The Thriving Quotient: A New Vision for Student Success

Laurie A. Schreiner
David Edens
Eric J. McIntosh

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

NASPA Conference March 2011
What does a “thriving” student look like?
Approaches to Student Success

- Behaviors that lead to learning outcomes
- Institutional supports for engagement
- Programs and services
- Entering student characteristics predictive of success
- Individual motivation and psychological processes that lead to engagement behaviors
Positive Psychology

The Fulfilled Individual
The Thriving Community
Conceptual Framework

Flourishing = Emotional Vitality + Positive Functioning

Definition of Flourishing

Rising to meet life’s challenges
Involved in healthy relationships
Engaged and productive
Looking beyond oneself to the greater good of others

(Keyes & Haidt, 2003)
Flourishing College Students

- Flourishing is independent of gender, parent educational attainment, or academic achievement.

- Measures of student engagement are predictive of flourishing.
  - Academic challenge
  - Active/collaborative learning
  - Enriching educational experiences
  - Supportive campus environment

(Ambler, 2006)
Bean & Eaton’s (2000) Model of Student Persistence

- Psychological processes that promote academic and social integration and contribute to student persistence:
  - Attitudes $\rightarrow$ behavior
  - Coping mechanisms (approach-avoidance)
  - Self-efficacy
  - Locus of control/attributions

- Students who persist are those who are most able to interact effectively within the campus environment in ways that strengthen their self-efficacy and control
Why “Thriving”?

Goes beyond psychological well-being inherent in flourishing

More holistic construct that adds
--Engaged learning and academic success
--Citizenship and openness to diversity
THRIVING

Academic

Intrapersonal

Interpersonal
Criteria for Including a Construct

Measurable

Empirically connected to student success

Malleable (state vs. trait)

Interventions make a difference
The Thriving Quotient (TQ)

- TQ was constructed from public domain instruments with proven validity and reliability that were adapted for college students after input from student focus groups.

- 25-item instrument with responses ranging on a 6-point Likert-type scale of 1 = strongly agree to 6 = strongly disagree.

- Coefficient alpha = .89
The Thriving Quotient

Engaged Learning

Academic Determination

Positive Perspective

Diverse Citizenship

Social Connectedness
Five Factors of Thriving

• Engaged Learning
  • Meaningful processing, focused attention, active participation in the learning process

• Academic Determination
  • Self-regulated learning, effort, coping skills, goal-directedness (hope)

• Diverse Citizenship
  • Making a contribution, appreciation of differences

• Social Connectedness
  • Positive relationships and access to friendships

• Positive Perspective
  • Optimism and subjective well-being
Research Questions

What does student thriving ADD to our ability to predict intent to graduate and college grades?
Conceptual Framework for Predictive Study

Astin’s I-E-O Model
Methods

- 35 private and 18 public four-year colleges and universities administered the Thriving Quotient
- Surveys were administered on-line – response rates averaged 12%
- After eliminating outliers and students over age 25, final sample consisted of 5,562 participants
  - 70% female
  - 21% first-generation
  - 80% Caucasian
Data Analysis
Structural Equation Model
Findings

• The model fits this new data very well
  \[ X^2 (1172) = 8,351.74 \ (p < .001), \ CFI = .940, \ RMSEA = .033 \]

• The model predicts 35% of the variation in intent to graduate and 31% of the variation in college grades

• Thriving explains an additional 12-22% of the variation in student success outcomes, above and beyond other predictors
Implications for Practice

**Individual student level:**

Interventions targeted to specific aspects of thriving

**Institutional level:**

Who is thriving?
In what aspects?
Targeting programs and services
What would help students thrive?

**Group Work:**
Specific suggestions for campuses that wish to help students thrive
Five Factors of Thriving

• **Engaged Learning**
  • Meaningful processing, focused attention, active participation in the learning process

• **Academic Determination**
  • Self-regulated learning, effort, coping skills, goal-directedness (hope)

• **Diverse Citizenship**
  • Making a contribution, appreciation of differences

• **Social Connectedness**
  • Positive relationships and access to friendships

• **Positive Perspective**
  • Optimism and subjective well-being
Engaged Learning

Look beyond behavior

Focus on faculty development

Teach students how to make connections in their learning

Create seamless learning environments
Academic Determination

• **Build hope: Advising**
  • Goal setting and pathways to success

• **Learn how to learn: FYE**
  • Self-regulation

• **Emphasize the role of effort in success**
  • Normalize the help-seeking process
  • Mastery takes practice and effort
Social Connectedness

- **Nurture a sense of belonging**
  - Mattering
  - Welcome
  - Commitment to student welfare

- **Encourage positive interactions with others:**
  - Selective involvement in campus activities and organizations
  - Build a sense of community in the classroom
Diverse Citizenship

- Study abroad
- Service learning
- Living-learning communities

IF

- Sustained contact
- Adequate support and safe environment for conflict resolution
- Common goal that requires collaboration
Positive Perspective

- Equip with optimistic explanatory style
  - Advising
  - Peer leaders
  - First day of class

- Envision future success
  - Advising – possible selves

- Teach students to develop and apply their strengths as a foundation for facing challenges (contributes to all aspects of thriving)
Additional Points of Intervention

- Spirituality contributes to all thriving—especially:
  - Positive Perspective
  - Diverse Citizenship

- Faculty Interaction
  - Engaged Learning

- Campus Involvement
  - Diverse Citizenship
  - Social Connectedness

- Major Certainty
  - Contributes to every aspect of thriving
Limitations and Directions for Future Research

• **Limitations:**
  - Sampling: Over-representation of white females – only four-year institutions

• **Directions for future research:**
  - Use actual persistence and GPA as outcomes
  - Longitudinal study: thriving over time, changes in thriving

• **Tomorrow at 12:15: Pathways to Thriving in Students of Color**
Join us for the 2011 Thriving Project!

www.ThrivingInCollege.org