

strength, which includes looking at the fairness of situations and integrity. When she heard Sr. Deb say, "That makes so much sense," she became better able to talk with her family about college and the kinds of goals she is setting for herself. Her writing changed, and she said, "I am supposed to be here."

Joanna Gonzalez, from Milwaukee, encountered StrengthsQuest in

GEN 101 last year as a freshman. "By the end of the class, I felt that I was able to understand myself more," the education major said. "Having learned that my strengths are connected to what I want to do in life helped me realize that I chose the right career path. I never saw myself as a person with talents and a lot of strengths. Identifying these strengths has affected my views on my abilities in a very positive way."

Senior Kristopher Warner, formerly of St. Cloud and now a Fond du Lac resident, learned the value of strengths-based teams. The honors biology major received strengths training along with other

members of Marian's Model United Nations Program and found the results "incredibly accurate."

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"Knowing what I was good at and having a partner to make up the slack helped," he said of his 14 Marian colleagues attending the Model UN conference in New York City. "My number one talent is Woo — I can be the voice and connect on a personal basis. I recognized that others were stronger than me in other areas and that I could trust them with

tasks ... and we can help each other where we are weak. Everyone has something that is truly a strength and they can lead."

Junior Taylor Putz is in his second year as a student mentor, assisting new students with the transition to college and connections both in and out of the classroom. Like all mentors, he is committed to attending one GEN 101 class weekly and has experienced StrengthsQuest himself.

"I enjoyed it," he said of the survey results. "Anyone would enjoy getting a list of five things you're good at! I'm Restorative: I find gaps, and if there is a hole,

I need to fix it. The focus on positives meant a lot to me.

"Seeing the application of strengths in his own life and via mentoring led 2011–12 Student Senate President Taylor Putz to promote training for the senate executive board. "The second time we sat down together, we connected, because we found out how people work," he said.

Witnessing such self-awakening drives Krueger. "Our mission is to help develop the whole person — spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially," she said. "They are developing their sense of identity and who they are becoming."

#### Campus-wide connection

Along with the emphasis on student self-discovery, faculty and staff are learning about StrengthsQuest, themselves and each other. Last year, Sr. Deb worked with a majority of campus departments and offices; she was completing this segment as the 2011 academic year began. "There isn't anyone who doesn't know about strengths on campus," she said.

Weaving strengths into classes at upper levels is among the strategies for moving the program forward, along with campus games and events to remind students how talents and strengths permeate all areas of their lives. "We will address social justice, spirituality and Catholic social teaching," Krueger said. "We need to tap into many strengths to influence and provide help for the good of the world."

Gallup has recognized the depth and breadth of the university's commitment and has invited Sr. Deb to present Marian University's strategies and stories at the annual Gallup University conference in Omaha next June.

"Only those who have appropriately applied their principles are invited to present," said Sr. Deb. "Many professionals are seeking a way to start strengths education on their campuses and they need practical and experienced people like those at Marian who have used many of Gallup's best practices."

Marian University has applied the Gallup formula, investing the knowledge, skill and time necessary to turn a talent into a strength, truly transforming into a Strengths-based campus. ■

## Student strengths give insight into academic success

"Our strengths focus inspires students to exceed their potential by allowing them to acknowledge and embrace the ways they most naturally think, feel and behave," President Steven DiSalvo, Ph.D., noted. "Students recognize how their strengths affect how they learn, how they interact with others and what strengths they bring to any group."

"With this knowledge in hand, faculty and staff can adapt how they work with students," he said. "For example, despite all the technology with which they've been raised, 'Relator' is a prevalent strength of our students: They are much more likely to be engaged and successful in a class that involves group work than in one that primarily uses lecture format."

Sr. Deb Golas, CSA, shared the five prevailing strengths characteristics of the Class of 2014:

- ADAPABILITY
- RESPONSIBILITY
- RELATOR
- RESTORATIVE
- INCLUDER

As a group, this class emphasizes and values relationship building.

## Access the Library of Strengths



Folks immersed in strengths-based learning and leading often talk about the Gallup-published books as if interchangeable, since all are based on the same positive concept and 40 years of researching human talents and strengths.

It all began with *Now, Discover Your Strengths* in 2001, which spent five years on the bestseller list.

*StrengthsQuest*, published in 2006, is aimed at young adults. This is the book read and studied by all Marian freshmen.

*Strengths 2.0*, published in 2007, is the updated version of the original book. It is a *Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week* and *USA Today* bestseller. It was the fourth best-selling book in all of 2010.

Other titles in the Strengths series focus on teaching, sales and leadership. For more details, see the Gallup website <http://strengths.gallup.com>.