

## Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant Final Report

**Project Title:** Using StrengthsQuest to help students understand themselves and others so they can thrive academically and relationally.

**Grant Recipients:** Sharon George, Paul Kwant, Diane Maguire, Lori Armstrong, Carri Griffis, Mary Holmes, Jackie Hughes

**Date Project Started:** The project was for Fall Semester 2016, but we started preparing during the Summer Semester of 2016. We have to wait until September 2017 to run the final report to determine if students were retained from Fall 2016-Fall 2017.

**Amount of Money Funded by the Mini-Grant** We were funded \$2,200 for this project.

### 1. How was the grant used to address a diversity or inclusion related goal?

We chose four diversity goals that we were trying to impact. **Goal 1:** Create a University that is respectful of differences and civil toward people who are different. For this goal, we focused on **Strategy B;** Provide diversity and anti-bias training annually for Residence Advisors, Student Government, and Leaders of Registered Student Organizations. Outside of our FSUS courses, we had successfully created an RSO called Building on Strengths and Success (BOSS). BOSS focuses on the promotion of the individual Strengths and potential of a diverse range of individual students throughout the campus at Ferris State. One of the functions of this group is to train students and employees (who are in advisor, mentor, faculty, etc. roles) how individual Strengths define each person's uniqueness and how to respect and honor one another in light of their diverse abilities. The grant was used to purchase the Strengths codes needed for RSO members. **Goal 3:** Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse population. For this goal, we focused on **Strategy D;** In each college, someone should be charged with monitoring the achievement gaps in the college. Our project has monitored the achievement gaps among students in Strengths-based FSUS courses and compared it to the University statistics in an effort to determine if incorporating Strengths into FSUS is effective in the retention of non-white students compared with white students. **Goal 5:** Improve inclusivity by incorporating diversity and inclusion in significant ways in teaching, learning, and research. For this goal, we focused on **Strategy E;** Develop applied research opportunities in collaboration with university partners to provide meaningful undergraduate research opportunities based in diverse communities. Based on the results of the measurable outcomes for this project, we originally thought we would want to try this project in other college's FSUS courses across campus to see if the results are similar (i.e. retention and achievement gap rates). However, because our measurable outcomes were inconclusive, we plan to make modifications and adjustments to our teaching practices and re-evaluate student learning. We have, however, recruited new FSUS faculty members to participate the Strengths-based cohort, thus opening the student audience to include TIP-students and coincidentally incorporating more diversity by including under-privileged students. We are also in the process of scheduling to present on this experience to all FSUS instructors, as well as, to faculty members who attend our session in the Compelling Approaches to Teaching and Learning Series through the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. **Goal 6:** Build upon existing partnerships and create new partnerships that enhance the University's commitment to and work with diverse populations. For this goal, we focused on **Strategy E;** Create ways to intentionally bring students and local community people together. We had believed that some FSUS students will join the BOSS RSO as a result of their experiences in the course and that BOSS would intentionally seek to partner with students from underrepresented groups and international students to do community service work. We managed to get BOSS registered, but they were not ready to recruit membership before the 2016 Fall semester

ended, therefore, we were not able to tell our FSUS students about BOSS or how to apply for membership. We hope to get the Fall 2017 FSUS students to apply for membership with BOSS and for BOSS to partner with international and under-represented student groups to work on the project in the 2017 Fall semester.

2. Describe the audience that was impacted by the grant's implementation. Provide quantitative data, if available.

College of Business Freshmen in the Fall 2016 FSUS course was impacted by the implementation of the Strengths Codes. The quantitative data are in the appendices and impact is summarized in question four below, which says the results are inconclusive. Overall, we feel Strengths does have a positive impact on students. This impact cannot currently be measured because students may not immediately realize how it affects them, therefore only time will tell how Strengths influences them in the future. Furthermore, each cohort of students seem to respond to the Strengths differently and the faculty members continue to make adjustments to enhance the quality of the course. In 2017, the students got to have an individual discussion with a trained-Strength student mentor. In a survey conducted with the 2017 Strengths-based FSUS cohort, 124 students said they "Definitely" agreed that they were satisfied overall with their individual Strengths discussion, while the remaining 21 students responded they "Somewhat" agree.

3. Grant recipients are required to provide a short narrative that details the specific efforts each of the collaborators made to the implementation of the grant. **Sharon George** purchased, organized, and administered the StrengthsQuest codes. She made sure all mini-grant faculty participants received the proper code for each student in each course. She also made sure the students had name tags with their Strengths listed and that faculty had the StrengthsQuest digital materials needed. **Lori Armstrong** arranged for classrooms to be used when all of our students met at the same time. **Jackie Hughes** administered the Post StrengthsQuest Survey. **Mary Holmes** ensured all students were added to the StrengthsQuest non-integrated Blackboard course shell. **Paul Kwant** setup and organized the BOSS RSO. **Carri Griffis** worked with the BOSS students on getting organized and coming up with a plan. **ALL** mini-grant faculty participants worked tirelessly and collaboratively to align the FSUS curriculum to Strengths. Each participant met weekly to actively share ideas, tips, and tricks on ways to engage the students and to maintain a standard of course delivery.
4. What is your overall assessment of the project's impact on the Ferris community? How did this impact compare to what you expected?

After reviewing the data from the three measurable outcomes, the overall assessment of the project's impact is inconclusive. This is not what we expected. For measurable outcome 1, we expected many of the survey results to have more students reporting Strongly Agree or Agree. Only one of the 10 questions improve, which was "I have become more aware of my individual uniqueness." (See Appendix A.) For measurable outcome 2, we compared the mean of our Strength-based FSUS course evaluation scores for 2015 with the mean of the institutional FSUS scores and listed the differences. We did the same for the 2016 scores. In 2015, we did better than the institutional FSUS courses for all but two areas. In 2016, we were more intentional with applying Strengths and were below the institutional mean in seven areas. (See Appendix B.) Finally, for measurable outcome 3, the retention rate for 2016 fall freshman retention to 2017 fall sophomore was 73% for the Strength-based courses. While this seems good, that number is inconclusive when comparing it to previous years. When looking at the chart (See Appendix C), the first-year retention rate for non-Strengths FSUS courses for this group of instructors was 80% in 2012 and 75% in 2013. The first year we tried using Strengths was in 2014 and we had a 66% first-year retention rate, which was the

lowest. In 2015, the Strengths-based FSUS courses had a 75% first-year retention rate. We thought these three measurable would show that by infusing Strengths into the FSUS courses, students would understand themselves better as individuals, students would have better relationships with others, and students would persist by doing better academically. We put more effort into applying the Strengths to the FSUS curriculum in 2016, but the data shows we did better in 2015 when we had a slightly lesser emphasis on Strengths.

5. Present a final budget including all funds received and spent related to the project, with special focus on the funds received via the Diversity Mini-grant.

We requested \$2,700. We spent \$2,200 on 220 Strengths codes and over \$500 on printing. We printed Strengths materials that explain each Strength in detail, along with the leadership domains. We also printed name tags with the student's Strengths that they wore to every class with lanyards, which we also purchased. Because we estimated a higher FSUS enrollment when we were funded, we purchased 220 Strengths codes as written in our mini-grant application. We ended up using 130 codes in Fall 2016. We used some of the codes for the BOSS (Building on Strengths for Success) RSO and the remaining codes went toward the 144 codes for the Strengths-based FSUS students Fall 2017 semester.

**Primary Grant Recipient's Signature: The College of Business Strengths-based FSUS Instructors**

**Date: February 6, 2018**

## Appendix A: Measurable Outcome 1

In Fall 2015, we had a 40-question StrengthsQuest post-survey and required all Strengths-based FSUS students to take it. The survey has questions categorized by personal, relationships, academic, and professional. We have analyzed the results of the survey to determine the effectiveness of our teaching and integrating the concept of StrengthsQuest in all aspects of each FSUS topic (e.g. Respect/Diversity, Teaching/Learning Styles, Advisor/Advisee Relationships, Participation/Contribution to Campus/Community, etc.). On the survey, we have observed areas in which we need improvement and are meeting regularly to come up with teaching and learning strategies that will increase the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” percentages in the highlighted question on the attached. The highlighted questions are mostly related to relationships and academic success. The specific measurable outcome will be the percent increase for the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” responses to the highlighted survey questions.

	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2015 % Agree	Fall 2016 % Agree
# of People who completed the survey:	76	102		
Q 15. Learning about my strengths helps me analyze why relationships are not working: Agree	56.579	40.196		
Q 15. Learning about my strengths helps me analyze why relationships are not working: Neither	19.737	24.51		
Q 15. Learning about my strengths helps me analyze why relationships are not working: Disagree	5.263	6.863		
Q 15. Learning about my strengths helps me analyze why relationships are not working: Strongly Disagree	0	5.882		
Q 16. I have become more aware of my individual uniqueness: Strongly Agree	18.421	19.608	38	77
Q 16. I have become more aware of my individual uniqueness: Agree	55.263	57.843		
Q 16. I have become more aware of my individual uniqueness: Neither	17.105	13.725		
Q 16. I have become more aware of my individual uniqueness: Disagree	6.579	2.941		
Q 16. I have become more aware of my individual uniqueness: Strongly Disagree	2.632	4.902		
Q 17. I understand how strengths are influenced by other strengths: Strongly Agree	25	25.49	91	77
Q 17. I understand how strengths are influenced by other strengths: Agree	65.789	51.961		
Q 17. I understand how strengths are influenced by other strengths: Neither	5.263	17.647		
Q 17. I understand how strengths are influenced by other strengths: Disagree	1.316	0.98		
Q 17. I understand how strengths are influenced by other strengths: Strongly Disagree	1.316	2.941		
Q 18. I have more respect for other people as a result of learning about my strengths: Strongly Agree	15.789	17.647	72	59
Q 18. I have more respect for other people as a result of learning about my strengths: Agree	56.579	41.176		
Q 18. I have more respect for other people as a result of learning about my strengths: Neither	14.474	28.431		
Q 18. I have more respect for other people as a result of learning about my strengths: Disagree	11.842	5.882		
Q 18. I have more respect for other people as a result of learning about my strengths: Strongly Disagree	1.316	5.882		
Q 19. I have a greater respect for cultural difference now that I see how culture influences strengths and the expression of strengths: Strongly Agree	18.421	16.667	75	57
Q 19. I have a greater respect for cultural difference now that I see how culture influences strengths and the expression of strengths: Agree	56.579	40.196		
Q 19. I have a greater respect for cultural difference now that I see how culture influences strengths and the expression of strengths: Neither	18.421	31.373		
Q 19. I have a greater respect for cultural difference now that I see how culture influences strengths and the expression of strengths: Disagree	2.632	4.902		
Q 19. I have a greater respect for cultural difference now that I see how culture influences strengths and the expression of strengths: Strongly Disagree	1.316	5.882		
Q 20. I am looking at people more positively: Strongly Agree	19.737	17.647	64	62
Q 20. I am looking at people more positively: Agree	44.737	44.118		
Q 20. I am looking at people more positively: Neither	22.368	31.373		
Q 20. I am looking at people more positively: Disagree	10.526	0.98		
Q 20. I am looking at people more positively: Strongly Disagree	1.316	4.902		
Q 21. I intentionally try to see people in light of their strengths: Strongly Agree	17.105	17.647	57	50

## Appendix B: Measurable Outcome 2

After each semester, the students complete the FSU Seminar course evaluations. The data from the evaluation is compiled and returned to each instructor. The highlighted items in the attached Course Evaluation form are related to relationships and academic success. If we are integrating the concepts of StrengthsQuest seamlessly into the FSUS topics, we believe that the mean scores for each highlighted criterion will increase from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016.

	Fall 2015 Difference	Fall 2016 Difference	Fall 2015 Institutional Mean	Fall 2016 Institutional Mean	Fall 2015 Strengths Total Mean	Fall 2016 Strengths Total Mean
<b>My FSU Seminar course helped me learn how to:</b>						
understand and avoid procrastination	0.03	0.12	3.73	3.80	3.76	3.92
create a weekly study schedule	0.09	0.15	3.75	3.78	3.84	3.93
use a planner and to-do list	0.02	0.18	3.83	3.89	3.85	4.07
set realistic goals	0.02	0.01	4.03	4.09	4.05	4.10
apply study skills strategies to use in my academic courses	0.08	0.05	3.93	4.01	4.01	4.06
interact with faculty	0.17	0.03	3.88	3.96	4.05	3.99
interact with my academic advisor	0.08	0.01	4.08	4.18	4.16	4.19
adjust my learning style to the way a professor is teaching	0.21	0.04	3.74	3.83	3.95	3.88
<b>The FSU Seminar course helped me learn where to go to:</b>						
receive academic assistance with my classes	0.15	-0.06	3.93	4.04	4.08	3.99
<b>The FSU Seminar course increased my understanding of:</b>						
differences and similarities among the members of the diverse Ferris community	0.08	-0.11	4.04	4.14	4.12	4.04
the FSU student dignity and anti-harassment policy	-0.05	-0.08	3.94	4.03	3.89	3.95
test taking strategies	-0.22	-0.09	3.87	3.87	3.65	3.78
the FSU core values (collaboration, diversity, ethical community, excellence, learning opportunity)	0.05	-0.06	4.12	4.23	4.18	4.17
the university's general education requirements	0.07	-0.02	4.13	4.21	4.20	4.19
appropriate student contact (Code of Student Community Standards)	0.00	-0.02	4.06	4.14	4.06	4.12

### Appendix C: Measurable Outcome 3

Dr. Kristen Salomonson ran the attached “Retention of Select FSUS 100 Courses” report to show the retention rate among FSUS students from all FSUS courses taught by a particular instructor. By having this data, each instructor can measure the impact being made on the retention rate.

#### Retention of Select FSUS 100 Courses

INSTRUCTOR	TERM	CRN	Student Count	Retained Next Fall	% Retained Next Fall	Retained 2 Years	% Retained 2 Years	Retained 3 Years	% Retained 3 Years
Jackie Hughes	Fall 2012	80253	19	14	74	11	58	11	58
Mary Holmes	Fall 2012	80211	16	14	88	12	75	12	75
<b>Total:</b>			<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>66%</b>
Jackie Hughes	Fall 2013	83093	18	15	83	13	72	13	72
Mary Holmes	Fall 2013	83094	19	14	74	12	63	12	63
Paul Kwant	Fall 2013	83095	20	14	70	13	65	10	50
<b>Total:</b>			<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>61%</b>
Diane McGuire	Fall 2014	82126	18	9	50	8	44	3	17
Jackie Hughes	Fall 2014	82130	18	10	56	6	33	4	22
Mary Holmes	Fall 2014	82137	23	17	74	15	65	14	61
Paul Kwant	Fall 2014	82125	17	14	82	13	76	11	65
Sharon George	Fall 2014	82129	18	12	67	7	39	5	28
<b>Total:</b>			<b>94</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>39%</b>
Diane McGuire	Fall 2015	81292	22	15	68	12	55		
Jackie Hughes	Fall 2015	81290	15	9	60	7	47		
Mary Holmes	Fall 2015	81285	12	10	83	7	58		
Paul Kwant	Fall 2015	81293	21	15	71	13	62		
Sharon George	Fall 2015	80683	20	18	90	17	85		
Sharon George	Fall 2015	80684	23	18	78	18	78		
<b>Total:</b>			<b>113</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>65%</b>		
Lori Armstrong	201608	81604	20	15	75				
Lori Armstrong	201608	81622	20	15	75				
Diane McGuire	Fall 2016	81617	14	11	79				
Jackie Hughes	Fall 2016	81615	14	10	71				
Mary Holmes	Fall 2016	81611	16	9	56				
Paul Kwant	Fall 2016	81619	13	11	85				
Sharon George	Fall 2016	83266	18	15	83				
Sharon George	Fall 2016	83267	15	9	60				
<b>Total:</b>			<b>130</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>73%</b>				
<b>All Students in all Semesters:</b>			<b>429</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>73%</b>				
<b>NON STRENGTHS students:</b>			<b>92</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>77%</b>				
<b>All STRENGTHS Students:</b>			<b>337</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>72%</b>				

## Appendix D: 2017 Strengths-based FSUS Cohort Survey on Strengths Discussion

### FSUS 201708 STRENGTHS DISCUSSION SURVEY

145 Students Surveyed

	Definitely	Somewhat	Not at All	Yes	No	Maybe	No Answer
Were you overall satisfied with your individual Strengths discussion?	124	21	0	0	0	0	0
Did you find your Strengths discussion to be helpful?	103	38	4	0	0	0	0
Have you been more aware of how you are using your Strengths in your life since your discussion?	78	60	7	0	0	0	0
Do you think the individuals you had your Strengths discussion with were able to interpret you and your Strengths well?	103	38	2	0	0	0	2
Would you like to find out more about the Strengths RSO?	0	0	0	32	94	1	18
Totals		157	13	32	94	1	20

01/22/2018 Updated