Dear First Year Seminar Instructor,

We are so glad you have chosen to use the StrengthsFinder instrument in your class. The following are resources for some of the activities we’ve found to be most effective in understanding strengths. We have included seven possible activities and made recommendations for their use based on how much time you’ve allotted for the strengths discussion.

If you only have 50 minutes...

1. Introduction to StrengthsFinder (2 to 3 minutes)
2. Activity #4 - The Truth About You (10 to 15 minutes)
3. Activity #2 - Top Strengths in the Class (30-35 minutes)

If you have 100 minutes...

1. Introduction to StrengthsFinder (2 to 3 minutes)
2. Activity #4 - The Truth About You (10 to 15 minutes)
3. Activity #3 - Talent Line Up (10 to 15 minutes)
4. Activity #2 - Top Strengths in the Class (50-60 minutes)
5. Activity #6 - Strengths in the Movies (15-20 minutes)

If you have 150 minutes...

1. Introduction to StrengthsFinder (2 to 3 minutes)
2. Activity #4 - The Truth About You (10 to 15 minutes)
3. Activity #3 - Talent Line Up (10 to 15 minutes)
4. Activity #2 - Top Strengths in the Class (35-40 minutes)
5. Activity #5 - Is There a Shadow Side to a Strengths Perspective? (10-15 minutes)
6. Activity #2 - Top Strengths in the Class (30-35 minutes) continued
7. Activity #6 - Strengths in the Movies (15-20 minutes)

Note: Consider Activity #1 and #7 optional homework/take home activities for all of these lesson plans.

Introduction to StrengthsFinder

Based on a 40-year study of human strengths, the Gallup organization created a language of the 34 most common talents and developed the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment to help people discover and describe these talents. In 2001, the initial version of this assessment tool was included with the bestselling management book Now, Discover Your Strengths. (http://strengths.gallup.com/110389/Research-Behind-StrengthsFinder-20.aspx)

Using the StrengthsFinder instrument, we want to empower students to:
- Be able to identify and surround themselves with the things that strengthen them.
- Be able to talk about their unique strengths as they relate to their academic and career goals.
- Have a language to discuss strengths-based thinking with peers.

We believe that discussing strengths with faculty and peers creates a confidence and self-awareness in students that they might not otherwise realize until the later half of college.
Additional Resources Available (referenced below):

“Hello My Name Is” (Activity #2): [http://dropbox.biola.edu/D61Bk](http://dropbox.biola.edu/D61Bk)
Talent Line Up PowerPoint (Activity #3): [http://dropbox.biola.edu/RkBeM](http://dropbox.biola.edu/RkBeM)
Strengths - 34 Themes PowerPoint (Activity #2): [http://dropbox.biola.edu/RkBeM](http://dropbox.biola.edu/RkBeM)
Strengths Videos (Activities #5 & 6): Please contact academic.advising@biola.edu to request these videos.
Strengths Activity Course Pack (Activities #1 & 7): [http://dropbox.biola.edu/5kBkf](http://dropbox.biola.edu/5kBkf)

For further information, please contact:

Carrie Stockton
carrie.stockton@biola.edu

The Advising Center
562.903.4782
academic.advising@biola.edu
SUGGESTED STRENGTHS ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1 - STRENGTHSFINDER REFLECTION
(adapted from StrengthsQuest™ Activity Workbook)
You will find this activity handout in the Strengths Course Pack materials.

Option 1: In-Class Activity
Ask students to use their Signature Theme Report and use the questions to analyze their results. To generate conversation, use the pair-share-compare strategy. Have students work in groups of two (or three) and share their responses to each of the questions. Once students have had the opportunity to share their responses in the small group, come back together as a large group, and ask each group to report on their discussion.

Option 2: Journalizing
Alternatively, you can ask students to use the journaling function of the StrengthsQuest Web site to complete this and other activities. Click Journal from the homepage, and follow the directions to add, sort, print, or make an entry. Upon returning to class, you can ask students to turn in their responses and/or facilitate a discussion regarding their reactions to the StrengthsFinder assessment.
Activity #2 - Top Strengths in the Class

Resources Needed
• Strengths Discovery Guide or results page (Students print online results and bring to class with them)
• “Hello My Name Is” Sheet (See Additional Resources)
• Markers
• Tape
• List of which strengths are most common in your class
(Students should email their five strengths to you before class)

This activity is best facilitated in a circle. Start by asking
students to create name tags or name tents to use throughout your sessions. On the name tags, ask
students to print their names and their five Signature Themes. You can use the “Hello My Name Is”
Sheet and have them create the name tags themselves. These signs allow students to see one
another’s strengths to aid your discussion. If you would like, you can use the PowerPoint with
 corresponding images for each of the 34 themes (See Additional Resources)

At this point you can facilitate the discussion one of two ways:
1. Move through all of the themes alphabetically.
2. Only discuss themes that your students have, starting with the most common themes.
Each method has advantages and disadvantages, but if you are short on time the second method
might be better.

When discussing a theme you can start by asking the students who have this theme to raise their
hands. You can then read, or have a student read, the theme description aloud. Students should
have printed their results page and brought them to class. Full theme descriptions here:
http://www.strengthsquest.com/content/File/143324/All_34_Themes_Full_Description.pdf

After reading the descriptor ask students with this theme to share their thoughts. Some questions
might be:
- “Do you agree with your description? It’s okay if you don’t.”
- “Where have you seen this theme manifest in your life?”
- “Can you think of a specific example or story of a time you felt strengthened through
  this theme?”
- “Does anyone who doesn’t have this theme have any questions for the people who
do?”

Feel free to let these discussions carry on as long as they need to without sacrificing time for
other themes or activities. When it is time to move on to the next theme start the process over
again. Questions that might come up later in the discussion are:
- “Luiz, you also had Belief as one of your themes, correct? How do you think that
  interacts with this theme?”
- “Sarah, you don’t seem to be agreeing with this theme, why is that? Is there another
  theme that describes you better that wasn’t in your top 5?”
ACTIVITY #3 - TALENT LINE UP
(adapted from StrengthsQuest™ Activity Workbook)

You can utilize the “Talent Line Up” PowerPoint (See Additional Resources), or you can just make the statements found below. During this activity, students are presented with a situation and two extreme reactions to this situation. Students are then asked to line up based upon their reaction to the situations. Students need not remain in a single file line; they can “bunch up” if necessary. This value line activity can be done before or after the students have completed the Clifton StrengthsFinder.

Read each situation and reaction, one at a time. Then instruct the students to line up end-to-end according to their reaction. When all the students have found their place, pick people in various places throughout the line to discuss why they are where they are.

Individuals at either end of the line will often clearly exhibit a certain theme (for example, in the first example below, those who respond “Oh boy!” often have Woo as one of their Signature Themes). Be careful not to assign themes to students based on this exercise alone. Students who find themselves in the middle may end up there for a variety of reasons. The motivation for their behavior varies as their talents vary. If they have taken the StrengthsFinder instrument, they should be asked to consider how their themes might relate to where they choose to stand. Below are a few situations and extreme reactions. Consider creating your own situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Reaction Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are invited to a party with people you do not know.</td>
<td>Oh Boy! Oh No!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are asked to participate in a competition.</td>
<td>Let’s start now! Do we have to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are required to work on a complex project.</td>
<td>Details . . . Yes! Ideas . . . Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to find your way to a place you have never been before.</td>
<td>No problem! No way!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Activity #4 - “The Truth About You” Video Discussion**
*(See Strengths Resource Videos Enclosed)*

These clips are excerpts of a video enclosed in the following book:


Marcus Buckingham worked for the Gallup Organization for many years and is a well-known proponent of strengths philosophy. This video will allow a discussion surrounding some of the basic concepts associated with strengths. The following are discussion questions for the three clips included in the video resources. These video clips are part of a longer 20-minute video which features a young boy in his music class. You may want to explain to your students that his story displays the concepts Buckingham is identifying.

**Defining Strengths**
- Do you agree with his definition of strengths and weaknesses?
- What are some things that you are good at but you don’t enjoy doing?
- What are some things that you look forward to and truly enjoy doing, whether you’re good at them or not?

**Weakness Fixing**
- Do you agree with his idea of focusing on your strengths? Is this possible? Is there anything wrong with focusing on strengths?
- Do you think that working on your weaknesses will help you grow more than working on your strengths?
- How can you apply this idea to your time at Biola, the way you spend your semester?

**Well-Rounded Teams**
- What are some good teams in sports, business, or music?
- How do the individuals in those teams interact with each other?
ACTIVITY #5 - IS THERE A SHADOW SIDE TO A STRENGTHS-BASED PERSPECTIVE? (adapted from StrengthsQuest™ Activity Workbook) You will find this activity handout in the Strengths Course Pack materials.

This activity asks students to consider the implications to the application of talents in a negative way. Ask students to read the Gallup Management Journal excerpt, and facilitate a brief discussion about the misapplication of talents. To facilitate this discussion, consider the following vital points:

Review the definition of strength: The ability to consistently produce a nearly perfect positive outcome in a specific task. The key to this definition is the phrase: “produce a nearly perfect positive outcome.”

- The strengths-based approach helps people see themselves and others as they really are.
- When we maximize our innate talents, we can make powerful, positive contributions that can drive positive outcomes.
- If Susan’s Analytical talents lead her to wear people out with her persistent questioning, she is applying those talents in a negative way.
- When Susan channels her Analytical talents to ask questions that make her consulting firm more valuable to its clients (without driving her teammates nuts), her talents can contribute powerfully to the workplace and the firm’s objectives. When Susan does this, she is using her greatest talents to “produce a nearly perfect positive outcome,” and there is nothing bad, or dark, about that.
- A strengths-based approach does not magically change the way people feel, act, or behave. It does not make us perfect students or perfect in our jobs. Nor do we cease to have problems or struggles at school or work. A strengths-based approach, however, does allow us to begin to understand how we or others may be struggling. We can come to a new understanding to help us learn how to channel our talents and those of others to achieve real change — and real results.

After this discussion, ask your students to consider the shadow side of one of their Signature Themes and answer the questions below the story of Susan. Debrief this activity by asking students to share their answers with a small group. This exercise can potentially be done with all five themes.
**Activity #6 - Strengths in the Movies**  
*(See Strengths Resource Videos Enclosed)*

This activity allows students to use their knowledge of Strengths and identify themes in characters from film and TV clips. The following are a list of questions you might want to ask to enhance a dialogue related to strengths:

- What do you believe are the Signature Themes of the main character(s) of the film? Why?
- When in the film do the main character(s) use their strengths to achieve excellence?
- Describe instances in the film where you saw evidence of the “shadow side” of a character’s themes of talent.

Students will most likely find themes not listed above. Feel free to ask them why they think that character has the theme they mentioned.

Here is a list of the video clips we’ve included and possible strengths you might be able to identify in the characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Possible Strength(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter</td>
<td>Hermione</td>
<td>Activator, Analytical, Intellection, Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Network</td>
<td>Mark Zuckerberg</td>
<td>Belief, Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King's Speech</td>
<td>Lionel</td>
<td>Developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Office</td>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Office</td>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Includer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk the Line</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Restorative, Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch Me If You Can</td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Ideation, Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride and Prejudice</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Self-Assurance, Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enchanted</td>
<td>Giselle</td>
<td>Positivity, Empathy, Relator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY #7 - VERIFYING MY SIGNATURE THEMES
(adapted from StrengthsQuest™ Activity Workbook)
You will find this activity handout in the Strengths Course Pack materials.

This activity helps students examine how their Signature Themes are manifested in their daily activities and how their Signature Themes are seen through the eyes of others. Upon returning to class, you can ask them to turn in their responses and/or facilitate a discussion regarding their reactions to this activity. Consider using the following questions to facilitate discussion:

• How did it feel to ask others about your talents?
• Did some people see your themes differently than you did? How so?
• Were you surprised by anything that the other person said?
• What did you learn as a result of completing this exercise?