If you focus on your strengths versus your limitations, you’ll see greater progress,” said Bryan Hartman ’88, vice president for student affairs.

StrengthsQuest

In their quest for a degree, college students need to capitalize on what they do well. This simple yet provocative idea is at the root of a recent decision to bring StrengthsQuest, a skill assessment test from Gallup, to SUNY Plattsburgh. The program is made possible in part by gifts to the Plattsburgh Fund.

“It’s an assessment tool that allows you to understand and leverage your talents,” said Bryan Hartman, vice president for student affairs. “They become your strengths. You can apply it to anything that you do.”

Hartman, who played a major role in bringing StrengthsQuest to campus after being trained to use the assessment, worked extensively with StrengthsQuest. She said, “Some students were going around making friends trying to find people with matching skill sets. I think it’s exciting—I see myself using my top strength day to day in my RD life.”

Cashman says an advisory team from offices across campus will help implement StrengthsQuest and track its progress over the next four years, the duration of a current special agreement between the school and Gallup.

“We have a close relationship with them that only strengthens, yes, but this relationship allows us to integrate the program specifically into Plattsburgh culture. Gallup provides ongoing training.”

Since orientation, StrengthsQuest has begun to spread across campus. On the first day of class, students complete the assessment. Overton-Healy says professional staff and student workers in the CDC use the assessment. Residence life staff adds that campus leaders like resident assistants and student workers in the CDC use the assessment. Overton-Healy says professional staff and student workers in the CDC use the assessment.

“In Whiteface, we made a team talent map,” said Nichole Goodwin, residence director in Whiteface Hall. “It was really helpful for people who run groups or organizations to have a visual.”

Goodwin said in addition to helping students plan their college careers and post-college lives, StrengthsQuest provides an opportunity for campus leaders to strategically collaborate.

“I’m an activist, so I’m always saying, ‘Let’s do something.’ But sometimes I need a strategic thinker to balance me out.”

In one-on-one interactions, Goodwin said, StrengthsQuest can be a good way to break the ice.

“It’s nice to be able to talk with people on a deeper level about what drives them,” she said. “I’m interested to see where this goes.”

By Matt McDonald ’14