

Building Academic Strengths: Using BCSSE for Strengths-Based Advising





Building Academic Confidence

Characteristics of academic confidence:

- Student has control over their own learning
- Student has experienced success at difficult tasks
- Student can apply successful experiences to future challenges
- Student does not avoid challenging tasks



Basics of Strengths-Based Advising

Schreiner (2013):

- Deficit remediation vs. strengths development
- Focus on talents and personal assets
- Associated with engaged learning, higher grades, and overall satisfaction



Basics of Strengths-Based Advising

- Work with students to help recognize their own strengths
- Nurture intrinsic motivation by helping students to identify current strengths and ways they can enhance them → **self-efficacy**
- Strength-development motivates students to persevere and overcome obstacles → **academic confidence**



Leveraging Strengths

*Advisors should help students “**leverage talents to address obstacles that may emerge in the future**” (Schreiner, 2013).*

1. Goal is to identify and reinforce academic strengths that are specific and meaningful for that student
2. Identify academic challenges that indicate low confidence
3. Leverage academic strengths when addressing low confidence



Confidence in Context

Confidence is best understood when contextualized or “situated”.

For instance, understanding confidence specific to a major or a course is much more informative when considering how to help.





BCSSE and SBA

Strengths-based advising (SBA) and advising entering, first-year students

- Strengths are also best understood when contextualized or “situated”.
- Strengths can be *general* (e.g. spent a lot of hours studying), or *specific* to a task or situation (e.g., “I am a really good writer”)





BCSSE and SBA

Leveraging Academic Strengths

Leveraging Academic Strengths

Identifying Academic Strengths

AP courses

3-4

Complete AP courses! Great. Indicates this student completed a challenging high school curriculum

Hours per week:

Studying

HS

6-10

FY

16-20

Studied a fair amount in HS, but really expects to increase studying in FY.

Learning Strategies (Identified key information from readings, Reviewed notes after class, etc.)

42

Student was using effective learning strategies. Very important for continued FY success.

BCSSE Advising Report Engagement State University

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Please review these results with particular attention to differences from high school experiences to expectations for the first year, as well as any expectations that may undermine a successful first year of college.

Student Background

Name	IM Smart
Student ID	123456
Completed Calculus	No
AP courses	3-4
Expected Major	Undecided
What choice was this institution?	First choice
Does student expect to graduate from this institution?	Yes

HS Behaviors and FY Expectations

Hours per week	HS	FY
Studying	6-10	16-20
Working	0-10	0-10
Co-curricular	1-5	0
Socializing/relaxing	6-10	11-15
Assigned reading		1-5

HS Academic Activities

	0=Very Low to 60=Very High
Quantitative Reasoning (Reached conclusion based on numerical information; Used numerical information to examine real-world problem, etc.)	38
Learning Strategies (Identified key information from readings, Reviewed notes after class, etc.)	42
To what extent, did your courses challenge you to do your best work?	6

First-Year Expectations for Effective Educational Practice

	0=Very Low to 60=Very High
Student-Faculty Interaction (Discuss career plans and academic performance, etc.)	20
Interaction with Diverse Others (Discussions with people of a different race/ethnicity, religious beliefs, etc.)	40
Peer Collaboration (Work with other students on course projects; Prepare for exams by discussing material with other students, etc.)	50

Expected Transition Difficulty

How difficult do you expect the following to be:	1 = Not at all difficult to 6 = Very Difficult
Learning course material	5
Managing your time	3
Paying for college expenses	5
Getting help with school work	4
Making new friends	2
Interacting with faculty	5

Academic Perseverance

How certain are you that you will:	1 = Not at all certain to 6 = Very certain
Study when there are other interesting things to do	3
Find additional information for assignments when you don't understand the material	3
Participate regularly in course discussions, even when you don't feel like it	4
Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments	2
Finish something you have started when you encounter challenges	3
Stay positive, even when you do poorly on a test or assignment	2

Academic Preparation

How prepared are you to:	1 = Not at all prepared to 6 = Very prepared
Write clearly and effectively	3
Speak clearly and effectively	3
Think critically and analytically	3
Analyze math or quantitative problems	2
Use computing and information technology	4
Work effectively with others	5
Learn effectively on your own	3

Importance of Campus Support

How important is it that your institution provide:	1 = Not important to 6 = Very important
A challenging academic experience	4
Support to help you succeed academically	5
Opportunities to interact with students from different economic, social, racial/ethnic backgrounds	3
Assistance coping with non-academic responsibilities	4
Support to help you thrive socially	4
Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)	4

Leveraging Academic Strengths

Identifying Academic Strengths

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Engagement State University

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HS Behaviors and FY Expectations	
Hours per week:	HS FY
Studying	6-10 16-20
Working	6-10 6-10
Co-curricular	1-5 0
Socializing/relaxing	6-10 11-15
Assigned reading	1-5

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Making new friends 2

Making friends (aka, "social integration") is critical for a successful FY.

Work effectively with others 5

Group study, group projects, and other forms of peer collaboration are all part of good learning habits.

Support to help you succeed academically 5

This student also realizes that it is important that the institution provide support. Students that realize this will often be the ones to seek help when needed.

Leveraging Academic Strengths

Identifying Low Confidence

BCSSE
beginning college survey
of student engagement

BCSSE Advising Report
Engagement State University

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Managing your time	3	
Paying for college expenses	5	
Getting help with school work	4	
Making new friends	2	
Interacting with faculty	5	

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Participate regularly in course discussions, even when you don't feel like it	4	
Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments	2	
Finish something you have started when you encounter challenges	3	
Stay positive, even when you do poorly on a test or assignment	2	

Academic Preparation		
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Speak clearly and effectively	3	
Think critically and analytically	3	
Analyze math or quantitative problems	2	
Use computing and information technology	4	
Work effectively with others	5	
Learn effectively on your own	3	

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Assistance coping with non-academic responsibilities	4	
Support to help you thrive socially	4	
Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)	4	

HS Behaviors and FY Expectations		
Hours per week:	HS	FY
Studying	6-10	16-20
Working	6-10	6-10
Co-curricular	1-5	0
Socializing/relaxing	6-10	11-15
Assigned reading	1-5	

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Learning course material 5

Student expects learning to be difficult. Remind student that they have successfully completed difficult courses in the past (e.g., AP courses).

Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments 2

This person is confident interacting with peers, but lacks confidence to ask for help from faculty. Develop plan for seeking help that builds on strengths.

Think critically and analytically 3

This student may be better prepared than they realizes. Help her connect with academic work in high school where these skills were needed.



BCSSE and SBA

Leveraging Academic Strengths in a Major

Business Major and SBA



BCSSE Advising Report Engagement State University

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Student Background	
Name	A B Student
Student ID	123456
Completed Calculus	Yes
AP courses	9-10
Expected Major	Business administration
What choice was this institution?	First choice
Does student expect to graduate from this institution?	Yes

HS Behaviors and FY Expectations		
Hours per week:	HS	FY
Studying	11-15	16-20
Working	1-5	0
Co-curricular	16-20	16-20
Socializing/relaxing	6-10	11-15
Assigned reading		1-5

HS Academic Activities	
<i>0=Very Low to 60=Very High</i>	
Quantitative Reasoning (Reached conclusion based on numerical information; Used numerical information to examine real-world problem, etc.)	47
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Expected Transition Difficulty	
<i>How difficult do you expect the following to be: 1 = Not at all difficult to 6 = Very Difficult</i>	
Learning course material	4
Managing your time	4
Paying for college expenses	2
Getting help with school work	4
Making new friends	2
Interacting with faculty	3

Academic Perseverance	
<i>How certain are you that you will: 1 = Not at all certain to 6 = Very certain</i>	
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Participate regularly in course discussions, even when you don't feel like it	4
Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments	3
Finish something you have started when you encounter challenges	5
Stay positive, even when you do poorly on a test or assignment	3

Academic Preparation	
<i>How prepared are you to: 1 = Not at all prepared to 6 = Very prepared</i>	
Write clearly and effectively	3
Speak clearly and effectively	3
Think critically and analytically	4
Analyze math or quantitative problems	5
Use computing and information technology	6
Work effectively with others	5
Learn effectively on your own	4

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<i>How important is it that your institution provide: 1 = Not important to 6 = Very important</i>	
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Opportunities to interact with students from different economic, social, racial/ethnic backgrounds	3
Assistance coping with non-academic responsibilities	4
Support to help you thrive socially	4
Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)	4

On your campus, the business program is writing intensive. What strengths is this studying entering with and what challenges can be anticipated?

Expected Major **Business administration**

Business Major and SBA

Identifying Academic Strengths

AP courses

9-10

This student has completed several AP courses. After discussing these course with the student, you find that two were writing intensive.

To what extent, did your courses challenge you to do your best work?

1=Not at all to 7=Very much

6

This student was challenged and successful. Discuss with the student their experiences with writing as part of this challenge. Knowing how to manage challenge is a definite strength.

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Use computing and information technology	6
Work effectively with others	5
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Support to help you thrive socially	4
Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)	4

Identifying Low Confidence

How prepared are you to: 1 = Not at all prepared to 6 = Very prepared
Write clearly and effectively 3

This student does not feel very confident about his writing. Ask them to describe the successful writing strategies they used in high school that were successful

Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments 3

First-year students are often intimidated by faculty. "Teach" them how to approach and communicate with faculty. Ask the student to consider how they approached high school teachers. Is it really that different?



The Role of Advising in SBA

Positive Feedback

- Emphasize to students the ability to be successful
- Positive reinforcement



The Role of Advising in SBA

Positive Feedback

- Emphasize to students the ability to be successful; positive reinforcement

Encourage Mastery

- Challenging activities promote cognitive development
- Success takes effort, but also a supportive environment; make sure they know how to find help



The Role of Advising in SBA

Positive Feedback

- Emphasize to students the ability to be successful; positive reinforcement

Encourage Mastery

- Challenging activities promote cognitive development; success takes effort and support

Define Success in Terms of Improvement

- Discourage comparing performance to others
- Do point out “good habits” of those that are successful



The Role of Advising in SBA

Positive Feedback

- Emphasize to students the ability to be successful; positive reinforcement

Encourage Mastery

- Challenging activities promote cognitive development; success takes effort and support

Define Success in Terms of Improvement

- Discourage comparing performance to others; do point out “good habits” of those that are successful

Keep Challenges in Perspective

- Help students recognize when they are successful
- **Point out previous successes**
- Discuss reasons for past “failures”

Adapted from *Educational Psychology: Developing Learners* (Ormrod, 2013)



The Role of Advising in SBA

Students don't need to feel like they are going it alone.





The Role of Advising in SBA

Advisors, faculty, and staff play a key role in helping students to gain the confidence to say, “I can do that”.

