

Part One:

**Your College,
Your Strengths,
Your Journey**

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Kristen put a lot of thought into where she was going to go to college — and what she was going to do once she got there.

She made 10 visits to seven schools. For each one, she made a spreadsheet filled with all the classes she would take. She finally made a decision and enrolled at a large Midwestern college where her brother was the only other person she knew.

Her priorities were: make friends, have a meaningful experience and really learn how to “go with the flow.”

Now, going with the flow never had been among Kristen’s strong suits. In fact, she felt like she had to change the “controlling,” “unspontaneous” parts of herself when she got to college. She saw those attributes as weaknesses.

During freshman orientation, Kristen completed the CliftonStrengths assessment and found out that her top five themes were Discipline, Individualization, Harmony, Focus and Significance. A week later, she met with Mike, one of the professors on campus, who was also a strengths coach. He told her that the “controlling,” “unspontaneous” parts of her were not weaknesses; they were strengths.

“Professor Mike became a real mentor for me,” Kristen says. “He truly helped me understand where I was at my best and how I could get involved and make an impact on campus.”

According to Professor Mike, trying to become laid back was not only unnatural for Kristen, but it would make it harder for her to succeed.

“I started to see my Discipline strength as a net gain rather than a net loss,” Kristen says. “Coming out of that coaching meeting, I knew I wanted to get involved on campus, and I knew I had something to give. So I applied to be an orientation leader as a freshman.”

During the orientation leader interview, Kristen talked about how important it is for her to have routines, to plan ahead, to be orderly and to create predictability for others. She talked about her strengths, but she didn’t use CliftonStrengths terminology. She wanted to show that she had the talents for the role, but she didn’t expect the interviewer to speak the same “strengths language.”

“Then the interviewer stopped me, leaned over the table and said, ‘Do you have Discipline? Me too!’ She told me she was one hard nut to crack and that she never smiles, but she smiled that day when she realized what we had in common,” Kristen says. “That’s what CliftonStrengths does — it creates a shared language that breaks down barriers and brings people together.”

Kristen got the orientation leader position. She joined a sorority, made friends and did well in her classes. Bit by bit, she became involved and engaged on campus.

Eventually, Kristen was elected president of her sorority. She used her Harmony talents — her natural ability to bring differing factions together — to lead her sorority sisters through some struggles they were experiencing. Later, she applied her leadership skills and talents to a campus-wide strengths rollout for all incoming students. She also served as a student strengths coach for her peers.

“I was proud of my unique talents and jumped into teams, knowing that I had something special to bring to the table. It was OK that I wasn’t as ‘go with the flow’ as other people,” she says. “In fact, as time went on, I learned how to partner with people who could complement me and who made me more confident in my own strengths.”

By the time the intense, once uncertain freshman graduated from college, she was extremely involved on campus. She served as an orientation and enrollment leader and as the dean’s student assistant at the college of human ecology. She was a hospice volunteer and president of her sorority. She even won an award from the dean of student life for being one of the top 16 graduating seniors for improving student life. And, she graduated summa cum laude.

Today she is a nonprofit executive who leads her organization using a strengths-based approach.

Now, imagine if Kristen had rejected who she really is — forever feeling self-conscious about her “controlling,” “unspontaneous” personality — rather than embracing her true self. How might her life have turned out differently?

Kristen learned something radically important: When students not only know their strengths — but more importantly, apply them — the effect on their lives is transformational. And after graduation, they will have a big head start. Gallup has found that people who use their strengths every day are six times more likely to be engaged in their work and three times more likely to say they have an excellent quality of life.

As Kristen discovered, college is a chance to start fresh. Regardless of your background, age or reputation in high school, you begin with a clean slate — which is really liberating — and a chance to learn and grow in ways that will amaze you.

Like Kristen, you get to write your own story.

So what do you want your story to be? Begin your journey with the end in mind. What will your legacy be when you leave college? You have already begun to chart this journey, and you’ll have a better perspective if you understand when and where you’re at your best: your strengths.

Strengths begin with talents, those patterns in your thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are most consistent and reliable and that make you unique. When you add skills

and knowledge to those talents; you can develop them into strengths. As a student, you get the chance every day to search for patterns in your actions, to learn from them, and to use them to understand your life experiences now and in the future. That knowledge is vital because you’ll find unlimited potential in your strengths.

But building a great life and a thriving college experience requires something more: making a real commitment to putting your strengths into action. Knowing and using your strengths has an impact on every aspect of your college experience. But first, **you must know yourself and see yourself as unique, gifted and motivated.** This begins with identifying your talents so you can see where you are at your very best.

CLIFTONSTRENGTHS

To get you started, this book includes an access code to take the CliftonStrengths assessment. This unique code is in the packet in the back of the book. After you complete the assessment, you'll receive a report that lists your top five themes of talent (your "Signature Themes") and access to resources to help you better understand your unique talents.

Knowing what your leading themes are is the first step to turning them into strengths. After you learn your top five themes, look them up in the second half of this book. For each theme, you will find several action items, which include questions, ideas and suggestions you can use to develop your talents in each theme and start turning them into strengths.

Understanding how to use your unique strengths will make your college journey — and the rest of your life — happier, more fulfilled and more successful. That's the point of developing your strengths. It may be the most useful thing you'll ever learn.

Strengths-Based Philosophy

You are different from the people sitting around you. In fact, you are so unique that the chances of you having the same top five talent themes as someone else are about 1 in 275,000. The odds of having the same top five themes in the *exact same order* are 1 in 33 million.

Because of your talent themes, your experiences and your environment, you look at life in a unique way. Many people think they need to be exactly like someone else, whether that's a celebrity, some other towering figure of success, or somebody they know and admire. But trying to be someone else doesn't work. Becoming more of who you *already are* is the key to your success.

Who you are is a gift given to you at birth — you are born with a set of talents that nobody else has. Turning your unique talents into strengths requires skills, knowledge, conscious effort and deliberate action — all applied to the things that matter to you. While success means different things to different people, everyone achieves their version of success by fully developing and applying their strengths. Nearly 70 years of research has proven it.

In the early 1950s, Don Clifton, a popular psychology instructor and researcher at the University of Nebraska, started thinking about all the ways the field of psychology had to describe what is *wrong* with people — medically, psychologically

and socially — and the very few ways it had to identify what is *right* with people.

Clifton began researching why some people become great at what they do and others don't. For one project with ROTC students in the mid-1950s, he looked closely at the common factors of successful people. The study kept expanding, and in 1998, Clifton, who was then chairman of Gallup, sought to invent a common language and talent themes to describe what people do well.

So Gallup researchers mined their database, which contained more than 100,000 talent-based interviews at the time, and looked for patterns. They examined specific questions that Gallup had used in studies of successful executives, salespeople, customer service representatives, teachers, doctors, lawyers, students, nurses and people in several other fields.

Through this process, Clifton and Gallup researchers established the 34 themes of talent. Researchers then developed the first version of the CliftonStrengths assessment to measure these distinct talents. As of this writing, more than 16 million people have taken the assessment. And the American Psychological Association officially gave Clifton a presidential commendation as the Father of Strengths Psychology.

What CliftonStrengths actually measures is talent, not strength. The assessment is called "CliftonStrengths" instead of "CliftonTalent" because the ultimate goal is to build a

true strength, and talent is the primary component in the strengths formula.

That's why the CliftonStrengths assessment does not include any questions about your formal education, degrees or résumé. Nor does it ask about your skills — whether you can speak fluent French, build a website or fix a transmission. While knowledge and skills are important, along with regular practice, they are most helpful when they serve as amplifiers for your natural talents.

Though people do change over time and personalities evolve, scientists have discovered that core personality traits are relatively stable throughout adulthood, as are people's passions and interests. And research suggests that the roots of personality might be visible at a young age. A 23-year longitudinal study of 1,000 children living in New Zealand revealed that children's observed personality at age 3 shows remarkable similarity to their reported personality traits at age 26. That's why CliftonStrengths measures talent — talents don't really change much.

Knowledge, skills and practice — along with talent — are vital parts of the strengths equation. You will likely develop skills and knowledge through your experiences in school, in work settings and in hands-on practice. When you supplement your talents with your knowledge and skills to the point that you can consistently provide near-perfect performance in a given activity, you have developed a strength. And by applying and

even further refining your strengths, you move closer to fulfilling your natural potential as an individual.

Building your talents into strengths requires practice and hard work, much like building physical strengths. For example, if you have a natural talent for running, the more miles you put in, the faster you'll get. People with less talent for running can put in those same miles, but their speed won't improve as much as yours will. A 1950s research project on speed-reading with 10th-graders found that practicing boosted everyone's words-per-minute reading rate. But those who started out reading fast (300 words a minute at the beginning of the study) made more gains (2,900 words a minute at the end of the study) than everybody else did. All the kids improved, but practice helped the kids who had talent for reading improve the most.

Knowledge and practice will help you move from good to great in your areas of talent. But remember, there's a limit to how much you can do. Everyone is talented, but no one is talented at everything. If you spend your life trying to be good at everything, you will never be great at anything. Many colleges — and society as a whole — encourage you to be well-rounded, thinking that if you work hard enough, you can master anything. But you can't.

Trying to become well-rounded breeds mediocrity. You can master the things you're naturally good at, but if you're working on something that is outside your areas of talent, you'll become, at best, OK at it. Trying to be well-rounded at the expense of

being great is a waste of your time and talents. In fact, of the leaders Gallup has studied, those who strive to be competent in the most areas become the least effective leaders overall.

Just like knowing what your talents are, you need to identify your areas of weakness so you know where to concentrate your energy and where not to. Gallup describes a weakness as anything that gets in the way of your success. Simply being aware of your areas of weakness can help you avoid obstacles.

Once you can acknowledge, for example, that you're not great at managing details, you can figure out how to make managing details less of a problem. The first question to ask yourself is whether you need to operate in your area of weakness at all. If you can just avoid doing detail-oriented work, by all means, stop.

Of course, most people don't have the luxury of ignoring necessary tasks just because they aren't naturally good at them. When you have to attend to details, you might need to establish support systems — checklists, reminder apps — to manage your weakness and keep you on track.

Another strategy is to partner with someone who has talent in the areas you don't. For example, being innately good at making people feel included (which is a talent in the Includer theme) is a lesser talent for Tyler. Tyler will rush to assemble a group without considering everyone who might need to be involved, and sometimes, he leaves people out. So he has learned to find partners who naturally include others. They help him

think about people he would have overlooked — and who might ultimately make a group stronger.

It's also in your best interest to become aware of any blind spots that your talents cause. For example, Susan has strong Command talents, and she may not realize the damage left in her wake as she pushes to get things done each day. Or take Caspian, who has dominant Consistency talents. He might focus so much on keeping the steps uniform and become fixated on the process that he ignores the overall goal. So while Susan's and Caspian's talents push them to achieve amazing things, their blind spots can sometimes narrow their perspective.

The 34 CliftonStrengths themes describe a great deal of the variation in human talent and provide a common language, but they do not capture every nuance of unique personalities. The fine points of talents and how they are expressed vary a great deal from person to person. For example, you and your friends may all have Learner among your top five themes, but each of you might express that theme differently. One of you may learn from voracious reading, while another learns from doing and yet another learns by talking with others. No instrument can measure every subtlety of every talent in every situation, but CliftonStrengths offers the best and most concise explanation of talents and themes.

And millions have taken the first step on their strengths journey. As mentioned earlier, more than 16 million people have taken the CliftonStrengths assessment, and Gallup has

helped thousands of organizations all over the world become strengths-based. A big part of being a strengths-based company is matching employees' strengths to their roles. The more people can align their strengths with their work, the more engaged they will be in their careers. The same goes for college. The more you align your strengths with your college experiences, the more you can engage with your campus and your studies.

But to be engaged, you have to be involved. Joining clubs, making friends, and seeking mentors and professors who care about you while staying financially healthy and applying what you learn in the classroom are all part of a great college experience. To have success in all of these areas, you need to understand what makes you unique and what makes you great — your strengths. When you apply your strengths to make your campus and college better, those experiences will change you.

THE BIG SIX

To better understand what makes a college experience great for students like you, in 2014, Gallup and Purdue University began measuring the impact of the experiences students have in college on their later lives. This study of more than 30,000 U.S. college graduates, called the Gallup-Purdue Index, assesses alumni's perceptions of their undergraduate experiences and how those experiences relate to their engagement and job quality later in life.

The Gallup-Purdue Index shows that there are six key collegiate experiences — the “big six” — that are critical to being engaged at work. Among college graduates who had all six of these experiences, 65%, on average, were engaged. Of the alumni who didn't have any of the big six experiences, only 25% were engaged.

The Big Six Experiences

1. Had at least one professor who made you excited about learning
 2. Had professors who cared about you as a person
 3. Had a mentor who encouraged you to pursue your goals and dreams
 4. Worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete
 5. Had an internship or job that allowed you to apply what you were learning in the classroom
 6. Were extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations
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The Big Six: Mentorships and Relationships

You may have noticed that the first three big six experiences focus on relationships. Yet, people often underestimate the importance of their closest relationships and social connections and how they affect campus engagement, academic success and their sense of belonging. The people you know and the people you love have a great deal of influence on how you experience your life. So those you are closest to can influence whether or not you thrive on campus.

Experience 1 Had at least one professor who made you excited about learning

When alumni look back on their college experience, they say their relationships mattered most. But the people who had the biggest impact on their lives weren't their friends (though they were important). The people who had the biggest impact were their professors. The first of the big six experiences is having a professor who makes you excited to learn. That professor doesn't have to teach a class related to your major. The person is more important than the subject. The crucial thing is to have a professor who makes you look forward to class, who makes time fly during class and who gives you so much to think about when you leave class that learning seems more like fun than work. You may decide that a career in the subject the professor teaches isn't for you, but the experience of being excited to learn from a great teacher is important.

Experience 2 Had professors who cared about you as a person

Do you have a professor whose teaching style inspires your learning — someone who gives you valuable feedback and who you are truly getting to know? Making a connection with one or more of your professors can be a powerful experience that has enduring benefits. It's rare for professors to chase down students to get to know them better, so you might have to seek them out and kick-start a deeper relationship. The long-term effects might be more far-reaching than you think. An expert who cares about you as a person can help you find innovative ways to use your strengths in a subject area you're passionate about.

Experience 3 Had a mentor who encouraged you to pursue your goals and dreams

A mentor might be a professor, a member of the administration or maybe your boss. Usually, a mentor is someone who has a wider perspective and more life experience than you do. The best mentors give you good advice and inspire you to further *your* hopes for *your* life. They provide individual and personal guidance that aligns with your strengths and plans. Their direction and affirmation are invaluable when you're starting out in life.

Ultimately, what the first three big six experiences reveal is that alumni who have thriving careers and lives had important relationships that began in college: mentors, someone who

encouraged their dreams, and at least one professor who cared about them and made them excited to learn. So as you think about your college experience, remember that the people you create relationships with now may influence the rest of your life.

Scientists are discovering just how much relationships shape expectations, desires and goals. Emotions can spread quickly from one person to the next. According to a Harvard study, your odds of being happy increase by 15% if a direct connection in your social network is happy. And if a friend of your direct connection is happy, the odds of you being happy increase by 10% — even if you don't know or interact with this secondhand connection. So your friends' friends have an impact on you and vice versa. The same holds true with your professors, mentors and others in your social network.

Having close friendships and mentorships in general is good for your health too. Relationships can serve as a buffer during tough times, which can improve your cardiovascular functioning and decrease your stress levels — especially helpful during finals. On the other hand, people with very few social ties have nearly twice the risk of dying from heart disease and are twice as likely to catch colds, even though they are less likely to have the exposure to germs that comes from frequent social contact.

Some students, however, might think they should focus on school and nothing else. After all, the classroom is the epicenter of the campus experience — where they will ultimately succeed or fail. But your sense of engagement on campus depends on

more than grades alone. It's important to spend time with people and not just bury your head in your studies. When you think back on your college years, what you will remember most will be the people — the teachers, mentors and friends you made along the way.

So go see a band on Friday night with your roommate. Ask your favorite professor to have a cup of coffee with you. Seek out a mentor and ask how you — given your strengths — can accomplish your goals.

And keep socializing and networking. The sheer amount of time you spend interacting with others makes a difference. Studies show that when people have almost no social time, their chances of having a good day or a bad day are 50/50. However, each hour of social time quickly decreases their odds of having a bad day. The data suggest that you need at least six hours of social time to have a great day. Those six hours include all your social interactions: talking with classmates, coworkers and friends; reading texts and sending emails; and even chatting with the barista who makes your mocha.

So when you think about your campus involvement and connections, remember that spending time with others and having at least one close friendship is essential to your ability to thrive. And each additional friendship can contribute even more.

Gallup has found that people who have at least three or four very close friendships are healthier and are more engaged in their jobs. The absence of any close friendships can lead to

boredom, loneliness and depression. That's one reason some college students want to transfer. They think they will find better friendships at a new school. The reality is that regardless of where you are, you need to be able to forge meaningful relationships using your unique set of talents and strengths.

Arun is a college sophomore who intentionally keeps his list of good friends short. He prefers authenticity over quantity in friendships. He attributes that to his Relator theme, which makes him inclined to keep a small social circle made up of people who truly know him. Arun says he has always been this way. "But I didn't realize it was a pattern until I saw my roommate's and my top five themes posted on our door when we were freshmen," he says. "It said the Relator theme pulls me toward people I already know and that I really like being around close friends more than just acquaintances. I guess I thought everyone was like that — why *wouldn't* you prefer a tight group of really good friends? But seeing how different my roommate's list was, well, it made me wonder."

The next day at Arun's freshman orientation, he attended a coaching session on his CliftonStrengths assessment results just like Kristen did at her campus. "That's where I realized that my pattern is really a talent and that it kind of guides my choices," Arun says. "Then, a professor for a class I'd signed up for said she was basing a group project on strengths. I got to thinking about how my Signature Themes were going to play out in a group." During a breakout session, Arun talked to his

academic adviser and learned more about how he could use his strengths to be successful at school.

“Then the university president stood up and talked about his Individualization strength and how he saw each of us as unique. He told us to forge our own paths with an understanding of what’s best in us and to use it in everything we do,” Arun says. “School, work, relationships, all of it. Pretty soon, I realized that just being aware of my themes makes me more deliberate, I guess you’d call it. I’m just more intentional and aware about my relationships, and they’ve gotten better ever since.”

Today, Arun says that his own Individualization theme causes him to see his closest relationships like the spokes on a bike — they keep his life balanced. His father always asks him good questions and motivates him. His girlfriend gets him out of the house more than he would on his own. His tight-knit group of fraternity brothers helps one another through financial problems, relationship issues, and health and academic challenges. His favorite professor works through his questions and concerns with him, and his mentor helps him think about his future and how what he is learning will apply to his career.

“One thing I noticed is that I rely on a network of people because no one person can do everything,” he says. “And I don’t necessarily get the same thing I give in my relationships.” That’s not unusual: More than 80% of the people Gallup studied report that they contribute something very different than they

receive from their closest friendship. As Arun found, the key to great relationships is focusing on what each friend, mentor and professor uniquely contributes, instead of expecting one person to do it all.

The Big Six: Academics

Experience 4 Worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete

Think back to when you were in grade school sitting through a class in which you had very little interest. Perhaps your eyes were fixed on the clock or you stared blankly into space. You probably remember waiting anxiously for the bell to ring so you could get up from your desk and move on to whatever was next.

Now compare that to a class you loved. The teacher was caring and engaging and taught with passion. The style and subject perfectly aligned with your strengths and who you are. You loved everything you were learning, and you didn’t even notice the time because it flew by. You even looked forward to going to class.

What was the class? How did you feel when you were in the class?

It's important to identify that class and that feeling because that's when you were at your best. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term "flow" to describe the phenomenon that occurs when you enjoy a task so much that you lose track of time.

You experience flow when you feel challenged and stretched, but more than equal to a task. Think of flow as being "in the zone." Everything falls into place. You don't exactly know how you did it, but you excelled, and you were deeply satisfied. People who have developed strengths and who are in environments that allow their talents to flourish are far more likely to experience flow.

Think again about that grade school class or another time when you experienced flow — when your strengths were so deeply aligned with what you were doing that time disappeared and you couldn't wait to tell your friends about what you learned and thought about. Having a passion for what you're studying and being able to apply your strengths in the classroom are vital to your engagement on campus.

When you register for classes, ask yourself two questions:

1. *Will I be able to apply my talents in this class?*
2. *Will I be able to apply my strengths to a long-term project?*

If you don't know the answer to either of these questions, get more information about the class. If you answer "no" to both questions, ask yourself why you are enrolling in the class in the first place. Applying your talents and spending a semester or more in experiential learning can make a huge difference in your future engagement with the school.

Remember that you see the world through the lens of your unique talents. For example, if you have Relator as one of your top five themes, search for long-term projects that have small group discussions. If you have Responsibility, make sure you are clear on the expectations and outcomes of the project. If you have Woo or Communication, find assignments where you can speak and process verbally. Academic programs that align with your talents will allow you to be your best in the classroom and when you need to commit to ongoing projects. They will also set you up for success in your career.

However, because every major has a list of course requirements, you will almost certainly have to take some classes and work on some projects you don't like. But applying your talents and relying on others can help you get through them, and you might even learn something from the experience.

Take Anson and his dreaded syllogistic logic class, for example.

"I'm majoring in fine arts, but my adviser said she wouldn't sign off on my course list unless I signed up for syllogistic logic," Anson says. "I thought that was super dumb. I've gotten by my whole life without knowing what syllogistic logic is. Why should I waste time and money to learn now?" But because it was a requirement, Anson took the class, and he hated it as much as he figured he would. So he relied on talents to get through it.

Anson has a lot of Focus, which he used to make himself concentrate on the work he found boring and repetitive and to gauge his progress. And he did make progress — a little each day.

The other talent he used wasn't even his own. "I met a girl at the first-year orientation who had Positivity as her No. 1 theme, and when I saw she was in my syllogistic logic class, I made sure to sit next to her every day. I figured her positive outlook might rub off on me, and she did make the class a lot less unpleasant," he says.

It wasn't until the class was over that Anson realized it helped him mitigate a weakness: writing. Anson doesn't enjoy writing and says he would put off writing a paper forever if he could. But syllogistic logic teaches people to think in sequence — one thing leads inevitably to the next.

"I have to take a bunch of literature classes, which I also don't want to take because that means writing about a million papers," Anson says. "A blank screen makes my blood run cold — where do you even start? But with syllogistic logic, you start

with something small that you already understand, and you build on it, one thing at a time." Anson realized that he could use that same process with writing. He starts with something he understands, and then he thinks through what he read to build on the original idea. "As much as I dislike writing, it's so much easier if you know how to think it through," he says.

While Anson learned the value of applying his strengths to something he wasn't good at and didn't want to do, he also stumbled across another powerful resource: *other people's strengths*. The student with Positivity in her top five helped Anson get through the syllogistic logic class just by being herself. Gallup calls that a complementary partnership — finding someone with dominant talents that you lack. No one has all the talents needed to tackle every problem. So finding a complementary partner is a great way to get the most out of everyone's talents. When it comes to long-term projects or classes, knowing the strengths of others is vital to your learning and the project's outcome.

Here's an example of a group of students who would have benefited from understanding one another's strengths. Michael, Neeraj and Tim are friends who are working on a long-term class project together. When they meet, Michael and Neeraj immediately jump into task mode, while Tim starts brainstorming about the project. Michael doesn't mind. After all, they need ideas, and he doesn't pay much attention to what either of his partners is doing anyway. But Neeraj often gets upset. He usually thinks Tim is wasting time, and he gets

frustrated by what he perceives as Tim's lack of focus. And Tim thinks Neeraj is bossy and trying to control the project.

Now suppose that their professor had taken the time to explain how talents affect group dynamics for the project. Further, suppose the professor had designed some strengths-based group exercises that would have helped students get to know one another and figure out how they could best use their talents to work together.

With those insights in mind, Neeraj and Michael would have known to listen intently to Tim's brainstorming because he has Ideation and Maximizer in his top five, and his new ideas could make the project better. Tim would have appreciated Neeraj's Responsibility and Focus talents to make sure the project gets done on time. And Michael would have used his Individualization talents to highlight and support both of his partners' unique contributions to bring excellence to the project.

And these are people who know and like each other. Appreciating others' perspectives and what they contribute is far more difficult among strangers. And just about everybody on campus is a stranger to you, at least for a while.

Understanding yourself and others — and where each of you is at your best — gives you the chance to truly grow, develop and succeed. A big part of enjoying college and succeeding in long-term group projects is simply being comfortable enough with who you are and what you have to offer that you can share yourself with other people.

The Big Six: Internships and Careers

Experience 5 Had an internship or job that allowed you to apply what you were learning in the classroom

Ever since you were a child, well-meaning people have been asking, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The pressure to make the right career choice only intensifies as you head to college. Choosing a career is a daunting task, and you're not alone if you struggle with it. Some people avoid making a choice as long as possible. Others choose whatever job turns up or whatever career they think will make their parents happy.

For many years, Gallup has been asking employed adults, "Do you like what you do each day?" Given that adults employed full time in the U.S. report working an average of 47 hours per week, this might be the most basic yet important question to ask. Unfortunately, only 20% of people give a strong "yes" in response to this question. Only 13% of employees say they find their work meaningful, and a mere 20% think they're in jobs that use their talents.

You may not know the best career choice for you right now. However, an internship or job that allows you to apply what you are learning lets you explore a career so you can discover the things you might love about it as well as the things you might not. You get to decide what's best for you, and these

opportunities can help you figure out what that is. What's more, alumni say that having a job or internship in college that allowed them to apply what they learned in the classroom played a part in their short-term and long-term success.

Isabella started college with a pre-med major. But during her junior year, after a semester-long internship at a hospital, she realized that while she loved biology, she just wasn't drawn to becoming a doctor. Her adviser suggested that she could have a fulfilling career in biological research. So after graduate school, Isabella got a great job in a research center.

Three years later, Isabella was asked to lead a team that would explore small research projects and dissertations that have an impact on a larger scale. With Significance, Learner and Individualization in her top five, Isabella discovered how much she enjoyed getting to know her team members as individuals, and she loved that they could achieve so much together.

Although laboratory work fascinated her, Isabella realized she had the talent for — and got the biggest rush from — leadership. So she went back to school, got an MBA and now runs a biotech research company. When she graduated from high school, she had no idea that any of the jobs she had after college even existed, but an internship and knowledge of her strengths gave her the perspective she needed to be successful.

The opportunity to choose your career, rather than taking whatever job you can get to pay the bills, is one of the reasons

you are in school. But that doesn't mean you have to have your entire career path plotted on the first day of your freshman year. College gives you an outstanding opportunity to match your innate talents and strengths to your interests and apply them to hands-on experiences on campus.

The Big Six: Clubs and Organizations

Experience 6 Were extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations

Every so often, you might see alumni on your campus gazing at the buildings, waiting patiently in the hallway to talk to elderly professors and spending a fortune on college sweatshirts at the campus store. If you ask them why, their eyes will light up, and they'll tell you how life-changing college was for them. Those alumni tend to have something in common — they were engaged and active on campus. That involvement created a profound sense of community, and it stayed with them.

That's why being involved and engaged in your college experience is so important. Graduates who say they were extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations while attending college are nearly two times more likely to be engaged at work than their peers. When you participate, you

can become part of a community with a common purpose, build networks and make a lasting impact on issues that matter to you.

There are likely dozens of clubs on campus that would give you the opportunity to develop your strengths, deepen your roots and boost your engagement. But be selective. Being heavily involved with a few meaningful groups has more of an impact on your campus engagement — and is better for your résumé — than joining countless organizations that don't interest you as much. Whether they are political, social, academic, religious, environmental, artistic, athletic or completely random, most organizations can probably really use your strengths. So join a club, run for office, get on a team or find the organization that fits you — you'll get as much out of participating as you put in.

Mauricio, a sophomore engineering student, grew up in Los Angeles and enrolled in a small college in Wisconsin. "People thought I was nuts, going to school so far from home where you can freeze to death eight months a year," Mauricio jokes. "But this school offered me a full ride, and when I visited, I loved that the school's colors and sports schedules were in every restaurant and coffee shop in town. I just felt safe and part of something bigger than myself. That and the scholarship — I couldn't pass it up."

But moving to Wisconsin was harder than he thought. "It was tough at first. People talk different here, they dress different and they don't do the things we do back home," he says. "Seriously, ice fishing?" When he got his Clifton Strengths

assessment results during freshman orientation, he realized that none of his top five themes — Analytical, Ideation, Discipline, Responsibility and Self-Assurance — were very relationship-oriented, but he didn't think much of it.

So he buried himself in his schoolwork and focused on applying his strengths to his learning, which helped him get the most out of his classes. "Actually, the more attention I paid to my strengths and how I used them, the more I realized I'd kind of *always* used them at school, just not very well — kind of scattershot instead of deliberately," he says. "They work better if you aim them."

Still, during his first semester at school, Mauricio hadn't made any friends beyond his roommate, which worried his mother so much that she came for a lengthy visit. Mauricio admitted that he thought he would feel connected to the school just by living on campus. But having one friendship isn't the same thing as being fully engaged and connected to campus life. So, to make his mom feel better, he told her he would consider joining a group for engineering students on campus. "But meh," Mauricio says. "Their big thing was organizing a booth on career days, which is fine, but not what I'm into."

Weeks later, he noticed a student riding a skateboard on campus. Mauricio says, "He had a loaded Dervish Sama [skateboard] with Randall R-11 trucks, so I knew the dude wasn't playing." Mauricio followed the student on foot to a skate park a few blocks away. He called his mom and asked her to send him his longboard, and she did.

Mauricio started going to the park after class and riding his skateboard on campus — and he suddenly realized that his school had a big skater population. “It’s like there was a hidden community of skaters here, people I can hang with, disguised as Midwesterners this whole time. I made more friends on a skateboard than I had in all of high school,” he says.

Mauricio says he started feeling more confident and comfortable expanding his social circle to include non-skaters, even some ice fishermen. But the best part was that he felt like a welcome, contributing part of a community again. “My mom is so happy about it that she gave me a Dervish Sama as a Valentine’s Day present,” Mauricio says. “And she usually just sends cookies.”

Mauricio is now a senior and wears his school’s hoodies with pride. “The more involved I got here at school, the more comfortable I felt getting involved,” he says. “So I joined the engineering group after all.” It didn’t take Mauricio long to figure out why the group was so lackluster and why its campus involvement was so minimal — Mauricio says that’s his Analytical and Ideation at work. And his Self-Assurance gave him the confidence to get the club out of its rut. “This year, they elected me president. My mom is thrilled. And I got us to add a skateboarding clinic/engineering presentation at the career day. We had more people at our booth than the architecture students, and they were giving out pizza,” he says.

Mauricio believes that he and his friends have created something that will continue to draw students in long after they graduate. And he loves giving back to the town and school. “Plus, we’re creating the next generation of skaters and engineers,” he says. “And that’s important.” When Mauricio got deeply involved on campus and used his strengths, it changed his entire college experience.

YOUR STRENGTHS AND LEADERSHIP

As you look beyond the experiences you have in college and start thinking about your career, get involved in leadership roles on campus. Employers look for leadership experience, and they will ask about it in job interviews. Maybe that means becoming the president of a club. Maybe you would prefer a behind-the-scenes role. Leadership isn't restricted to the position you have. You can lead from whatever role you have in a club or organization.

The good news is, you can apply any CliftonStrengths theme to leadership roles and responsibilities because they are all useful — even the themes that don't seem like it at first. For example, you can use Relator to understand team members' points of view so you can guide them better and include them more. You can use Input to collect all the information you need so you can make well-informed decisions. Context can show you where your group's purpose fits in the larger campus environment. So when you assume leadership roles in college, you can develop leadership strengths regardless of your top themes of talent.

Also, if you get the chance to manage others, take it. Managing people can be one of the most important aspects of

leadership. Gallup has found that the most effective managers are those who capitalize on their greatest talents and consciously use them as they manage others.

If you look at great leaders such as Winston Churchill or Mahatma Gandhi, you will notice more differences than similarities — and the differences are what defined them. Churchill's bold and commanding leadership succeeded in mobilizing a war-ravaged nation. Gandhi's leadership during and after India's struggle for independence was based on peaceful resistance — the polar opposite of Churchill.

Both men knew their strengths and used them wisely. That's more unusual than you might think. All too often, leaders are blind to the obvious — their own personality. People who don't know their own strengths and weaknesses can develop self-concepts that are miles away from reality. Gallup has spoken with several leaders who claim to be great at developing their people, but their employees tell a very different story.

Although less noticeable than blind spots for weaknesses, blind spots for strengths are harmful too. Unfortunately, many leaders haven't discovered where they have the most potential for growth.

But you can. You've already started. And college gives you a magnificent opportunity to gain leadership experience that can lead to a more engaging career where you can use your strengths. The key is to be intentional. Look for every opportunity to refine your greatest talents in leadership roles.

Effective Teams and the Four Domains of Leadership Strength

Gallup has studied thousands of organizations and teams and found that the most cohesive and successful teams are the ones in which team members are aware of their own unique strengths as well as the strengths of each individual on the team.

Gallup also found that the 34 CliftonStrengths talent themes sort into four distinct domains of leadership strength: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building and Strategic Thinking. While focusing on your top five themes is essential for your *individual* development, these broad domains or groupings of themes offer a practical way to look at the composition of a *team or group*.

Executing Themes	Achiever, Arranger, Belief, Consistency, Deliberative, Discipline, Focus, Responsibility, Restorative
Influencing Themes	Activator, Command, Communication, Competition, Maximizer, Self-Assurance, Significance, Woo
Relationship Building Themes	Adaptability, Connectedness, Developer, Empathy, Harmony, Incliner, Individualization, Positivity, Relator
Strategic Thinking Themes	Analytical, Context, Futuristic, Ideation, Input, Intellection, Learner, Strategic

One way to examine a team's overall strength is to see how the individual members' top themes sort into the four domains. These categories can give you valuable insight into how team members contribute by describing how they make things happen, influence others, build relationships and work with information. Seeing their dominant talents grouped by domain helps everyone on the team understand how they think and act as individuals — as well as how the team's most dominant talents sort collectively.

It generally serves a group well to have a representation of strengths from multiple domains. Instead of one dominant leader who tries to do everything or a group of individuals who all have similar strengths, when team members' strengths come from multiple domains, the team is likely to be more effective and cohesive. Although individuals don't need to be well-rounded, partnerships and teams should be. A blend of strengths will help any group you belong to or lead get more done.

Think about your own top five themes. Where do they fall within the four domains of leadership strength? What kind of a leader are you? Do you have a lot of themes in one domain but none in another? How will you apply your unique talents to your leadership roles? How will you contribute to groups or teams where you are not the leader?

Now, think about the groups, teams and clubs you belong to on and off campus as well as all the leadership roles you play.

Looking at the four domains, how the 34 themes sort within them and the examples below, consider all the different ways everyone contributes to each group's overall success.

Executing: Leaders with dominant strength in this domain know how to make things happen. When you need someone to act, these are the people who will get things done.

For example, leaders with Deliberative or Discipline may excel at establishing a process and timetable for a group project, while different leaders will use their Achiever to work relentlessly toward a group's goal. Leaders with strong Arranger can determine the optimal way to use team members' strengths to complete a task.

Influencing: When you need someone to take charge, speak up and make sure your group is heard, look to leaders with the strength to influence. They can sell an idea, and they're excellent at communicating to different audiences: resident halls, sororities and fraternities, or athletic teams.

For example, campus leaders with a lot of Command or Self-Assurance might use few words, but their confidence will win followers. In contrast, leaders who use Communication or Woo can get people involved by making them feel comfortable and connected.

Relationship Building: Those who lead through Relationship Building are the essential glue that holds a team together.

Without these strengths on a team, the group is simply a bunch of individuals. Leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strengths have the ability to make a group much greater than the sum of its parts.

Leaders with Positivity can keep the team's collective energy high, and someone with Harmony will minimize disputes. Leaders with Individualization will see and respect each team member's specific interests. Leaders with strong Relator or Developer will push others toward bigger achievements.

Strategic Thinking: Leaders with Strategic Thinking strengths keep a team focused on what could be. They constantly absorb and analyze information, help the team make better decisions, and create a vision for the future.

Within this domain, leaders using Context or Strategic can explain how past events influenced present circumstances or navigate the best route for the future. They can help the team break old habits and create a new path toward change. Leaders with strong Ideation or Input might see countless opportunities for growth based on all of the information they review. And leaders drawing from their Analytical theme will help the team drill into the details and ask the perfect question at the perfect time.

STARTING THE JOURNEY

When you know your strengths, you know the value you bring to the world around you. You know when and where you're at your best. When you know your strengths, you have a holistic view of all the people and experiences that shape your life on campus and beyond.

**SO NOW, IT'S UP TO YOU. IT'S
YOUR STORY, YOUR JOURNEY
AND YOUR FUTURE.**

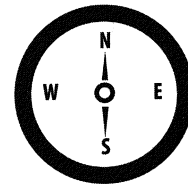
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The following pages list all 34 CliftonStrengths themes of talent and action items for each theme. These action items will give you deeper insight into your top talent themes — and maybe even help you identify blind spots — so you can make the most of your college experience by using your strengths.

Achiever	Deliberative	Intellection
Activator	Developer	Learner
Adaptability	Discipline	Maximizer
Analytical	Empathy	Positivity
Arranger	Focus	Relator
Belief	Futuristic	Responsibility
Command	Harmony	Restorative
Communication	Ideation	Self-Assurance
Competition	Includer	Significance
Connectedness	Individualization	Strategic
Consistency	Input	Woo
Context		

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**TO COLLEGE STUDENTS
EVERYWHERE WHO WANT TO
APPLY THEIR STRENGTHS TO
CHANGE THE WORLD**