.



LEARNING COMMUNITIES
Create faculty learning communities to support active learning.



COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Map STEM curriculum on campus and at local community college.



Students enroll in newly designed transition and gateway courses to aid their progress in STEM and other fields of study.

3 Advise And Support First-Generation Students



COORDINATION
Coordinate efforts for Carolina Firsts across campus.



ADVISING
Offer academic advising specifically to meet the needs of first-generation college students.



COACHING
Train academic coaches to support any undergraduates.



Faculty, advisors, and academic coaches help students navigate the research university.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

MEASURE

- Academic and psychosocial factors among FGCS
- College knowledge and expectations
- Changes in student learning patterns, attitudes, and behaviors
- The acquisition of knowledge or skills as a result of interventions
- Changes in faculty instructional techniques, attitudes, and behaviors

DESCRIBE

- Academic success among FGCS overall and by subgroups
- Micro-aggressions and micro-affirmations among FGCS
- Pathways to degree completion in the sciences
- Faculty motives for course redesign
- Perspectives and behaviors among FGCS regarding applying to graduate school

ASSESS

- Strategies for enhancing college knowledge and expectations
- Models for academic coaching
- Strategies for promoting self-regulated learning
- Strategies for course redesign



Students fulfill degree completion requirements and move on to graduate school and career opportunities.



Finish Line Initiatives

Connect And Communicate With First-Generation Students



SELF ASSESSMENTS

Strengths-based assessments to enhance college knowledge and expectations.



BUILD COMMUNITY

Cohort models to foster communication and share common experiences among males of color.



PARTNERSHIPS

Partner with American Indian tribes to help support Native American students attending UNC.



NEW PROGRAMS

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Self-Assessments

Inventories that help students identify their interests, strengths, personality traits, values, majors and careers

- What self-assessments (MBTI, StrengthsFinder, Focus 2, etc...) are currently being used on your campus?
- What is going well in the use of these assessments?
- What are some challenges in the use of these assessments?



Self-Assessments at UNC-CH

- Student Success Navigator®
- StrengthsFinder®
- Strong Interest Inventory®
- Focus 2®
- MBTI®





THE #1 WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLER



DON CLIFTON

Father of Strengths Psychology and
Inventor of the Clifton StrengthsFinder

STRENGTHS FINDER **2.0**

FROM GALLUP

Tom Rath

Why StrengthsFinder®?





Why the Strong Interest Inventory®?

strong®





UNC-Chapel Hill believes all admitted students can thrive in college, graduate, and grow into lifelong learners.

Components of Student Success

We believe student success includes:

- 1** Exploring & growing intellectually 
- 2** Appreciating diverse perspectives as well as developing one's own identity 
- 3** Developing social & emotional skills 
- 4** Engaging in meaningful activities, roles, & relationships 
- 5** Cultivating a sense of purpose or vocation 

Encouraging Student Success

Success is likely in an environment that:

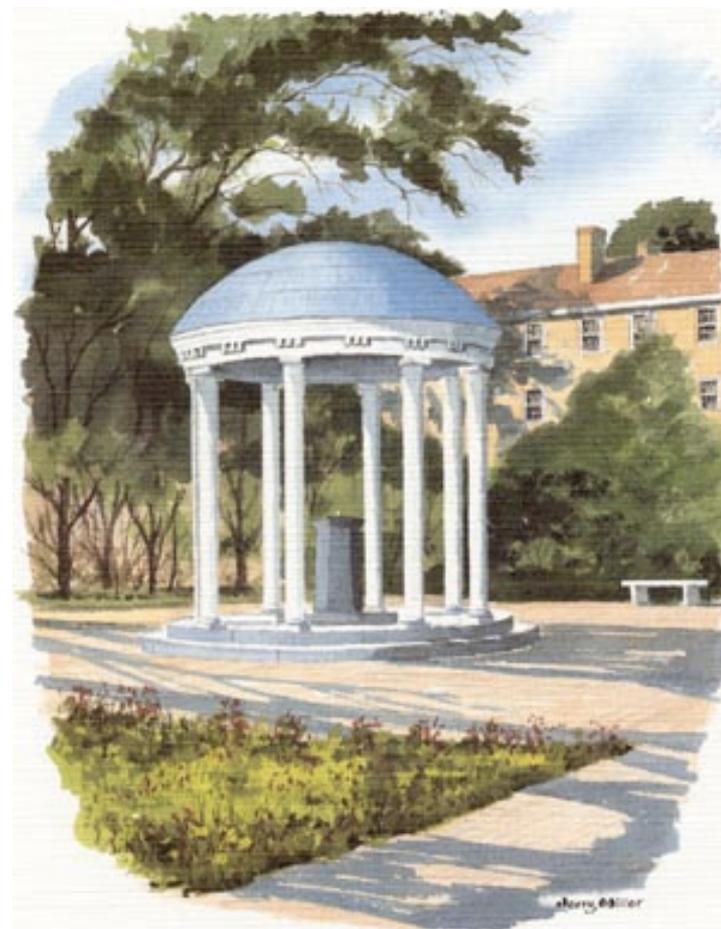
- 1** Fosters self-advocacy & resiliency 
- 2** Promotes a growth mindset understanding of intelligence 
- 3** Affirms cultural identities & advances inclusive excellence 
- 4** Encourages academic excellence, integrity, & leadership 
- 5** Demonstrates concern for the well-being of the whole student 

thrive
@CAROLINA



Development of Programming

- Self-Assessment Team
- Training
- UCS Partnership
- Use of inventories across campus
- Programming Format



GRADUATE



Workshop Outline



Finish Line Project Studies

17	DES 7.2	Micro-affirmation Qualitative Study	Cynthia Demetriou Candice Powell Carmen Huerta-Bapat James Ellis	A qualitative exploration of verbal accounts of FGCS' experiences of micro-affirmations and micro-aggressions while enrolled in college.
18	DES 8	NC-WIT Study	Amy Germuth Brooke Midkiff Kevin Jeffay	This study examines the experiences of undergraduates in introductory Computer Science courses. Responses will be compared between FGCS and non-FGCS.
19	QED 2	Self-Assessments/ Regulated Goals Study	James Ellis Katie Cartmell Carmen Gonzalez Sharon Levine Fred Cave	This study is to examine first generation college student participation in self-assessment programming and their experience taking the following assessments: a) Clifton Strengths Finder and b) Strong Interest Inventory. It looks to determine the degree to which each assessment and activities influence academic achievement, campus engagement, and cognitive skill development. Using an untreated control group design with a pre- and post- test.

“I am most proud of my strength as an achiever. I feel like there’s nothing I can’t do when I really set my mind to it.”

“I learned that I am very strong-willed and stand up for my story and future plans, even when others don’t agree with them or understand.”

“I’m most proud of empathy. It aligns with my values and I want people to feel supported and understood.”

“I will try to use my strengths to achieve my goal of stepping out of my comfort zone to try new things.”

“I will use my strengths to not let problems stop me from seeing different solutions.”



Challenges and Considerations

- Budget:
 - Strengths Quest: \$10 per code
 - Strong Interest: \$10-\$16 per assessment, need trained interpreter
- Assessment Completion/Communication:
 - Student completion of assessments prior to workshop
- Student Attendance
 - Where/when to hold workshops?
 - How to communicate value?



Self-Assessment Programming on YOUR Campus



University of Colorado

"Now, every year, 6,000 new students will learn their strengths and how to use them productively to improve well-being and engagement. And 1,000 staff and faculty members in the region -- at CU-Boulder and other campuses -- are involved in learning about strengths."

[LEARN MORE](#)

Kansas State University

"In an effort to increase the retention, engagement, and overall well-being of its students, Kansas State University has partnered with Gallup to become a strengths-based campus."

[LEARN MORE](#)

University of Chicago

"The use of [StrengthsQuest] will allow us to begin meeting our goals of providing skill development to the graduate and undergraduate community by empowering our students to invest in their personal success through their engagement with the University of Chicago."

[LEARN MORE](#)

George Mason University Well-Being University Initiative

George Mason adopted a new strategic plan to become the first certified Well-Being University in the world.

[LEARN MORE](#)





Questions?



[FINISHLINE.UNC.EDU](https://finishline.unc.edu)

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Acknowledgements

This research is part of the Finish Line Project (P116F140018; Panter, PI; Demetriou, Executive Director), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's "First in the World" grant program. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the U.S. Department of Education.



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MEN OF COLOR COACH APPROACH STUDY
This study describes the experiences of a cohort of undergraduate males of color participating in a program designed to engage students in academic coaching exercises such as goal setting, monitoring goal progress, developing a supportive networks, using resources on campus, and gaining a sense of belonging on campus.

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Strengths and Strong on YOUR Campus

The following questions will guide you in brainstorming ideas to bring similar self-assessment programming to your campuses.

Are StrengthsFinder® and/or Strong Interest Inventory® currently in use on your campus?	Where are these assessment(s) being used? How are these assessment(s) being used?
Student Population	Who would you market your self-assessment programming to? Why would this be beneficial to this group? What would your communication strategy look like?
Partnerships	Who on campus might be interested in partnering with you?
Programming Format	When/where would you hold this programming on campus? How often? What might your programming look like?
Funding	What potential funding sources can you identify?

