Cognitive Style Mapping

What It Is: Cognitive style is defined as information processing habits, representing the learner's preferred modes of perceiving meaning, thinking, remembering and problem solving, as well as characteristic ways of feeling and behaving in learning situations. The use of the cognitive style mapping process is intended to help the learner determine how and where learning takes place most effectively—what the individual's particular learning patterns are.

In Cognitive Style Mapping an inventory is administered, consisting of "preference" type questions. The analysis of the answers to these questions provides a "map" or evidence of the strength of the learner's preferences for various phases of the learning process. Cognitive Style Mapping does not measure achievement or ability--only learning style preferences. For example:

Does the student learn theoretical matters by listening or reading, through visual or auditory material, by touching or even smelling the matter being studied? Does the learner work most effectively in a highly structured setting, in a peer group, or in an environment where he/she may work alone and establish an independent rate? Does the student reason and reach conclusions by dealing with rules, recognizing similarities, identifying differences, or combining all three approaches?

Benefits: Awareness of one's style of learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses, makes it possible for the learner to focus attention on the study strategies that will increase study efficiency for that individual. It is also possible to better recognize the desired match among class structure, skills required and individual learning style preferences. Skills or processes that might be identified as weaknesses can be developed if needed for a specific course. An awareness of learning preference can direct attention to the benefits of using special study materials. Learning to maximize learning preference strengths can increase studying efficiency in many instances.

Study Skills Center Assistance:

1. The Study Skills Center can arrange for the student to complete the inventory by computer.

2. When the "map" (analysis of responses to inventory questions) is ready the Study Skills center can provide interpretation of the information included.

3. The Study Skills Center staff can provide suggestions on how to improve study strategies based on individual learning style strengths, with suggestions for application to specific class structures and requirements.

4. The Study Skills Center can provide materials for further work on developing efficient and appropriate study techniques.