

# Exploratory Students Finding Purpose in College Transition Using *CliftonStrengths* for Students Online Assessment

Concurrent Trends and Issues: Sunday, February 23, 2020 @ 8:00am

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SOUTH DAKOTA  
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## Objectives of Presentation

1. Understanding the importance of:
  - Exploratory (and all) students finding purpose in their lives
  - University retaining students
  - Utilizing this information in the future
2. Provide a background of CliftonStrengths for Students online assessment
3. Demonstrate the use of *CliftonStrengths*
4. Conducting discussion of using this information and supporting resources in the future

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## ABOUT US

**South Dakota State  
University,  
Brookings, South Dakota**

Division I university located in eastern South Dakota with approximately 12,000 students.

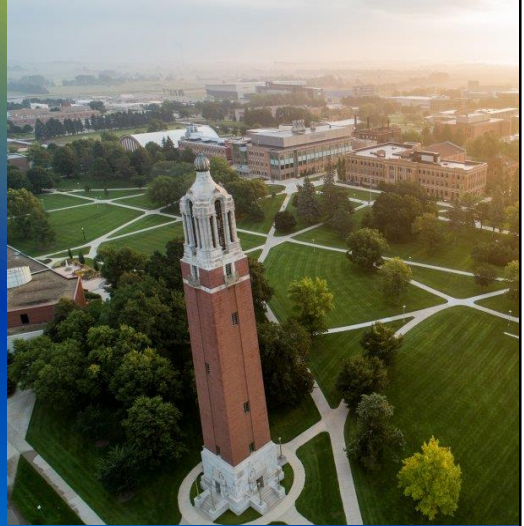
Classes we use assessment in:

*First Year Seminar*

*Exploratory Studies*

③ *Service-Learning*

*Transition to Careers & Life, Love, & Money*



Not representatives from Gallup, and not a strengths-based campus, but we have strong pockets of students/organizations/classes that use it

## Exploratory Studies Program Core Classes

### Department of Academic and Career Success

- Exploratory Studies
- First Year Seminar
- Mastering Lifetime Learning Skills

**"My exploratory studies class, academic success and lifelong learning courses have unexpectedly been my favorite, most valuable courses I have taken in my educational career."**

**- Sophomore  
Spring 2018**



## Exploratory Studies Course at SDSTATE

### Exploratory Studies Program Tracks (250-300 students)

- **Education, Social Sciences, and Management**  
*(focusing on working with others)*
- **Humanities, Fine Arts, and Design**  
*(developing and creating something meaningful)*
- **Health Sciences**  
*(having a career that focuses on helping others)*
- **Engineering, Technology, and Math**  
*(thinking in numbers and working with concrete resources)*
- **Agriculture and Natural Sciences**  
*(working in a hands-on environment)*

This is the largest program selected by first year students at sdstate, 250-300 first year students will select this program. Each track has a corresponding section that brings in speakers from the majors to assist students in major selection

Propose of this format is to assist students in finding a track that is a right “fit” and properly assist them in creating a solid foundation early on in their college careers to support and retain them.

## Support Students Holistically

**For students to grow cognitively and to integrate knowledge in a way that reflects learning they also need to grow:**

- Interpersonally by considering themselves as a part of a whole. Confidence develops when students realize they are not alone (Johnson, 2006).
- Intrapersonally by establishing a belief system that acts as a filter, guiding choices and experiences (Kegan, 1994).

“...a holistic and integrated approach to development that recognizes the mutually reinforcing nature of cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development.

For students to grow cognitively and to integrate knowledge in a way that reflects learning they also need to grow interpersonally by considering themselves as a part of a whole and intrapersonally by establishing a belief system that acts as a filter, guiding choices and experiences.”

(Strengths builds belief in self)

## Support Students Holistically

***CliftonStrengths* is one aspect of helping students find their purpose and place on campus.**



- Living learning communities
- Engaging experiences assignment
- Imagine 2023 – People-Centered focus
- Well-being
- Academic Achievement
- Exploratory Academic Plan

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South Dakota State University





## First -Year Advising Center

- **We support exploratory students with a first-year academic advisor to assist in university transition and planning for classes**
- **Creating a support system early on**
- **Transition to a professional academic advisor after their first-year**

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South Dakota State University

Each student is assigned an Academic Advisor. This person can help with more than just class selection. Transition to college is sometimes challenging and often you have questions- Your advisor can point you in the right direction, refer you to additional resources, or answer your question.

## Challenges Exploratory Students Face

**Student's daily levels of engagement and emotional exhaustion can fluctuate based on their **daily levels of meaning in life and curiosity.****

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"My strengths have somewhat helped me find my purpose. This has helped me narrow in more specific options for a major and the direction I wish to go after school. Learning my strengths has really helped me find meaning in what I have been doing this semester."

- FYS Fall 2019

Garrosa, 2016



In a 2016 study by, Garrosa, et. al, researchers looked at how student's daily levels of engagement and emotional exhaustion can fluctuate based on their daily levels of meaning in life and curiosity.

## Challenges Exploratory Students Face

"I used my strengths to help determine which career path I should take. I just recently declared my major with the help of my top themes because when you know what your strengths are, it's easy to determine a career you will be successful at and happy with. My strengths definitely helped me find my purpose because now I know my purpose is to be an environmental engineer."

- FYS Fall 2019



**First-year college students struggle to make decisions; especially decisions related to their academic majors, as they are uncertain of future goals.**

Halasz, 2010 ○

## Why is Finding Purpose Important?

**In some societies, the search for meaning has been related to:**

- Lower life satisfaction
- Lower psychological well-being
- Lower control over one's environment
- Dissatisfied with one's personal relationships

## Purpose = Confidence

**Developing purpose is a developmental task for college students.**

The concept of developing purpose is an approach to **thinking broadly** about life in ways that encompass:

- Vocational plans and aspirations
- Personal interests
- Family commitments

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Chickering and Reisser, 1993

"So far, my strengths have helped me find my purpose a little better. I feel that my strengths have defined me as a person. Having different strengths than others is what makes you unique. I don't exactly know my purpose yet, but by learning about my strengths in class will help me figure that out someday."

- FYS Fall 2019



There is a sense of confidence that develops when students realize they are not alone, an awareness that others possess similar concerns while the student continues to search for self

## Strengths Research

- “...self-report measure of personal strengths was positively correlated to students’:
  - **Interpersonal** and **intrapersonal** strengths
  - School functioning
  - Affective strengths
  - Adaptability
  - Social skills and leadership,
  - Level of students’ family involvement.”

# Retention



## Importance of Retention

- According to a study, **slightly over half** of [undergraduate] U.S. college students will **graduate within six years**.
- Nearly **one in eight** who start in any fall term will **transfer** by the following fall
  - **Student's Perspective:** dropping out of college can be a loss of investment and job potential
  - **University's Perspective:** student attrition is financially hazardous in a time of shrinking budgets

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Gallup, 2018

In addition to our classes and advising model for exploratory students, we also incorporate the *CliftonStrengths for Students* online assessment.

According to a 2018 article posed by the Gallup foundation called, *Using a Strengths-based Approach to Retain College Students*, “only **slightly over half** of [undergraduate] U.S. college students will **graduate within six years**, and nearly **one in eight** who start in any fall term will **transfer** by the following fall”.

**Student's Perspective:** dropping out of college can be a loss of investment and job potential

**University's Perspective:** student attrition is financially hazardous in a time of shrinking budgets



## A Possible Solution to the Retention Issue: *CliftonStrengths for Students Online Assessment*

1

Transform the way  
students experience  
college

2

Help them thrive  
throughout their  
time on campus

3

Help them thrive  
beyond to next  
transition

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Gallup, 2018

*CliftonStrengths for Students* assists in creating thriving, engaged students. Over 600 colleges and universities worldwide use this platform to:

## Retention and Student Support

According to a 2015 study, researchers discovered that first-year students who took the *CliftonStrengths* assessment had **significantly higher retention rates** compared to their peers who did not take the assessment.

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Soria, K., Stubblefield, R., 2015

Control and Experimental Groups

## Retention and Student Support

### Solely taking the assessment is not enough

- The odds of retention increased for students who had strengths-related discussions with:
  - Administrators
  - Faculty
  - Other students

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Soria, K., Stubblefield, R., 2015

Research has also shown that solely taking the assessment is not enough, further in the study, it discussed that the odds of retention also increased for students who had strengths-related discussions with administrators, faculty, and other students.

## Retention and Student Support

Focusing on each student's well-being and engagement has a significant effect on their academic career.

Soria, K. M., Stubblefield, R. , 2015

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"I am now using my strengths to the best of my abilities. I had to figure out what they were and how to use them. I try to use them in an atmosphere where I will excel. It is also good to use them when you are not comfortable to grow more as a person. They have helped me find my purpose here on campus."

- FYS Fall 2019



## *CliftonStrengths* Research

- “...understanding one’s strengths has shown to be predictive of **attendance, credits earned, and student retention.**”

## Retention and Student Support

"I knew one of my strengths was my ability to help people. This class helped me realize my career choice as a counselor and helped me step out of my comfort zone to do what was best for ME!"

- FYS Fall 2019



When students focus on their strengths, they learn more effectively, which increases student **engagement**, and thus, **retention**.

Soria, K. M., Stubblefield, R. , 2015

## Research & Background of *CliftonStrengths* for Students

### Study of the best of the best:

- Over 2 million interviews, 5 decades, 30 different cultures
- Over 430+ talents identified
- Measured talents that were strongest and put them in 34 themes
- Over 16 million people around the world have taken the *CliftonStrengths* Quest
- 600 college campuses & 850,000 students in North America
- **Uniqueness factor:** 278,000 permutations of top 5 themes, 33 million permutations of all 34 themes

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Gallup, 2018

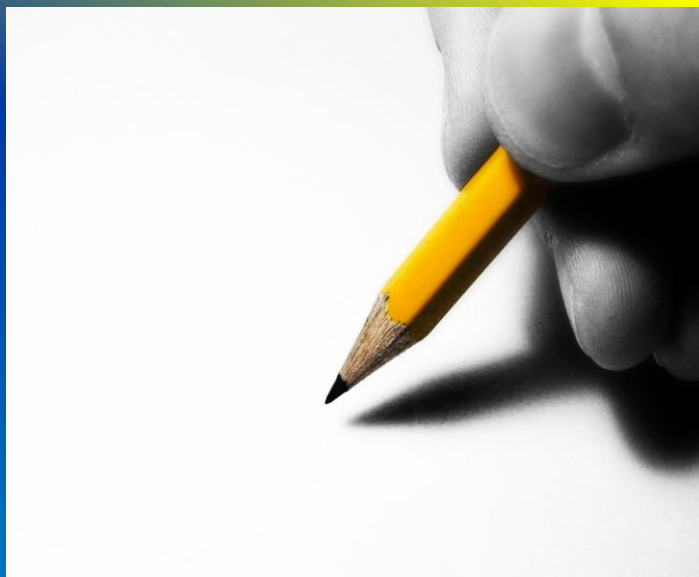
## Gallup Definitions

- **TALENT**- a reoccurring pattern of thought, feeling or behavior that can be productively applied with little effort or thought. (potential strength)
- **STRENGTH**- the ability to provide consistent near perfect performance in a given activity.



# Writing Challenge

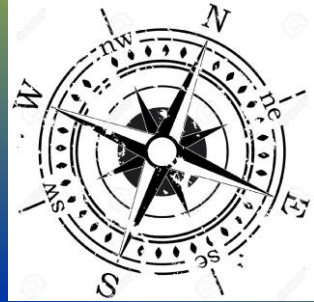
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## *CliftonStrengths for Students*

### **5 Guiding Principles:**

1. Themes are neutral
2. Themes are not labels
3. Lead with positive intent
4. Differences are advantages
5. People need one another



Leadership Domains			
Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking
<i>People who get things done!</i>	<i>People who take charge, speak up, and make sure the team is heard.</i>	<i>People who build strong relationships that can hold a team together</i>	<i>People who analyze information that can inform better decisions.</i>
Achiever Arranger Belief Consistency Deliberative Discipline Focus Responsibility Restorative	Activator Command Communication Competition Maximizer Self-Assurance Significance Woo	Adaptability Connectedness Developer Empathy Harmony Includer Individualization Positivity Relator	Analytical Context Futuristic Ideation Input Intellection Learner Strategic

Blurred Lines: We have all 34, we just use at different emphasis!

## Strengths in the Workplace

### Bonnie's Strengths:

- **Strategic**  
(Strategic Thinking)
- **Connectedness**  
(Relationship Building)
- **Empathy**  
(Relationship Building)
- **Intellection**  
(Strategic Thinking)
- **Developer**  
(Relationship Building)


### Melissa's Strengths:

- **Relator** (Relationship Building)
- **Achiever** (Executing)
- **Futuristic** (Strategic Thinking)
- **Responsibility** (Executing)
- **Arranger** (Executing)



## CliftonStrengths Resources


- **StrengthsQuest.com**
- **my.gallup.com** - \$11.99 for top 5 plus many resources  
\$49.99 for all 34 strengths and additional reports
- **Other Strengths Based Resources:**
- **High 5** <https://high5test.com/>  
- free to take \$29 to receive full report
- **Values in Action**  
<https://www.viacharacter.org/>  
- free to take and access to some resources \$20-\$50 for additional reports



### CliftonStrengths 34 Report

This report shows you how you are uniquely powerful. Learn how to unleash the infinite potential of your strongest CliftonStrengths and how to understand your full CliftonStrengths 34 profile.


[Download Report](#)



**Strengths Insight Guide**

Read your personalized Strengths Insights.


[Download Report](#)



**Signature Theme Report**

View full descriptions of your top five themes.

[Download Report](#)



**Theme Sequence Report**

View all 34 of your themes in order and read detailed descriptions of each.

[Download Report](#)

E-MODULE

## CliftonStrengths: Your Introduction >

MODULE

### Introduction to Strengths

Learn the secret behind strengths: What is strength? Can everyone have strengths? How do we create strength? How do I pinpoint what I do best?

MODULE

### I Have My Report, Now What?

Gain insights into your natural talents by working with your Top CliftonStrengths Themes.

MODULE

### Share your Strengths

We need others to hold up a mirror to us to better recognize our talents and become more familiar with our greatest strengths. Learn how to enrich your life by sharing your...



## **CliftonStrengths as a Leadership Model**

- Know and understand their strengths
- Build their lives around their strengths
- Surround themselves with other strengths
- Invent ways of using their strengths to deal with areas of non-strengths

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## The Best Schools Help Students:

### Discover Their *CliftonStrengths*

- Discover, understand, and maximize their natural talents.

### Develop Their *CliftonStrengths*

- Learn how to apply their strengths to succeed in and out of the classroom.

### Apply Their *CliftonStrengths* to Thrive

- Train staff to be a Strengths coach to develop happier, healthier, and more engaged students.

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StrengthsQuest.com, 2020

## The Best Schools Help Students:

### Discover Their *CliftonStrengths*

CliftonStrengths assessment helps students and educators to discover, understand and maximize their natural talents.

### Develop Their *CliftonStrengths*

Utilize resources and activities to support students as they learn how to apply their strengths to succeed in and out of the classroom.

### Apply Their *CliftonStrengths* to Thrive

The best schools send campus leaders through Gallup's CliftonStrengths coaching curriculum. These coaches bring proven strengths-based development techniques back to campus, allowing them to develop happier, healthier and more engaged students.

## Card Activity– What are Your Natural Tendencies?

- If you're going on a trip, do you plan out all the details for every day..... or, decide what to do as you go?
- If you had to go to an event of 100 people you don't know, how do you react? Sounds like a fun time.....or, I'd rather die a slow death.
- If you're playing a game: (sports, board games, otherwise), do you play to win.....or, play to have fun?
- Organize your closet/room/office?  
Do you – have things colored coordinated, or are lucky it is all hanging up/put away?



## *CliftonStrengths* Research

### **2 Available Strengths Tools:**

- *CliftonStrengths*
- **Values in Action** – free strengths assessment
  - <https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>

**“Focusing on an individual’s strengths can lead to an improvement in vocational and psychological health and well-being, consistent with counseling psychology’s philosophy.”**

## CliftonStrengths Research

**"Yes, my strengths have helped me find my purpose because I feel I have helped better myself and others. I find it fulfilling to help others as much as I can because I love to see people succeed."**

**- FYS 2019**



**• "...students':**

- Productivity**
- Life choices**
- Self-confidence**
- Academic success**

**...were positively impacted by strengths development."**

## CliftonStrengths Research

I've been using my strengths a lot to help me get ahead in some of my classes and learn more about myself and how I can study more efficiently and be myself more. I feel as though my strengths helped me define myself more, I feel like I always tried to be someone else but I now want to be myself and being more unique."

- FYS Fall 2019



- For strengths-based education to help students find purpose, the student must:

- Apply
- Develop
- Be intentional with their strengths and talents

Lopez & Louis, 2009

## CliftonStrengths Research

**"After doing the Clifton Strengths Assessment I have confirmed that I thrive in settings allowing me to build relationships. My top four strengths are all classified as relationship building strengths. From these I know that working with people and especially being a support system for them will lead me to success."**

**- FYS Fall 2019**



- **"From an individual perspective, an awareness of individual talents brings about greater self-confidence and a sense of identity and direction."**

Clifton et al, 2006

## Partner Share

- Share a theme you identify with and give an example of how it plays out in your life.
- How can you utilize this in your class/campus/first-year students?

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If you choose to use CliftonStrengths, someone on campus go through the strengths coaching

## In Summary

**After learning more about the *CliftonStrengths* assessment, we hope that you find value in assisting students:**

- Find Purpose on Campus and in Life
- Gain Confidence and Sense of Identity
- Improve Academic Achievement, Social Skills, & Leadership
- Improved Overall Well-being
- Teamwork
- Retention



# Questions?



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CliftonStrengths for Students:

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# THANK YOU!

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Please remember to submit your  
evaluation on Guidebook!



#FYE20

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