

Advising Strategies for Course Selection on the Basis of *StrengthsFinder*® Themes

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Achiever – loves to be challenged – prefers challenging classes that are “doable” – likes profs that have a reputation for stretching students—“tough but fair” – encourage them to choose classes that may be unfamiliar to them and will challenge them

Activator – loves to learn by doing – courses with hands-on activities, lots of class participation, experiential learning – avoid classes that are all lecture or with a rigid syllabus – find profs that allow optional assignments

Adaptability – loves flexibility -- needs to explore lots of options before choosing a major – work hard to help the student see how various course choices could be used to fit any major or to meet graduation requirements – flexibility is the key! – these students will tend to add/drop more than the usual student, so allow them to register for more courses than they intend to take, knowing they will drop the ones that don’t interest them – remind them of the drop/add deadline

Analytical – loves to think critically -- needs to respect the expert – put them in courses where the professor is a noted authority, or is known for presenting information in a logical, credible manner – this student is often critical, especially of disorganized instructors – help them choose organized, coherent profs that encourage critical thinking – encourage them to take some of the “hard sciences” each term – this student is also often a sequential learner who wants things laid out for them step-by-step – this is the student who will appreciate creating an “action plan” or a 4-year graduation plan with the advisor!

Arranger – loves to design their own educational plan – this student likes the challenge of creating their own major or mapping out their own courses and may need little help from an advisor to do that – provide the needed information, then get out of their way! – this is the student who will thrive in independent study courses, who probably would enjoy study abroad or taking courses from other universities – this is also an ideal Teaching Assistant for professors

Belief – loves to see the value in a course – this student has strong values/beliefs that guide their choices, so their course selection needs to be congruent with their values or passions – may prefer profs with strong beliefs that are the same as theirs – may enjoy ethics courses, philosophy, religion, but also may be a handful for the prof – encourage them to take courses from profs with strong opinions and beliefs, regardless of whether or not they agree with those beliefs

Command – loves to make their own decisions – wants to plan their own curriculum, but for different reasons than the arranger (arranger wants to do it for the enjoyment of playing around with all the schedules and options; command wants to do it so they are in control of their own choices) – has a somewhat combative learning style, so would enjoy profs with strong opinions that encourage debate in the classroom – help them weigh the pros and cons of various courses or majors, then get out of their way so they can make their own decision – focus on decision-making skills with them and never give advice!

Communication – loves to tell their story – prefers courses where there is a lot of class participation – likes profs who tell stories or use narrative in teaching and who allow students to do likewise – choose courses where they will be graded for their class participation or where they can make oral presentations – theatre or communications courses will probably be of interest

Competition – loves to be the best – this student enjoys courses where they are compared to others – grading on the curve, posting grades by ID, or otherwise letting students know where they stand in comparison to others in the class appeals to them – may enjoy speech classes, classes where they can debate, or courses where they can rack up extra credit points – will want to choose courses where they can not only be successful, but be at the top of the class—especially if it's a difficult class

Connectedness – loves to see the connections between courses – interdisciplinary courses will appeal, as will courses where connections are made with other courses in the curriculum – show them the connections between the Core or Gen Ed curriculum -- tends to enjoy humanities, history, philosophy, theology, psychology, and other courses where the “why” questions are asked

Consistency – loves fairness – prefers courses where expectations are clear and spelled out in advance – loves grading rubrics – dislikes being in courses where the prof plays favorites or where expectations change during the term – surprises are no fun to these students, so they will want to map out their educational plan well in advance and then stick to it – enjoys routines, processes, and other sequential procedures, so may enjoy the sciences, statistics, accounting, music, engineering or law

Context – loves to know the background – enjoys courses that use primary sources, original texts or artifacts – enjoys history, political science, comparative religion, philosophy, economics, and other courses that allow them to investigate the “root causes” of today’s events – dislikes courses that involve rote memorization

Deliberative – loves to think it through – this student wants to know all the options and have all the information in hand before making a decision – will probably be well-prepared for the advising session and will appreciate an advisor who is well-informed and fairly directive – likes to know that the advisor can be trusted – will

want to double check everything and will be concerned about meeting requirements – prefers courses where the expectations are clear, where class time is used well, and where students take the course seriously – encourage them to get copies of syllabi before choosing their courses, so there will be no surprises

Developer – loves to encourage others – this student thrives in courses where they can assist other students, work in teams, do group projects, or tutor – they enjoy service learning courses immensely – supplemental instruction, field studies, or being a peer leader in a course also appeal to them – an educational plan that includes these elements each term will be particularly satisfying to them

Discipline – loves organization – this student will also be well-prepared for the advising session and usually knows what they want – enjoys structured courses, well-organized profs with clear expectations, grading rubrics – will probably want to take all the required courses first to “get them out of the way” – will want to carefully plan their course schedule and will care about the times classes are taught and how they will get their assignments done – will want study time in between classes, so won’t want to schedule any back-to-back classes – will enjoy seeing the syllabus in advance of choosing the class

Empathy – loves to understand how others feel – enjoys courses where the professor relates well to students and forms connections to them – tends to enjoy psychology, social work, education, and other disciplines that encourage empathy – courses where they can read novels, watch movies, or journal are often a good match – the relationship with the professor is important to these students and they will care if that is a good fit

Focus – loves to reach their destination – often has powerful and specific goals – tends to enjoy courses that are practical in nature or have practical value to them – will ask questions of how a course will prepare them for life or will help them reach their goal – can concentrate for long periods of time and often has very effective study habits, so can undertake challenging courses if they see a practical result of taking the course – prefers profs who stay on track and don’t ramble – probably will have their classes mapped out in advance but may have questions about why they have to take certain courses

Futuristic – loves to have a vision – probably will enjoy the advising relationship as they ask questions of “what if” and map out various strategies with the advisor – enjoy challenging classes and profs with a reputation for risk-taking – probably can tell the advisor where they want to be in 5 years, but may need help figuring out how to get there

Harmony – loves consensus – likes courses that are practical in nature, dislikes courses where there are debates and where controversy is encouraged – tends to enjoy the advising relationship and tends to see the advisor as an expert

guide, so these students may stop in more frequently for advising – likes to gather people’s opinions before making a decision – good listeners who don’t often contribute their own opinion, but are good at helping people hear each other’s opinions and what they have in common – may not let you know if they disagree with you, which makes advising a little tricky

Ideation – loves ideas and the big picture – enjoys creating their own educational plan – likes independent study or designing their own assignments – enjoys doing research with professors – enjoys courses that involve creative assignments rather than exams – enjoys profs with diverse ideas, enjoys learning from other students and hearing their ideas – willing to try anything that sounds interesting – may need advisor’s help to stay on track to meet graduation requirements because every class sounds interesting to them

Includer – loves to involve everyone – likes courses where there is diversity and lots of class participation – involvement in class is important to them – sociology, anthropology, psychology, social work and other social sciences probably will interest them – service learning will also appeal

Individualization – loves the uniqueness of others – will enjoy reading about people and studying different cultures – appreciates profs that value diversity and allow students to design their own assignments – will not want to be treated as a “typical” student but will expect the advisor to appreciate their uniqueness and help them plan courses that are especially suited to their learning style or other needs – will enjoy courses with lots of class discussion where they can learn from others – tends to enjoy literature, sociology, psychology, and other courses about people

Input – loves information – will want every possible piece of information you can give them as an advisor – will probably have read all the student handbooks and catalog information in advance of the appointment -- will enjoy classes in which research is valued – will enjoy profs who are “experts” or are well-read – class discussions, lots of reading, and use of the internet or library are appealing – doing research with faculty may appeal

Intellection – loves to think – enjoys classes where their thinking is stimulated – intellectual, analytical courses may appeal – enjoy writing papers, reading a lot – philosophy, theology, literature may appeal – may not always respond right away because they need time to reflect – may go away from the advising session to think, then come back with questions or new ideas

Learner – loves the process of learning – honors classes will appeal, as will courses that challenge and stretch – will want to take classes that are interesting to them and may not care as much about meeting requirements – enjoy working with faculty or doing research with faculty – enjoys class discussions

Maximizer – loves strengths and excellence – likes courses taught by profs whose teaching style matches their learning style – enjoys elective courses where they can develop new talents and strengths – likes to mentor or tutor others – enjoys working with faculty and tends to seek out mentors to learn from

Positivity – loves enthusiasm – likes courses that are fun – appreciates profs with a sense of humor – needs to make work fun – likes class participation and group projects – likes profs who praise them and are optimistic

Relator – loves to work with close friends – who teaches the class is more important than what is taught – relationships with profs matter – enjoys taking classes with friends – sense of community in the classroom is important to them

Responsibility – loves to see things through to completion – will want to take required courses first – will want to know what is expected in each class – likes profs who are consistent and can be trusted – enjoys having a faculty mentor – will usually be prepared for advising sessions and will follow through on educational plans

Restorative – loves to solve problems – case studies, problem solving exercises, and other class activities that allow them to come up with “solutions” will appeal to them – appreciates feedback from profs – always wants to know how something can be done better or how they can improve – may enjoy political science, sociology, or psychology

Self-Assurance – loves to be right – very confident of themselves and their abilities without necessarily being arrogant – important for them to be in control of their grades and achievement, so will want a prof who uses grading rubrics or has clear expectations – enjoys getting to know the prof and understanding what is expected – enjoys challenging and stimulating classes

Significance – loves to make a difference – enjoys class participation – enjoys classes where they can be successful – prefers classes that are relevant to their goals and desires – enjoys independent study or creating their own assignments – appreciates feedback from profs

Strategic – loves to see the alternative – likes classes that emphasize options, alternative solutions, and strategic thinking – independent study often appeals, as do creative assignments

Woo – loves to meet new people – enjoys taking a variety of classes – enjoys new material and opportunities to meet people they wouldn't otherwise meet – relationship with prof is important – group projects usually appeal