Beyond Surviving: Developing and Validating a Model of Thriving

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Think about your own experience as a student.

How did you judge whether or not you were successful?

To what do you attribute your success? ("I succeeded because ....")
“Implicit Theory” of Student Success

Our underlying beliefs about ...
“Implicit Theory” of Student Success

Why students succeed
“Implicit Theory” of Student Success

Why students fail
“Implicit Theory” of Student Success

What should be done to reverse the failure
Dominant Paradigm: “The Successful Student”

Student Background
Characteristics and Pre-College Experiences

Student Behaviors
Study habits, time on task, peer interactions, motivation, interaction with faculty

Quality of Effort
Students Invest in “Educationally Purposeful Activities” (ENGAGEMENT)

SUCCESS!

“The student as author of their own success”
Systemic barriers to success are ignored – and the role of educators in creating an environment conducive to learning and success is missing
• Psychosocial
• Motivation

• Behavior
• Engagement

• Learning
• Graduation

Student Success
Thriving—more than just surviving!
What does it mean to thrive?
What does it take to thrive?
Thriving: Fully engaged, energized, and making the most of the university experience
• Based on existing malleable constructs predictive of student persistence and GPA
• 24-item instrument
• Confirmatory factor analysis: five-factor model with a higher-order construct of thriving

\[ \alpha = .89 \]
\[ \chi^2_{(114)} = 1093.83, \ p < .001, \ CFI = .954; \ RMSEA = .054 \]
with 90% confidence intervals from .052 to .058
UNIVERSITY STUDENT THRIVING

ACADEMIC DETERMINATION

ENGAGED LEARNING

DIVERSE CITIZENSHIP

POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

THRIVING
Engaged Learning

\[ \alpha = 0.87 \]

Learning That Lasts!

Meaningful Processing
- Connections
- Energy
- Relevance and application
Academic Determination

α = .82

Manage time well

WORK HARD

Motivated

SELF-REGULATED LEARNER

Know how to apply strengths to academic tasks
Diverse Citizenship

$\alpha = .79$

- Value differences in others
- Want to make a difference
- Think I can make a difference
- Act to make a difference
Social Connectedness
$\alpha = .83$

Feeling supported by others, having close friends, not feeling lonely
Positive Perspective

$\alpha = .78$

Realistic Optimism: Long view of future success
Thriving is malleable!

We can intervene to make a difference in students’ thriving levels -- and in their ultimate success.
Pathways to University Student Thriving

Institutional Integrity

FACULTY: Interaction, pedagogy, perspectives

Campus Involvement

Spirituality

Sense of Community

Major Fit

THRIVING

ENGAGED LEARNING

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE

DIVERSE CITIZENSHIP

ACADEMIC DETERMINATION
A Shift in the Primary Burden of Responsibility

FROM:

TO:
χ² (375) = 4740.20 (p = .000); CFI = .924; RMSEA = .044; R² = .70
Direct Pathway to Thriving: Spirituality

- Advising that focuses on meaning and purpose
- Faculty and staff willing to engage in dialogue
- Contemplative practices
- Partnerships with faith-based organizations
- Sacred space on campus
- Weaving interfaith observances into diversity celebrations and training
Direct Pathway to Thriving: Student-Faculty Interaction

Frequency

Satisfaction

Sensitivity to Diverse Learners and Multiple Perspectives
Faculty Sensitivity & Multiple Perspectives

Institutional Integrity

Care and Compassion

Campus Sense of Community

Frequency and Satisfaction with Student-Faculty Interaction

THRIVING
Rewarding Student-Faculty Interaction

In the classroom: active learning, inclusive pedagogy, and accessibility cues

Conversations about careers; “painting a picture of the future”

Engaging dialogue around academic issues

Research partnerships

Validation – “you deserve to be here”

“She believed in me before I believed in myself”
Psychological sense of community is the strongest contributor to thriving.
## Sense of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbols, signs, rituals</td>
<td>Opportunities for positive interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not just “welcome” but a full member of the community → sense of belonging and validation</td>
<td>Celebrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared emotional connection</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
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<tr>
<td>Student voice</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>Shared goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattering to the institution</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Struggle of any kind can be internalized by students as evidence that they do not belong.

(Walton & Cohen, 2007)
Fostering a Sense of Belonging on Campus

Faculty and staff “go the extra mile”

Students have at least one faculty or staff member they trust
• to provide info and support
• to connect them to resources

Museus, Yi, & Saeula, 2017
Institutional Integrity: Delivering On Your Promises

#1 predictor of sense of community in students of color in PWIs
Institutional Integrity: Delivering On Your Promises

-- faculty and staff actions are congruent with the mission

-- expectations are met

-- campus is accurately portrayed during admissions
Thriving in Transitions

- **Positive Appraisal** – “I can handle this”
- **Providing Support** – “I’m not in this alone”
- **Using Effective Strategies** – “I know what to do”