Section 4: Application (Career)

After completing this section, students will be able to:

- Describe the concept of person-environment fit/calling as it pertains to career planning.
- Evaluate their career goals in light of their talents and strengths, as well as other personal qualities and external considerations.
- Apply theme-specific strategies as a part of the career exploration process.
Facilitation Notes

Applying Your Talents in Career Exploration and Development

The goal of this section is to help students begin to apply the StrengthsQuest approach to their exploration of careers. Our studies of top achievers in most careers and professions indicate that they “invent” ways to apply their greatest talents and strengths as they work. If they can't, they move on until they find a career in which they can. Unfortunately, most people don’t tap into their greatest talents and strengths and then apply them to their career. As Oliver Wendell Holmes observed, “Most people go to their graves with their music still inside them.”

The very best have an edge — a big edge. They have discovered the power of following their unique natures. They recognize the tremendous potential of building upon their greatest talents — the ways in which they most naturally think, feel, and behave. Students should consider their natural talents and strengths when exploring their career options and identify potential areas of “best fit.”
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.1: One Key Question

Learning Outcome:

- Describe the concept of person-environment fit/calling as it pertains to career planning.

🕒 Approximately 25 minutes

Activity Description:

A strengths-based approach to career planning and development starts with self-knowledge and awareness. This means understanding what we do best and what we want most in the place where we work.

Part One: What I Do Best

Ask students to go through the list of “What I do best” items on the worksheet. Ask them to identify the five statements that would best describe the tasks they would like to spend most of their time doing in a job or a career.

Tip

You may want to suggest that students start by selecting 10, and then narrow their choice to five. To expand on this activity, you may want to facilitate a discussion about how students narrowed their choices from 10 to five.

Part Two: What I Want Most

When developing a career plan, it is not only important to consider talent alignment to role and tasks, but it is also important for students to consider how their natural talents and strengths align to the culture or an organization or manager. Important considerations might include questions such as:

- How do they measure success?
- How do they attempt to solve problems?
- What are their business strategies?
- What are their people strategies?
- How do employees gain executive sponsorship?
- Do the answers to these questions align well with your natural talents?

This activity is continued …
One Key Question

Part One: What I Do Best

Read through the following list of “What I Do Best” tasks or activities, and identify five statements that would best describe the tasks or activities you would like to spend most of your time doing in a job or career.

- volunteer for causes I believe in
- collect and archive all kinds of information
- talk with those going through difficult situations
- establish routines and processes
- think and study
- create order and safety in my life
- control my life
- check people out carefully before revealing confidential information
- associate with people who appreciate my strengths
- work hard
- do things right
- live for the present
- help people solve their problems
- be busy all the time
- find a new way to do things
- learn as much as I can about the people I meet
- follow up on the details
- take on challenges
- follow through on my commitments
- participate in intellectual and philosophical discussions
- give praise
- have clear rules that everyone follows
- prove myself successful
- overcome obstacles
- win the approval of others
- strive to know more
- envision the things I want and desire
- selectively distribute praise and recognition
- organize a big event or celebration
- join brainstorming sessions
- get people committed
- help others see their strengths
- make work fun
- inspire people about what could be
- examine the unique qualities of each person
- be in the "public eye"
- feel connected with all of life
- compare my performance to others
- act according to my beliefs
- include people who feel left out
- let others know, without words, that I know how they feel
- coach
- discuss history and its lessons
- help others explain their thoughts
- meet new people
- use history to explain my position
- treat all people the same
- concentrate until the job gets done
- do what is expected of me each day
- discover patterns of data
- be persuasive
- keep track of several things at one time
- figure out how different people can work together productively
- plan new programs
- discover new information
- create future pictures and plans
- take on significant goals and challenges
- search for the reasons and causes
- tell stories
- push things to action
- accept people as they are
- teach people
- find experts to help
- stay in contact with my friends
- choose the best alternatives
- build bridges between people of different cultures or experience

Activity 4.1: One Key Question: Part 1
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.1: One Key Question (Continued)

Ask your students to read through the list of workplace attributes, and identify five statements that best describe
the attributes that they would like to find in a workplace. Tell students that they can add additional attributes
to the list if there are additional considerations that may be important to them when considering a place of
employment.

Then, ask your students to rank their choices in order of importance.

Debrief this activity by asking students to share their responses with a small group. As with so many others, the
positive effect of this activity can be enhanced by having students discuss their work in small groups and/or report
to the entire class.

Gallup’s research has identified 12 items that measure employee engagement and link powerfully to relevant
business outcomes, including retention, productivity, profitability, customer engagement, shrinkage, absenteeism,
and safety. These items — the Q12 — measure dimensions that leaders, managers, and employees can influence.

Gallup set out to identify factors that were common to higher-performing units or workgroups. To identify these
common factors, Gallup posed thousands of different questions to more than 1 million people.

The third element, “At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day,” emerged from the ability of
a straightforward statement to predict the performance of a given worker and entire teams: With a front-row seat
on their own thoughts and feelings, workers have no trouble assessing this element in their own work lives. But
the simplicity of the statement belies the complexity within it. The reasons why this element is so powerful go to
the heart of the most recent discoveries about human nature and touch on debates about individuality that stretch
back for centuries.

What makes someone succeed where others fail? Is it something innate, something she learned, or is she just
trying harder? Can excellence in a certain role be learned? How fast and how much can people change? Can a job
candidate be molded to fit the needs of the position, or is what you see during that first interview what you get?

To get the most from her job or career, each employee should mold his job around the way he works most
naturally, maximizing the frequency of optimal experiences in which he loses himself in the work, is internally
motivated, and finds himself naturally gifted. Acknowledging one’s greatest natural talents and weaknesses does
not mean accepting a narrow set of career possibilities. Rather, it means each employee will succeed in a relatively
unique way, applying his own style to the accomplishment. What is important is identifying organizations where
those opportunities exist.
One Key Question (Continued)

Part Two: What I Want Most

Now, read through the following list of “What I Want Most in the Place I Work” needs or attributes, and identify five statements that would best describe the attributes that you would like to find in the place you work. Feel free to add additional attributes that may be important to you when considering a place of employment.

☐ step-by-step training at work
☐ work either on virtual teams or with few people
☐ have a supervisor or manager who cares about me
☐ recognized for work I do well
☐ have a set schedule
☐ flexible environment that allows me some freedom
☐ be my own boss
☐ my opinion counts
☐ have to figure out things on my own
☐ family-friendly environment
☐ have strong work relationships
☐ working in a company with a large number of people I deal with each day
☐ clear career path within the organization
☐ there is someone always guiding my work
☐ have the opportunity to always be working with people
☐ work alone most of the time
☐ on-call position
☐ have a place where I believe in the mission of the company

Now, rank your choices in order of importance, starting with the most important and continuing to the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Do Best</th>
<th>What I Want Most in a Place I Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 4.1: One Key Question: Part 2
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.2: Values Clarification

Learning Outcome:

- Evaluate the relationship between talent themes and personal values.

Approximately 25 minutes

Activity Description:

This exercise provides a basis to have a discussion regarding how values inform all behavior, including our careers. Students will most certainly have different values and in differing order. This particular exercise asks students to evaluate values through the lens of their themes. However, students will also bring values to this discussion from their past experience, including culture and upbringing.

Define the notion of values. A value is an abstract judgment of what a person considers good, right, or worthwhile. Understanding what you value is an important step in self exploration.

Ask your student to identify one of their Signature Themes. Then, have them read through the list of values and place a check mark next to those that they value as a result of having that particular talent theme. Ask the students to do this for each of their Signature Themes.

Debrief this activity by facilitating a discussion about the relationship between values and behavior. During this discussion, it will be valuable to discuss how the values of others affect our decision making. Some students may be following the advice of other significant others, including family and friends. This is also an opportunity to talk about the cost associated with pursuing certain careers and potentially conflicting values.
**Values Clarification**

A value is an abstract judgment of what a person considers good, right, or worthwhile. Understanding what you value is an important step in self exploration. Below, identify one of your Signature Themes. Then, read through the list of values, and place a check mark next to those that you feel you value as a result of having that theme. Repeat the exercise for each of your other four Signature Themes.

**Theme:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Popularity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Romance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Self Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dignity</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Open Mindedness</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Activity 4.2: Values Clarification*
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.3: Holland Codes Analysis

Learning Outcome:

- Evaluate their career goals in light of Holland Code type indicators.

Activity Description:

Ask your students to take the Self-Directed Search, Strong Interest Inventory, or another assessment that utilizes the Holland Code type indicators. The assessment is likely available at your college’s career center. Alternatively, you can locate instruments on the Internet, which while not as reliable as the Self-Directed Search, can give you some indication as to which Holland Codes best represent you. One such instrument is available at www.careerpath.com.

After identifying their Holland codes, ask students to answer the activity questions.
Holland Codes Analysis

Which two Holland Codes did you score highest with?

What are some career fields or jobs associated with each of these Holland Codes that you may be interested in?

Can you exclude any career fields or jobs as a result of taking this assessment?

What relationship do you see between your Signature Themes and your Holland Codes?

Activity 4.3: Holland Codes Analysis
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.4: Career Action Items

Learning Outcome:

- Apply theme-specific strategies to career planning.

Approximately 20-30 minutes

Activity Description:

Ask students to read the action items for “Applying Your Talents in Careers” (StrengthsQuest, Chapter 10) for each of their five Signature Themes.

Then, ask each student to identify one strategy they will commit to, and then have them answer the questions on the Career Action Items worksheet.

Alternatively, you can ask students to use the journaling function of the StrengthsQuest Web site to complete this activity. Click Journal from the homepage, and follow the directions to add, sort, print, or make an entry.

Supplemental Activity 4.A: Career Center Visit

Ask your students to visit your campus’ career center. During their visit, assign them tasks to complete. These tasks might include taking a career inventory assessment offered in the center, locating career exploration materials, or speaking with a career counselor. Instruct the students to share their strategy or strategies from the exercises with the counselor and seek direction on how the career center can help make the strategy a reality. Upon returning to class, have students, either in writing or orally, report back on what they discovered during their visit to the career center.
Career Action Items

Read the action items for “Applying Your Talents in Careers” for each of your five Signature Themes. Then, identify one strategy you will commit to, and then answer the following questions.

Which theme did you choose to focus on?

What was the strategy that you chose to act upon?

List three specific steps you can take to implement this strategy.

Now take the time to implement your strategy, then answer the last question.

What did you learn about yourself and/or your areas of interest that you didn’t know before completing this activity?

In the weeks to come, commit to doing this activity again. You may choose the same theme and a different strategy or, if you prefer, a strategy from a different theme altogether.

Activity 4.4: Career Action Items
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.5: Themes in Professions

Learning Outcome:

- Relate talent themes to specific occupations.

Approximately 30 minutes

Activity Description:

Have students choose three to five occupations from the following list (or add other occupations to the list; they may want to specify occupations in their particular field of study).

In small groups, ask students to discuss each of the professions. Ask them to consider what combination of themes they think would be most beneficial to an individual preparing for work in that field?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pharmacist</th>
<th>Firefighter</th>
<th>Stockbroker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical care nurse</td>
<td>Disc jockey</td>
<td>Hair stylist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical equipment sales</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>Retail sales manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate agent</td>
<td>Air traffic controller</td>
<td>Physical therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Kindergarten teacher</td>
<td>Small business entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer programmer</td>
<td>Court reporter</td>
<td>Auto mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel front desk clerk</td>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>Concert promoter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic designer</td>
<td>Personal trainer</td>
<td>Landscape architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Youth minister</td>
<td>Orchestra conductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction worker</td>
<td>Telephone customer service representative</td>
<td>Football coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debrief this activity by asking each group to share their responses. To facilitate discussion, you may want to ask the following questions: What were the themes identified the same or different than those of other groups? What might account for the similarities and differences? Do you think there are optimal themes for each occupation? Why or why not?

Supplemental Activity 4.B: Chapter XI Activities

Chapter XI in the StrengthsQuest text includes activities that can be completed in class or assigned as homework for students. Some of these exercises would be appropriate for journalizing. These include:

1. Sentence-completion exercises on pages 281-282.
2. Identify and establish a relationship with a mentor. Have students report on who they would like to have mentor them and what steps they have taken to establish a relationship with that person.
3. Values exercise on pages 282-283. This exercise can be used as a followup to Activity 4.2. This exercise asks students to consider their values when choosing a career. Any career choice that causes them to miss their “target” of important values will produce “value conflicts.” This should be a consideration or a part of their decision rule when selecting a career.
5. Examining greatest success questions on page 286. This exercise is very similar to Supplemental Activity 4.D.
Themes in Professions

Occupation 1

Occupation 2

Occupation 3

Occupation 4

Occupation 5
Facilitation Notes: Supplemental Activity 4.C: Job Analysis

Learning Outcome:

- Relate talent themes to specific occupations.

manız 30 minutes

Activity Description:

Helping students analyze opportunities based upon what they do best is a vital part of helping students utilize their talents. The purpose of this activity is to put some real positions in front of them to see how their talents and strengths may fit that role.

Collect two or three job descriptions, either from your own organization or a job board like monster.com. The descriptions should be fairly detailed in order to show the outcomes and the responsibilities of the position.

Then, ask your students to read through the descriptions one position at a time. For each of the outcomes or responsibilities listed for the job, ask them to look at their themes and write beside each of them the theme or themes that would help them achieve the success or outcome described for each statement. Make it clear that not all of the outcomes or responsibilities may fit them, so there will be statements for which they do not assign a theme.

After completing this activity, have students either individually or in a small group, answer the questions on the Job Analysis worksheet.

Debrief this activity by asking students to share their responses with a small group. As with so many others, the positive effect of this activity can be enhanced by having students discuss their work in small groups and/or report to the entire class.
Job Analysis

Would most of my strengths be utilized in this role?

Are there some strengths that wouldn’t get much use if I took a role like this? What are they, and how would that make me feel?

Are there some things in this position that would be difficult for me to do?

How well would this position fit me?

What parts of the role do not fit?

How would I feel in this type of a role?
Facilitation Notes: Supplemental Activity 4.D: Career Interview

Learning Outcome:

- Evaluate their career goals in light of their talents and strengths, as well as other personal qualities and external considerations.

😊 Variable

Activity Description:

Ask your students to identify a job or career that they have an interest in.

Assign them the task of interviewing an individual currently working in the field by conducting a 20-minute career interview. Walk your students through the structure and content of the interview and explain its purpose: The goal of the interview is to learn more about their role and how their talents and strengths allow them to succeed in the position.

After completing the interview, ask your students to compare the information they gathered from the interview to their responses in Activity 4.1, looking for similarities and differences.

Debrief this activity by asking students to share their responses and insights with a small group. As with so many others, the positive effect of this activity can be enhanced by having students discuss their work in small groups and/or report to the entire class.
Career Interview

Identify a job or career you have an interest in. Contact an individual currently working in the field, and request an appointment for the purpose of a 20-minute interview. The goal of the interview is to learn more about their role and how their talents and strengths allow them to succeed in the position.

What is your name and position?

Tell me about this position.

What are the five most important aspects of your role?

What do you enjoy most about your job?

What do you enjoy the least?

What is the environment like in which you work?

Who do you partner with in your role?

What talents do they have?

How does this partnership help you be more effective?
Career Interview (Continued)

Look at the following list of “What I Do Best.” Which 10 statements best describe what you spend most of your time doing?

- Volunteer for causes I believe in
- Collect and archive all kinds of information
- Talk with those going through difficult situations
- Establish routines and processes
- Think and study
- Create order and safety in my life
- Control my life
- Check people out carefully before revealing confidential information
- Associate with people who appreciate my strengths
- Work hard
- Do things right
- Live for the present
- Help people solve their problems
- Be busy all the time
- Find a new way to do things
- Learn as much as I can about the people I meet
- Follow up on the details
- Take on challenges
- Follow through on my commitments
- Participate in intellectual and philosophical discussions
- Give praise
- Have clear rules that everyone follows
- Prove myself successful
- Overcome obstacles
- Win the approval of others
- Strive to know more
- Envision the things I want and desire
- Selectively distribute praise and recognition
- Organize a big event or celebration
- Join brainstorming sessions
- Get people committed
- Help others see their strengths
- Make work fun
- Inspire people about what could be
- Examine the unique qualities of each person
- Be in the “public eye”
- Feel connected with all of life
- Compare my performance to others
- Act according to my beliefs
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- Let others know, without words, that I know how they feel
- Coach
- Discuss history and its lessons
- Help others explain their thoughts
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- Treat all people the same
- Concentrate until the job gets done
- Do what is expected of me each day
- Discover patterns of data
- Be persuasive
- Keep track of several things at one time
- Figure out how different people can work together productively
- Plan new programs
- Discover new information
- Create future pictures and plans
- Take on significant goals and challenges
- Search for the reasons and causes
- Tell stories
- Push things to action
- Accept people as they are
- Teach people
- Find experts to help
- Stay in contact with my friends
- Choose the best alternatives
- Build bridges between people of different cultures or experience

If you knew someone was coming into your role, what talents would they need to have in order to be effective?

Supplemental Activity 4.D: Career Interview, page 2 of 2
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.6: Interviewing From a Strengths Perspective

Learning Outcome:

- Apply theme-specific strategies as a part of the career-exploration process.

💬 Approximately 30 minutes

Activity Description:

In this activity students, prepare to take job interviews from a strengths-based perspective. Remember, we are never so strong as we are when we have our strengths and successes clearly in mind.

Ask your students to identify their Signature Themes, and then answer the questions keeping these themes in mind.

Alternatively, you can ask students to use the journaling function of the StrengthsQuest Web site to complete this activity. Click *Journal* from the homepage, and follow the directions to add, sort, print, or make an entry.

After your students have completed this exercise, have them role play with one another. One student should ask the questions and the other student answer, and then they should switch. Have them repeat their answers numerous times (even immediately) so as to rehearse and improve on their responses.

Debrief this activity by asking students to share their responses and insights with a small group. As with so many others, the positive effect of this activity can be enhanced by having students discuss their work in small groups and/or report to the entire class.

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Supplemental Activity 4.E: Meaningful Roles

Instruct your students to list three of the most meaningful and important jobs, leadership roles, or volunteer positions they have held. For each, have them identify five responsibilities or outcomes they achieved in those roles. Then, for each outcome, ask them to write the Signature Theme or Themes that they utilized to help them be successful in achieving the outcome.

Break students into small groups. Then, ask the students to first discuss their findings. You may want to provide your own example so they can understand how their strengths can relate to their own successes. Then, ask each student to take one of their outcomes and identify a specific example of how they achieved that success, using each of the themes they listed.

This activity, like Activity 4.6, will help students prepare for interview situations by providing them the opportunity to create answers to frequently asked interview questions.
Interviewing From a Strengths Perspective

A job interview can be a very stressful experience. However, by taking the opportunity to develop and rehearse your responses to frequently asked interview questions, you can eliminate much of that stress and perform more successfully in an interview. First, list your five themes. Then consider each of the following frequently asked interview questions. As you answer each question, compose a response to each question, using your talents and strengths as a basis for your answers.

*What are your Signature Themes?*

*Keeping in mind these themes, how would you respond to the following questions?*

Tell me about yourself.

What strengths do you bring to us?

What is your greatest weakness and why?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

*Activity 4.6: Interviewing From a Strengths Perspective*
Facilitation Notes: Activity 4.7: Strengths-Based Cover Letter

Learning Outcome:

- Apply theme-specific strategies as a part of the career-exploration process.

Activity Description:

When it comes to applying for a job, many students first think of creating a resume. However, an often-overlooked part of applying for any job is constructing a well-written cover letter. Whereas a resume is intended to highlight an individual’s education, experience, skills, and strengths, a cover letter should connect those qualities to the particular position in which they are applying.

Ask students to investigate and identify the components of an effective cover letter.

Then, ask your students to compose a cover letter to a potential employer that demonstrates why they are qualified for the position. Instruct students not to make up details regarding their experience, rather, ask them to focus on their talents and strengths. They should make themselves look like an attractive candidate for the position, based upon their natural talents and acquired strengths.

Note: It is beneficial to provide students with instructions regarding cover letters and sample cover letters as they work on completing this assignment.
Strengths-Based Cover Letter

An often overlooked part of applying for any job is constructing a well-written cover letter. Whereas a resume is intended to highlight your education, experience, skills, and strengths, a cover letter should connect those qualities to the particular position you are applying for.

Begin this activity by searching the Internet for information regarding components of and suggestions for writing an effective cover letter.

Now, choose an occupation that you have an interest in and research the requirements of the position. Identify the qualities, skills, and experience that are required of someone in this field. Visit your campus’ career center or library in your search. You may also want to consult the Internet or find job announcements for similar positions in the newspaper or on employment Web sites.

Once you have a clear idea of what the position requires, imagine that you are applying for a position in this field. Write a cover letter to a potential employer that demonstrates why you are qualified for the position. Do not make up details regarding your experience. Instead, focus on your talents and strengths. How do they, coupled with the knowledge and skills you already possess, make you an attractive candidate for this position?

Activity 4.7: Strengths-Based Cover Letter
Facilitation Notes: Supplemental Activity 4.F: Theme Jumble IV

Theme Jumble Answer Key:

INPUT
FUTURISTIC
ARRANGER
EMPATHY

“Right Fit”
Theme Jumble IV

Unscramble the four jumbled words to create the names of four talent themes.

PITUN

TRUISTFUCI

AGRRRNNAE

MAPHEYT

Now, unscramble the letters in the circles to answer the riddle.

When looking for a new job, the tailor was looking for the "

Supplemental Activity 4.F: Theme Jumble IV