



STRENGTHS · PROFILE

CASE STUDY

Santa Clara University is located in the heart of California's Silicon Valley and blends high-tech innovation with a social justice emphasis grounded in the Jesuit Education Tradition. To support those whose majors don't obviously lead to a specific career path, the Maximising Strengths Career Development Workshop was developed for the Department of English to identify students' strengths and mapping them to professional opportunities.

The Challenge

Unlike applied fields such as Accounting or Nursing, Humanities degrees like English do not lead to obvious, specific career paths. Students must often identify their own skills and interests and then match them to career opportunities. This is both a challenge and an opportunity.

To help English students gain more professional support in this decision-making process, Santa Clara University (SCU) worked with Capp's Strengths Profile and Colleen Boselli of Strengths Catalyst Partners to develop a workshop that focused on identifying and maximising students' strengths.

Our Approach

An intensive one-day workshop was developed by Colleen under the direction of SCU's Dr Julia Voss. Prior to the day, both students and faculty took the Strengths Profile to help them identify their own strengths. During the workshop, the results were discussed fully to help both groups deepen self-awareness and determine meaningful ways to apply the learning.

Students developed personal brand language to enhance their resume, LinkedIn profile and interview responses. Selected English department alumni were invited to share their career journeys and to explain how they use their strengths in their jobs.

A separate set of exercises were developed for faculty participants to help staff apply their strengths to their own professional development. Through brainstorming and small group work, faculty also reflected on how they could use their strengths to enhance their teamwork.

The Outcome

Both students and faculty staff saw dramatic gains in professional and vocational awareness after the workshop:

- Awareness of strengths increased dramatically. **76%** of students and **72%** of faculty staff said they had a clear understanding of their strengths. One student commented that learning her strengths made it possible to "discuss qualifications during a job interview to find out if the job will be engaging or not."
- Reflecting the impact of framing and working with identified weaknesses, significantly more students (**56%**) and faculty members (**34%**) strongly asserted their ability to address their own weaknesses in professional situations.
- Students reported dramatically higher levels of engagement in their career planning with **94%** reporting that they were now strongly or somewhat engaged. One student said "I essentially learned my marketable worth in a way that was validating and empowering."
- Pre-workshop, students were **32%** somewhat or strongly agreeing that SCU helped them position themselves for employment after college. Post-workshop, the agreement raised to **65%**. One student said that he can now "more confidently express strengths as an elevator pitch or executive summary."
- **25%** increase in those who strongly agreed they were engaged with their career planning - "I am ready to renovate my resume and cover letter."
- **57%** of faculty staff strongly agreed they knew how to apply their strengths in the Department to "help people see how we can work together in ways that let our strengths complement each other."

"College is long on skills and experiences, but short on strategies for leveraging and showcasing them. This workshop helped students name and present their abilities for a variety of professions, which they recognized as exceptionally valuable. Colleen's approach of identifying and exploring strengths, connecting that knowledge to their professional vocations, and developing a personal brand gave personalized, hands-on career development that aligned with the department's creative and conscious culture."

Dr Julia Voss, Assistant Professor of English