# Applying Student and Faculty Personality Typing on a Two-Year College Campus

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Several articles concerning the use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) at agricultural colleges have appeared in the NACTA Journal in recent years. The results and implications of a multi-year project in which the MBTI was administered to students and faculty in the College of Agriculture, University of Nebraska were presented in a series of articles by Sorenson and Hartung (1987) and Barrett, Sorenson and Hartung (1985, 1987). McCann, Heird and Roberts (1989) compared MBTI personality types of students in animal evaluation classes versus those on judging teams at Texas Tech University over a three-year period. These same authors (1991) also evaluated the results and implications of students' MBTI personality types and their performance on nationally competitive judging teams representing four universities.

Faculty and staff at the Ohio State University, Agricultural Technical Institute (OSU/ATI), a two year technical college of about 600 students located on its own campus, have also used the MBTI at various levels in the Institute for a variety of reasons. This article describes how the MBTI is currently being used in several different applications on the campus and discusses plans for additional applications in the future.

## Overview of the MBTI

The MBTI is an instrument based on the work of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. It was developed over a 20-year period by Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs (Myers and McCaulley, 1985) and is considered to be the most reliable and valid instrument of its kind (Johnson, 1991). In order to understand the MBTI, a few terms and concepts need to be defined. Personality types are characterized by four pairs of letters, with a total of 16 possible combinations (types). The four pairs are designated by the letter combinations of E/I, S/N, T/F, and J/P. Readers interested in a more detailed explanation of the MBTI are referred to Lawrence (1982), Myers & McCaulley (1985), and Provost and Anchors (1987).

Extraversion (E) and Introversion (I) indicate the manner in which a person is energized. Extraverts prefer to gain their energy from the outer world of people, situations, and things. Introverts, on the other hand prefer to gain their energy from the inner world of ideas, concepts, and thoughts.

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The Sensing (S) and Intuitive (N) function is a perceptive process indicating the way a person prefers to receive information. Obviously, this is the function most clearly related to the educational process. Sensing people prefer to receive information through their five senses. They are likely to pay close attention to accuracy and detail, especially being tuned in to hands-on, practical, and experiential learning. People who prefer to use Intuition to receive information are likely to pay close attention to concepts and relationships, placing little emphasis on details.

The Thinking (T) and Feeling (F) function represents a judging process, indicating the manner in which a person prefers to make decisions. People with a preference for Thinking prefer to organize and structure information in a logical and structured way. Those with a preference for Feeling, on the other hand, prefer to organize and structure information in a value-oriented, personal manner when faced with a decision to be made.

The Judging (J) and Perceiving (P) preferences relate to the manner in which individuals prefer to live their lives. Judging refers to the preference of living a planned and organized lifestyle. Perceiving, on the other hand, refers to the preference of living a flexible and spontaneous lifestyle.

Staff at the OSU/ATI Residence Hall have been using the MBTI for several years both to help guide the selection of roommate combinations and to help resolve roommate disputes. The E/I and J/P preferences have been found to be particularly useful in these situations. Major roommate problems that have developed since initiating the use of the MBTI have typically occurred where roommates selected one another irrespective of individual preferences.

During recent years, the MBTI has also become a valuable tool in helping to train Resident Advisors (RAs). It has been found that it is important to have a well rounded team of advisors who are trained to work with all personality types. Resident hall staff have observed that RAs with the F preference are especially sensitive to and sought out by students seeking peer counselor type assistance and advice.

Problem Solving Course

In 1990 Zimmerman developed a capstone problem solving course which was instituted as a required course for all students with majors in the Engineering Technologies Division (Zimmerman, 1991). The course addresses the concerns expressed in recent years by both educators and industry personnel regarding the need and importance of holistic problem solving skills and abilities to the career success of graduates. Course topics include the hierarchy of four problem solving approaches (scientific method, application of technology, hard systems, and soft systems), crea-

tive and critical thinking, communication skills, learning styles, personality types, and decision making.

The MBTI is incorporated as a major part of the course when the subjects of learning styles and personality types and their relation to problem solving are presented. Students complete the MBTI instrument early in the quarter and are then introduced to the concepts of personality types and learning styles during class discussions and activities during portions of several following class sessions.

Results of the MBTI are provided to students during a class session about mid-quarter by an individual with expertise in the MBTI, who provides an interpretation of the results and several examples of applications to problem solving. Follow-up activities involving MBTI are incorporated by the instructor into the remaining class sessions. These include dividing students into various MBTI groupings when forming teams for in-class exercises, and discussions of MBTI types in relation to teaching, learning, work preference, decision making, and management. Since the population of students enrolled in the class is heavily biased to ST types, considerable emphasis is placed on these students' need to develop people-oriented and intuitive skills and abilities to compliment their technical knowledge.

Written feedback from students both in assigned journal entries and comments on the student evaluation of teaching instrument administered at the conclusion of each course has been very positive. Students understand and support the MBTI concept and process. They also recognize and appreciate the value of the MBTI related class sessions in enhancing their personal lives and their professional careers.

## Tutor Effectiveness Course

The recently developed tutor effectiveness course is another example of the incorporation of the MBTI as an important and major part of a course. In 1991, the tutoring coordinator (Johnson of this article) observed tutors struggling to work with students whose motivational patterns and learning preferences were different from their own and became acutely aware of the resulting problems and frustrations. As a result, a course entitled "Development of Tutor Effectiveness" was developed both to help tutors gain a clearer self- understanding and self-awareness and to improve their ability to work with the students being tutored.

The MBTI was incorporated as an important part of this course. By using results of the MBTI, tutors learn to be more aware of their strengths, to see differences in personality as positive, and to value the uniqueness of individuals. This has proven to be an important factor in the tutors' effectiveness. As one tutor wrote in his journal, "I learned a lot about myself and the people that I tutored. I found that, due to different personality types, tutoring involves more than just explaining the subject to someone. This class helped me to understand this much better, thus making me a better tutor."

## Orientation Course

In 1991, a program to administer the MBTI to all incoming students at Freshman Orientation Days prior to Autumn Quarter was initiated. Fortunately, Johnson (one of the authors) became a qualified MBTI user in 1991 which therefore made available on campus a staff member who could coordinate administrating and interpreting the results of the MBTI for a large number of students.

MBTI results are provided to the freshman students by the MBTI coordinator during one of the 10 one-hour sessions of the campus-wide Personal and Career Orientation courses taught during Autumn Quarter. (Students in the orientation course meet in one of several randomly assigned sections of about 20-25 individuals.) This class period is devoted exclusively to personality types and learning styles, and the MBTI results are used to help students understand and apply these concepts to themselves and their lives, focusing particularly on educational implications.

In addition to the in-class activities led by the MBTI coordinator, students are given journal assignments by their course facilitators (instructors) in which they are asked to explore in more detail how the concepts presented apply to their own lives. Although students and facilitators generally agree that the topic of personality types and the use of the MBTI are valuable parts of the course, some have expressed concern that the one-hour session is not long enough to provide adequate treatment of these subjects.

## Future Activities

Information concerning the MBTI results has now been collected for two or more groups of students for each of the applications discussed above. It is the authors' intent not only to continue this, but also to start analyzing the data so that statistical comparisons can be made between the MBTI results for the various student groups at OSU/ATI and those for the general population, college populations, and more specifically agricultural college populations as was done at the University of Nebraska and Texas Tech University.

Also, an effort is currently underway to encourage all faculty and staff at OSU/ATI to take the MBTI. Follow-up interpretative sessions will then be scheduled to help faculty apply the MBTI results in both their colleague/work environment and student/teaching/classroom situations.

## Conclusion

Faculty and staff at OSU/ATI have found that use of the MBTI has proved to be invaluable in a number of different applications on campus. Once students, faculty, and staff understand the concept of personality types and the MBTI, they can make immediate and successful use of this information and awareness. However, it is imperative that if the MBTI or other forms of personality typing instruments are used, that they be kept in the proper perspective. It is important that students and others involved clearly understand that the functions identified by the instrument are nothing more than preferred ways of doing things, and that each individual has the capability to and should develop and effectively use each of the eight characteristics.

In many ways the process involved in administering and interpreting personality typing instruments such as the MBTI is as important as the actual results. Having OSU/