

Flourishing and floundering students: Implications for identification and engagement

Pat Esplin, Larry Nelson, Steve Wygant
Brigham Young University

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Background research on
flourishing and
floundering

Today's Emerging Adults....

Are we raising a nation of little egomaniacs?

"failed adults"

Failure to Launch

Have We Raised A Generation Of Narcissists?

Selfish!?!

Living in the Age of Entitlement

"Young People Today Take Longer To Grow Up!"

Findings from

Project READY

(Researching Emerging Adults
Developmental Years)



Our research and work from other labs are starting to suggest that some young people may be floundering during this time period while others appear to be flourishing. While there is great diversity of individual experiences in emerging adulthood, few empirical attempts have been made to investigate whether the diversity of individual experiences may still be captured in broader typologies or clusters of experiences in emerging adulthood.

Current Study

The first purpose of this study was to identify different clusters of emerging adults based on the following beliefs, behaviors, and relationships:

- parental closeness
- religious faith
- pro-social behaviors
- internal regulation of values
- drinking
- drug use
- number of sexual partners
- pornography use
- video game use
- depression
- anxiety
- self-perceptions

Current Study

The second purpose of this study was to see if these clusters were differentially related to the criteria young people deemed important for adulthood and the extent of identity achievement.

Methods and Procedures

- 487 single emerging adults (281 young women, 206 young men) from four universities across the US
- M age = 20.07 (SD = 1.89, range = 18-26)
- 75% European American
- 90% living outside of their parents' home
- On-line questionnaire, recruited through faculty announcement in classes

Results

- Cluster 1 ($n = 91$, 20%) will be referred to as *Externalizing* because it consists of emerging adults with high levels of drinking, drug use, sexual partners, pornography use, and video game use.
- Cluster 2 ($n = 117$, 25%) will be referred to as *Internalizing* because it consists of emerging adults with high levels of depression and anxiety, and low levels of self-worth and social acceptance.
- Cluster 3 ($n = 112$, 24%) will be referred to as *Religious-Adjusted* because it consists of emerging adults with high levels of religiosity, low levels of risk behaviors, and average depression, anxiety, and self-worth.
- Cluster 4 ($n = 146$, 31%) will be referred to as *Well-Adjusted* because it consists of emerging adults with the highest levels of closeness to mother and father, high internal regulation of values, low levels of depression and anxiety, and high levels of self-worth and social acceptance.

Results

Gender:

- 39% ($n = 76$) of young men in the sample and only 6% ($n = 15$) of young women comprised the Externalizing cluster.
- 25% ($n = 46$) of young men and 25% ($n = 68$) young women comprised the Internalized cluster.
- Only 7% ($n = 14$) of young men comprised the *Religious-Adjusted* cluster, but 36% ($n = 98$) of young women were in this cluster.
- 29% ($n = 56$) of young men and 33% ($n = 90$) of young women comprised the Well-adjusted cluster.

Comparing the Clusters.....

Importance of Criteria for Adulthood

In order to assess criteria for adulthood, emerging adults were presented with a list of possible criteria for adulthood (e.g., “finishing education,” “avoid drunk driving,” “purchasing a house”; Arnett, 1997, 2003).

Participants were asked to “give your opinion on the *importance* of each of the following in determining whether or not a person has reached adulthood.” They could rate each item on a scale of 1 (*not at all important*) to 4 (*very important*).

The subscales included:

- **Relational Maturity** ($\alpha = .63$, 4-items, e.g., become less self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others)
- **Role Transitions** ($\alpha = .80$, 7-items, e.g., financially independent from parents)
- **Norm Compliance** ($\alpha = .82$, 8-items, e.g., avoid becoming drunk)
- **Biological/Age Related Transitions** ($\alpha = .79$, 9-items, e.g., reach age 21)
- **Family Capacities** ($\alpha = .91$, 6-items, become capable of caring for children)

Comparing the Clusters.....

Identity Achievement

Identity achievement was assessed using a shortened version of the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995), which considers 20 statements regarding individuals' commitment and exploration on various aspects of identity, including:

- **Occupation** (4-items, e.g., I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue)
- **Religion** (4-items, e.g., I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs)
- **Values** (4-items, e.g., I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me)
- **Family** (4-items, e.g., I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure)
- **Dating** (4-items, e.g., I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships).

Participants rated each statement on a 6-point scale with values ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Scoring was reversed for negatively-worded items, and item scores were summed to obtain total scores for identity achievement, with higher scores indicating higher exploration and commitment (i.e., higher identity achievement).

Results

Differences in outcome variables as a function of cluster membership

- Well-adjusted emerging adults rated relational maturity as more important than did Externalizing or Internalizing emerging adults.
- Well-adjusted emerging adults also rated norm compliance as more important than did Externalizing or Internalizing emerging adults.
- Well-adjusted emerging adults rated family capacities as more important than did Externalizing and Internalizing emerging adults.

Results

Differences in outcome variables as a function of cluster membership

- Well-adjusted and Average emerging adults had higher levels of identity achievement regarding occupation than did Externalizing or Internalizing emerging adults, who did not differ from one another.
- Well-adjusted emerging adults had higher levels of identity achievement regarding religiosity than did Externalizing or Internalizing emerging adults, who did not differ from one another.
- Well-adjusted emerging adults had higher levels of identity achievement regarding values and family than did Average, Externalizing or Internalizing emerging adults (who did not differ from one another).
- Well-adjusted emerging adults had the highest level of identity achievement regarding dating, followed by Average emerging adults; and Externalizing and Internalizing emerging adults had the lowest levels (and did not differ from one another).

Summary

Externalizers:

- High levels of drinking, drug use, sexual partners, pornography use, and video game use
- Do not see relational maturity, norm compliance, and family capacities as important criteria for adulthood
- Lower identity in occupation, religiosity, values, family, and dating

Summary

Internalizers:

- High levels of depression and anxiety, and low levels of self-worth and social acceptance
- Do not see relational maturity, norm compliance, and family capacities as important criteria for adulthood
- Lower identity in occupation, religiosity, values, family, and dating

Summary

Average:

→ High levels of religiosity, low levels of risk behaviors, video game use, and pornography use, and average depression, anxiety, and self-worth

→ High levels of identity achievement regarding occupation, lower achievement in values and family compared to the well-adjusted group

Summary

Well-Adjusted:

- High levels of closeness to mother and father, high internal regulation of values, low levels of depression and anxiety, and high levels of self-worth and social acceptance
- Rate relational maturity, norm compliance, and family capacities as important criteria for adulthood
- High identity achievement in occupation, religiosity, values, family, and dating

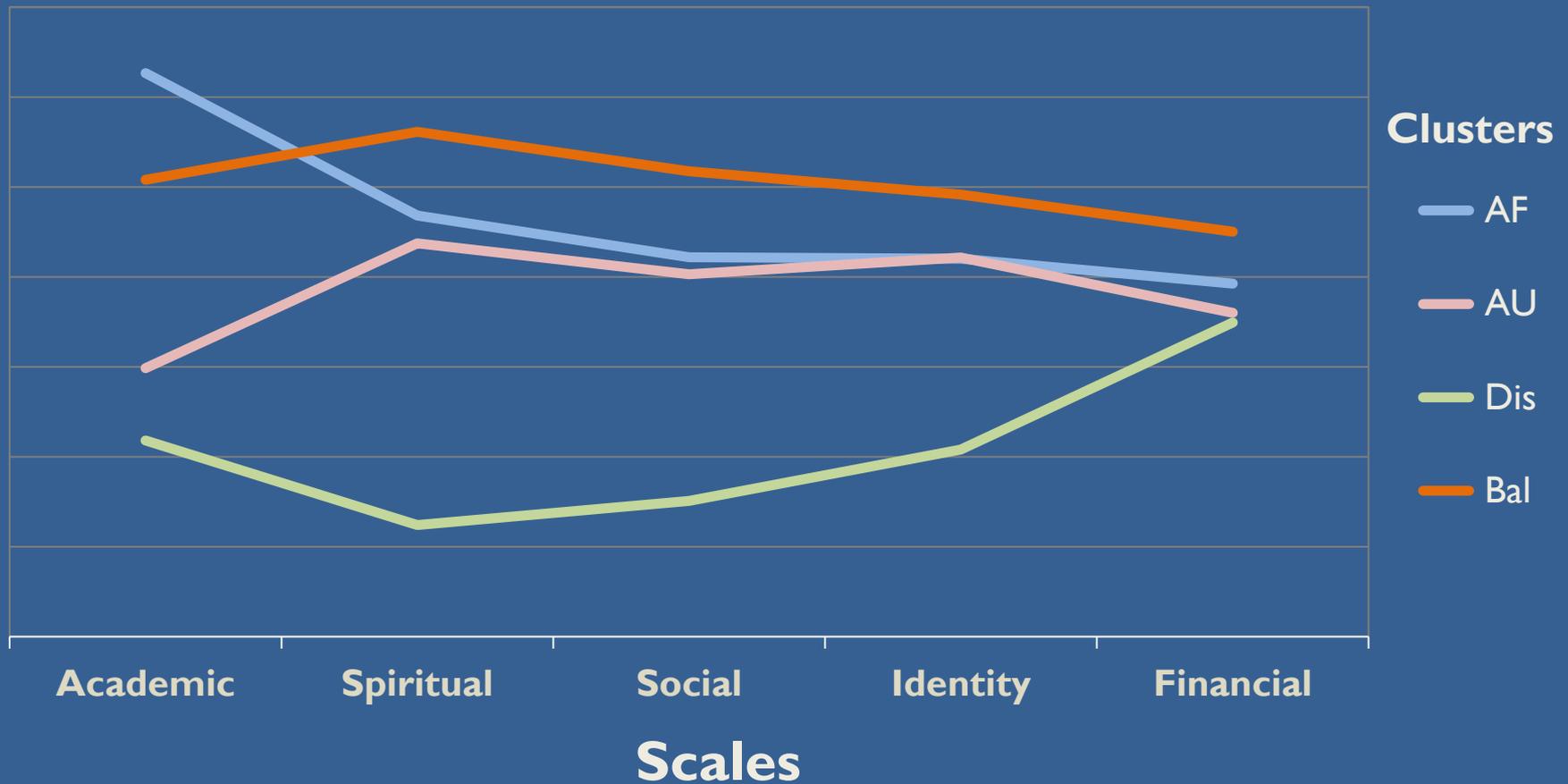
Current
research/conceptual
model

First-year student cluster model

- Questions:
 - *Can we use data to identify students who are likely to flourish or flounder during the first year?*
 - *Can we differentiate groups of students with different motivations, strengths and needs in order to connect them specifically with resources they need?*
- Based on responses from three first-year student surveys:
 - Pre-arrival Survey (July)
 - Freshman Mentoring Survey (January)
 - End-of-year Survey (March)
- Cluster analysis based on questions about
 - high school behavior and experience
 - motivations related to higher education
 - expectations for first year

What do our clusters look like?

Four clusters defined across five scales



(representing student motivations and past experiences)

Clusters

1. Academically focused (AF)

- Highest on academic dimension
- Average on other dimensions

2. Academically undeveloped (AU)

- Lower on academic dimension
- Average on other dimensions

3. Disengaged/reticent (Dis)

- Low on every dimension

4. Balanced/well adjusted (Bal)

- High on all dimensions

Background

		Clusters				
		AF	AU	Dis	Bal	Total
N		246	535	242	422	1445
Percent of total		17%	37%	17%	29%	100%
ACT Composite		28.9	28.6	29.4	27.8	28.5
High School GPA		3.83	3.75	3.77	3.76	3.77
BYU GPA		3.43	3.31	3.32	3.17	3.29
Gender						
	Female	66%	58%	47%	66%	60%
	Male	34%	42%	53%	34%	40%

How does high school experience differ across clusters?

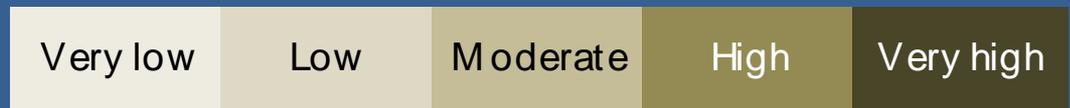
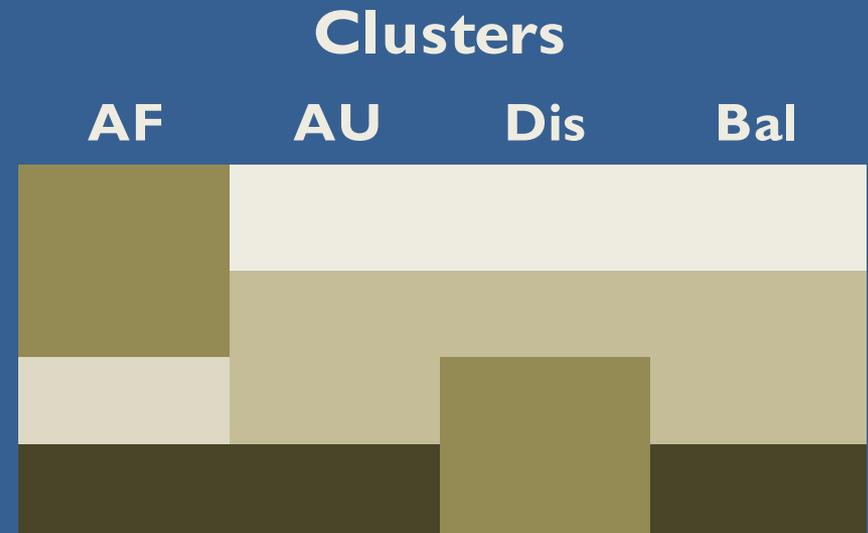
High School experience

Studied more than two hours/day

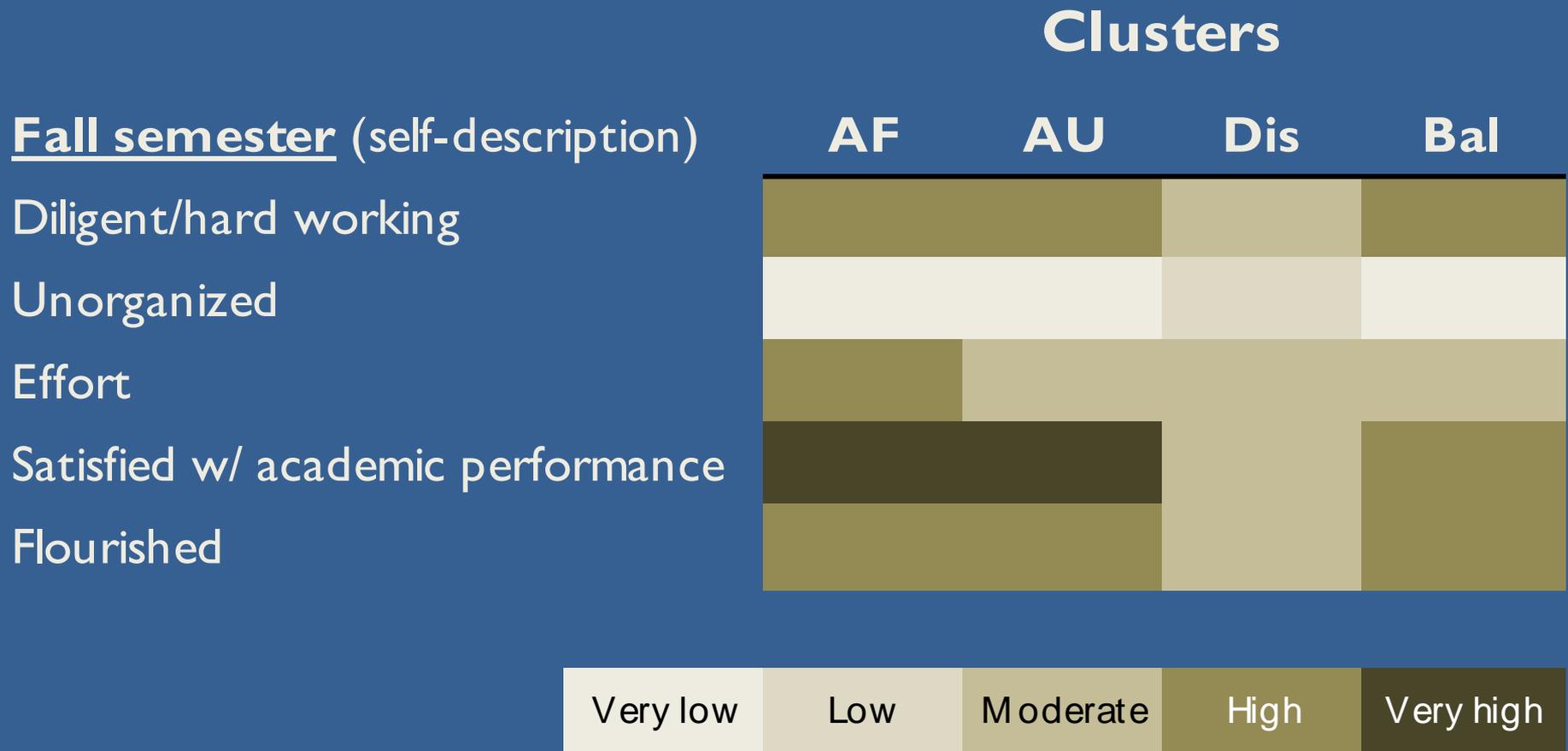
HS courses "very/extremely" challenging

HS success due more to ability than effort

Flourished in high school



How does fall semester experience differ across clusters?



How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?

Goal importance

Socialize

Learn new ideas and perspectives

Enhance your personal spirituality

Be challenged intellectually

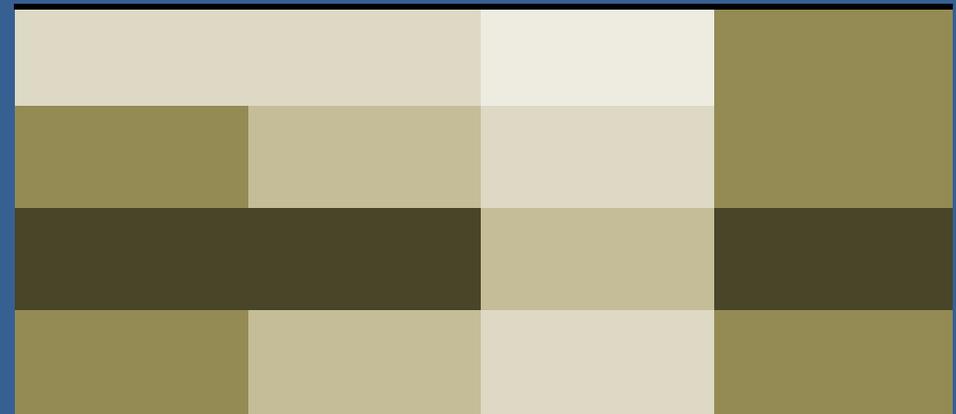
Clusters

AF

AU

Dis

Bal



Very low

Low

Moderate

High

Very high

How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?

Goal accomplishment

Socialize

Learn new ideas and perspectives

Enhance your personal spirituality

Grow from intellectual challenge

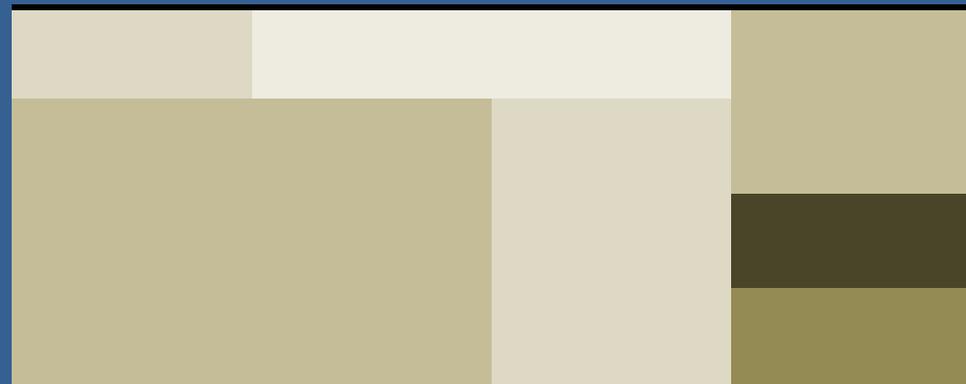
Clusters

AF

AU

Dis

Bal



Very low

Low

Moderate

High

Very high

How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?

Academic participation

Complete readings & assignments before class

Discuss course-related ideas outside class

Get feedback before submitting work

Work harder than you thought you could

Write multiple drafts of a paper

Clusters

AF

AU

Dis

Bal



Very low

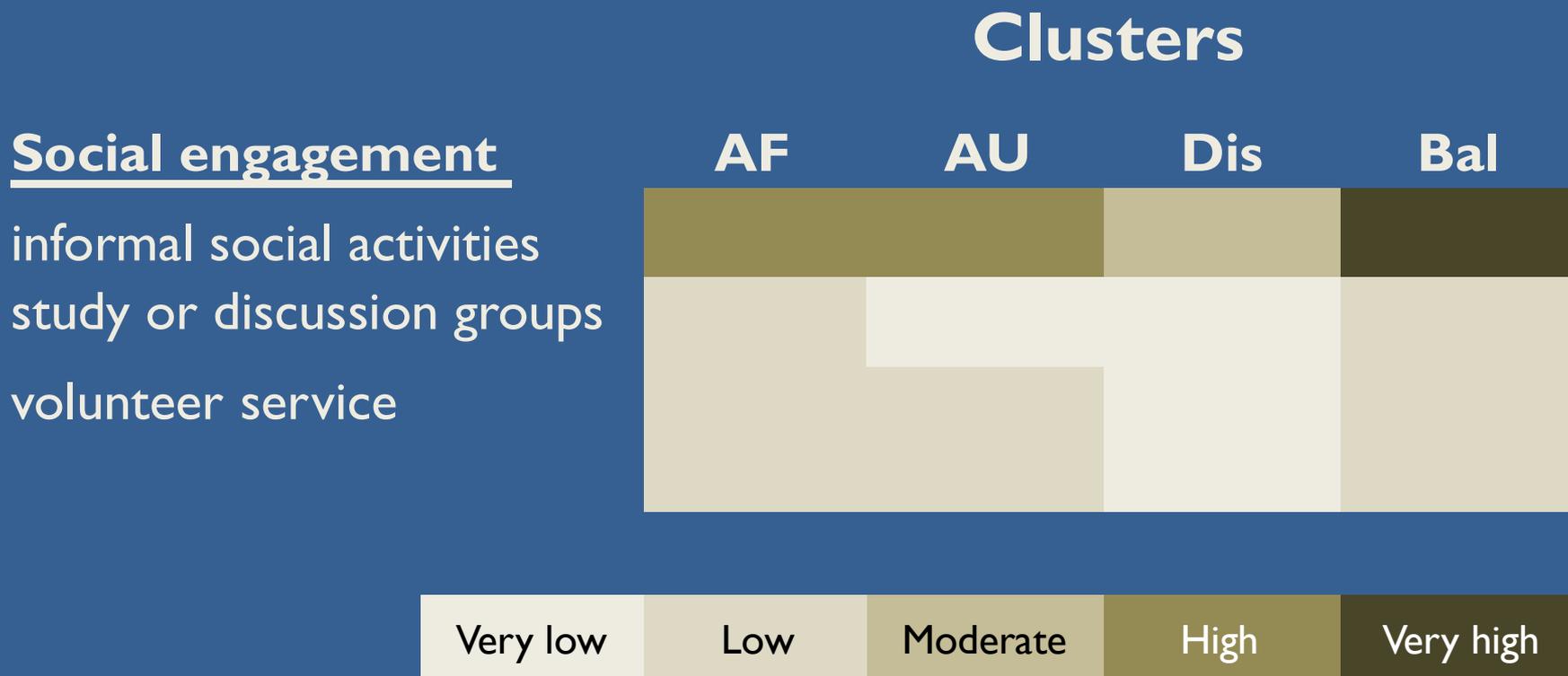
Low

Moderate

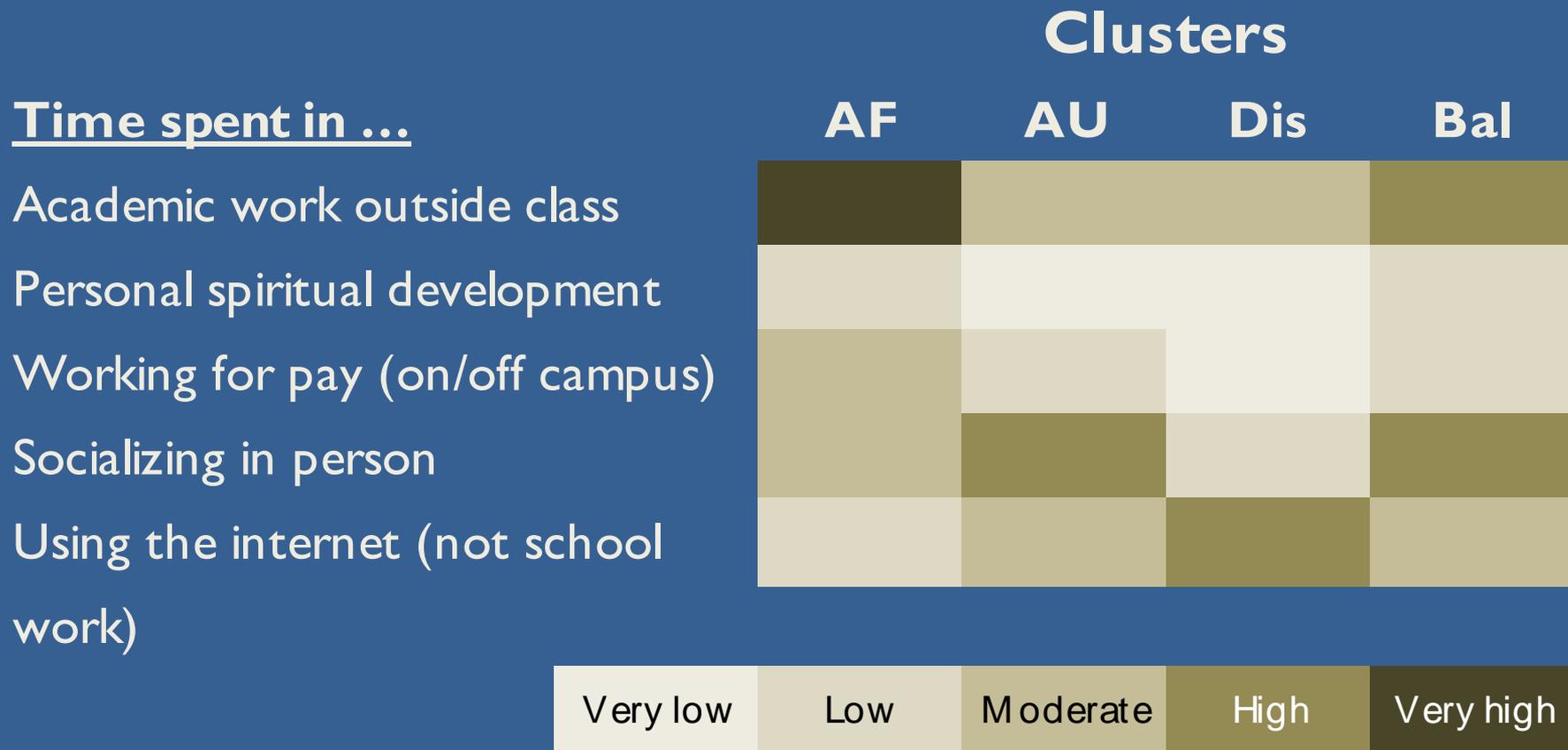
High

Very high

How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?



How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?



How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?

Identity

As a whole, I am satisfied with my life.

I like the kind of person I am.

I am often disappointed with myself.

I feel like I know & understand myself well.

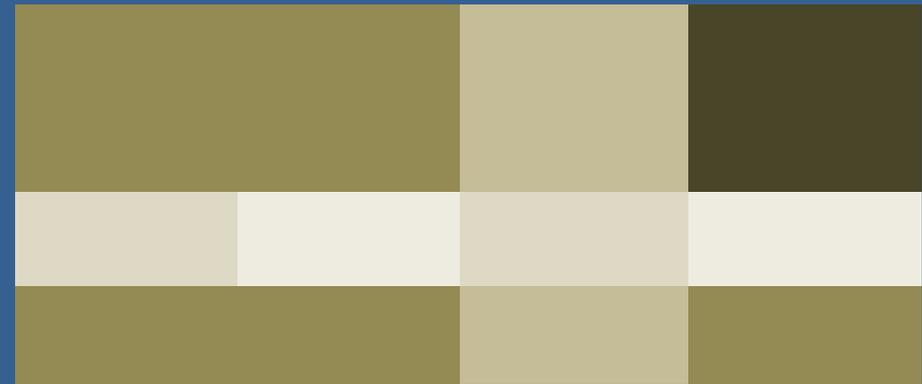
Clusters

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Bal



Very low

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Moderate

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Very high

How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?

Belonging

I belong at BYU.

I have fit in at BYU socially.

I have fit in at BYU academically.

I have fit in at BYU spiritually.

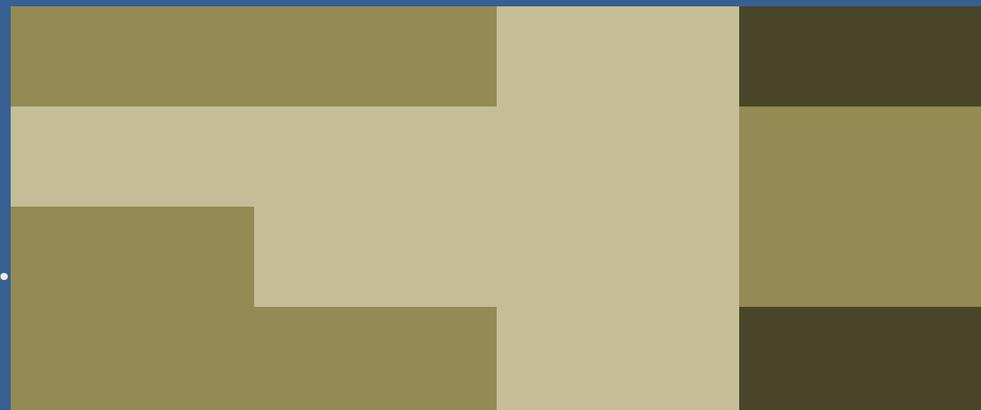
Clusters

AF

AU

Dis

Bal



Very low

Low

Moderate

High

Very high

How do clusters differ at the end of the first year?

Satisfaction/Flourishing

Made the right choice to attend BYU

Flourishing

Would choose BYU again

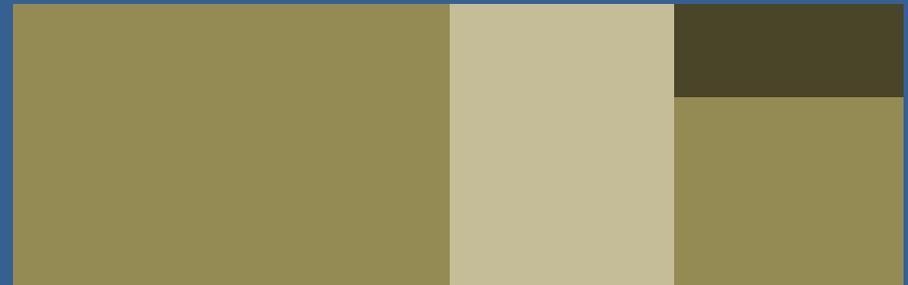
Clusters

AF

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Bal



Very low

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Moderate

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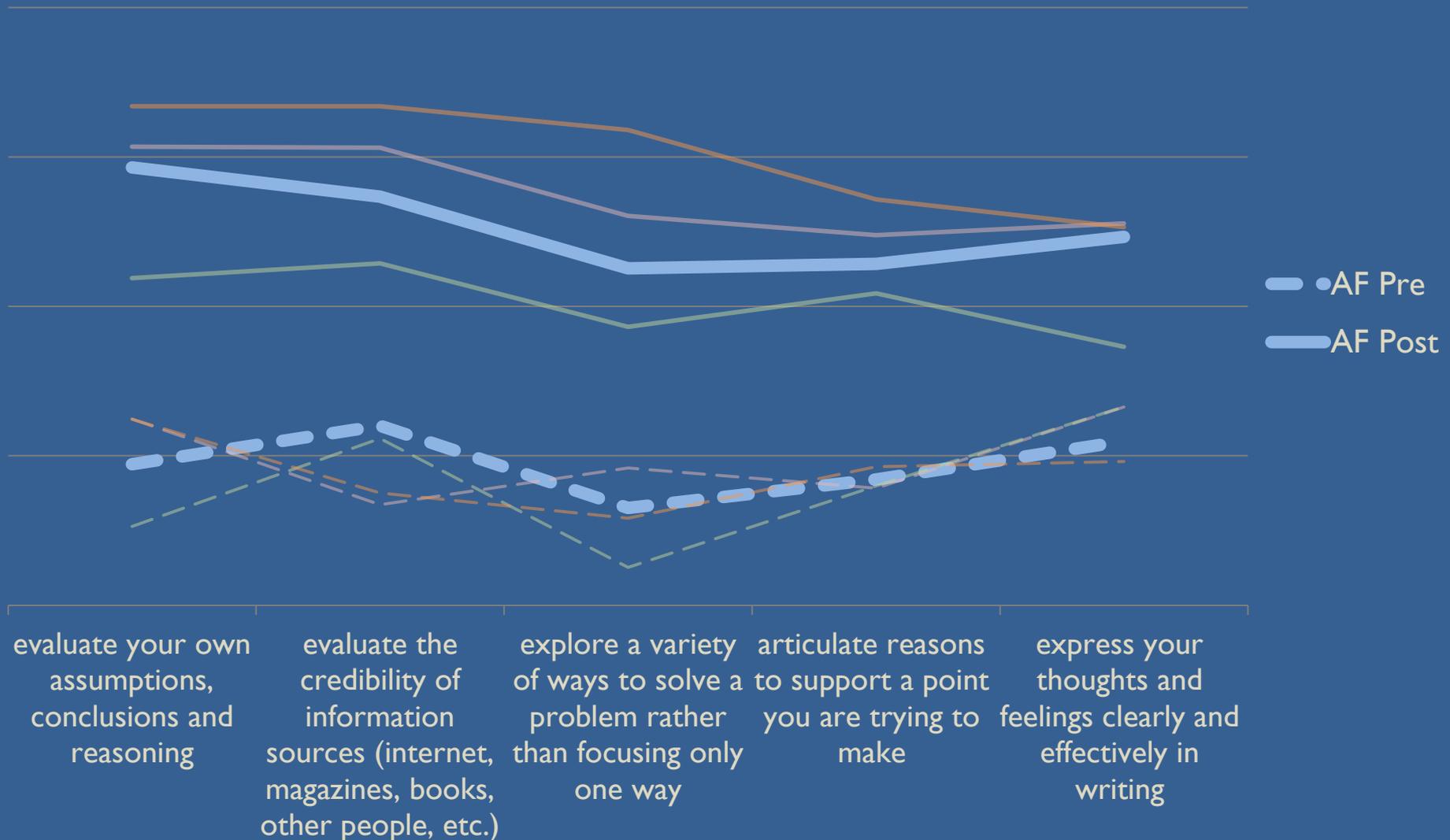
Very high

Regression: Predicting “flourishing” at the end of the first year

- Flourished in high school
- Expected to work fewer hours for pay first year
- More settled in beliefs and values
- More satisfied with life
- More confident in ability to make friends

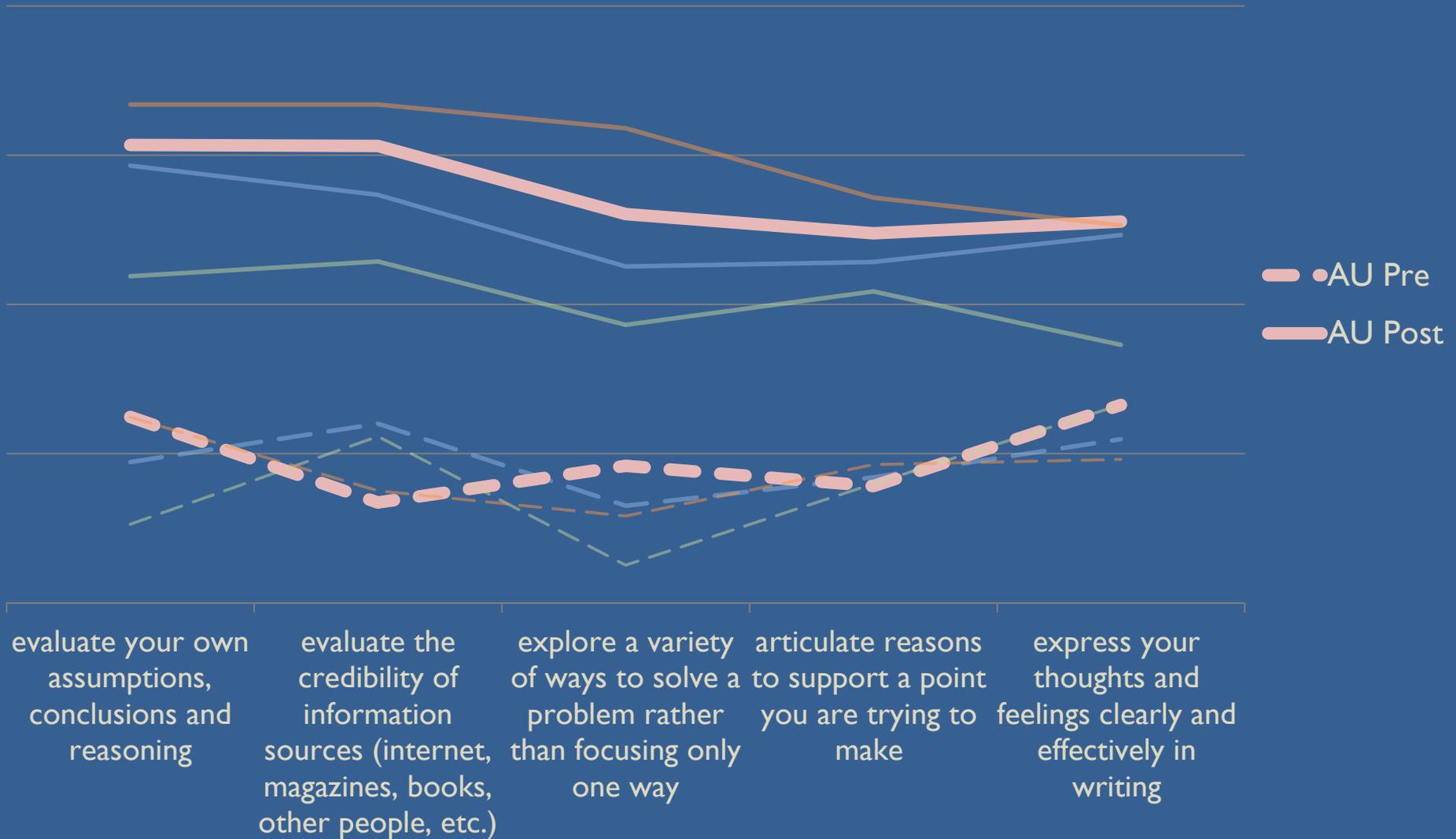
Intellectual Constructs

“Academically Focused” Cluster



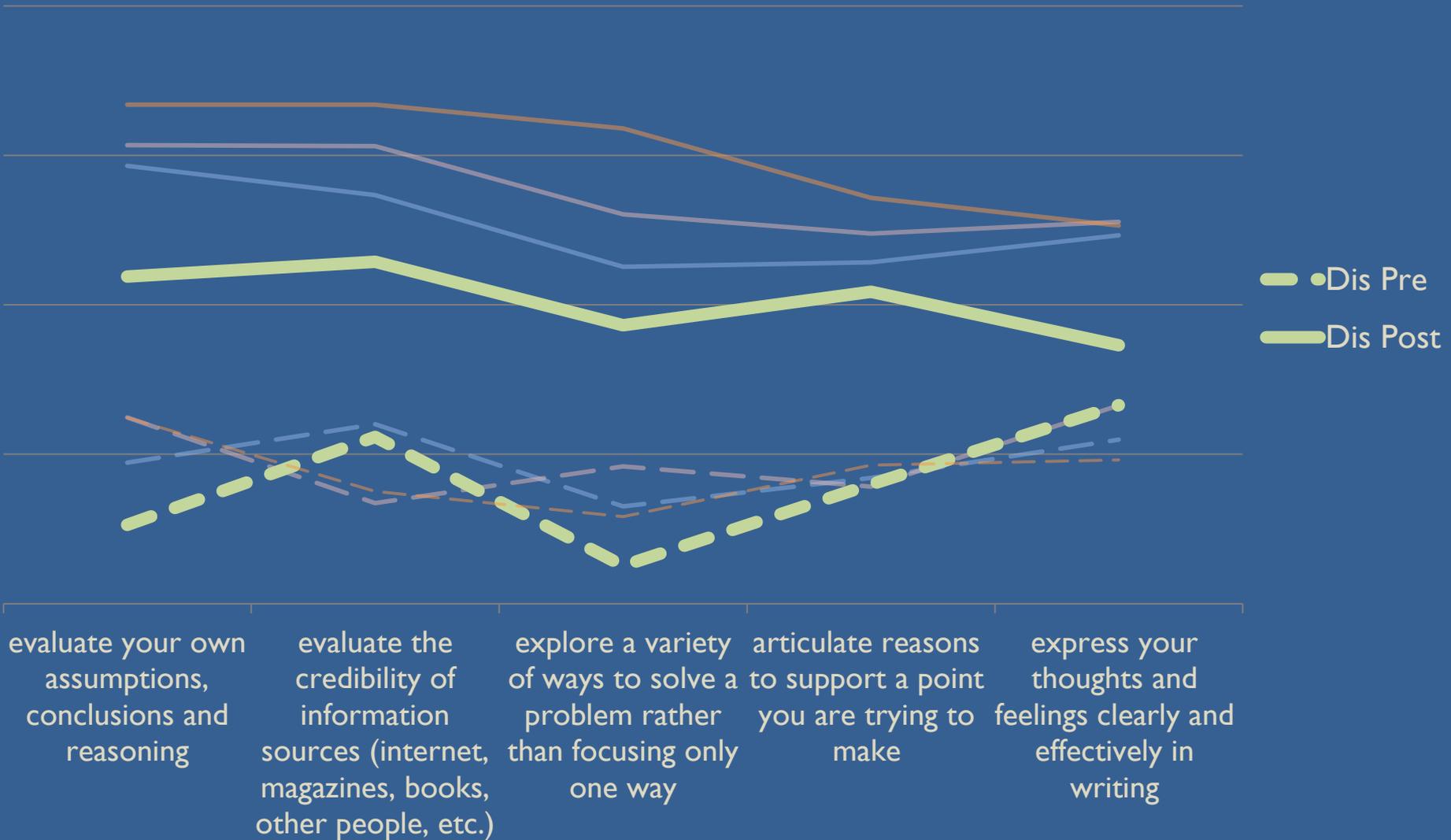
Intellectual Constructs

“Academically Undeveloped” Cluster



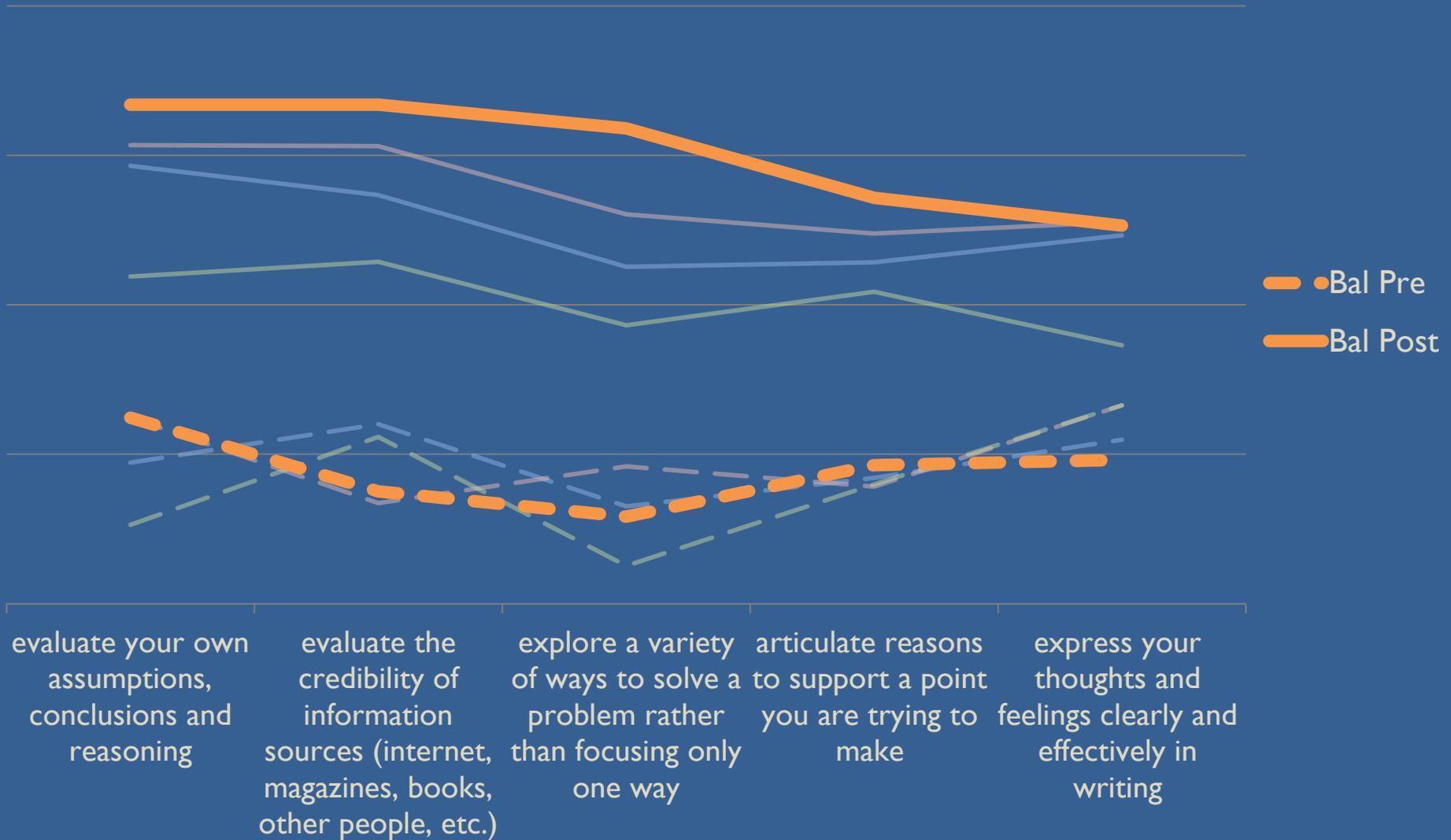
Intellectual Constructs

“Disengaged” Cluster



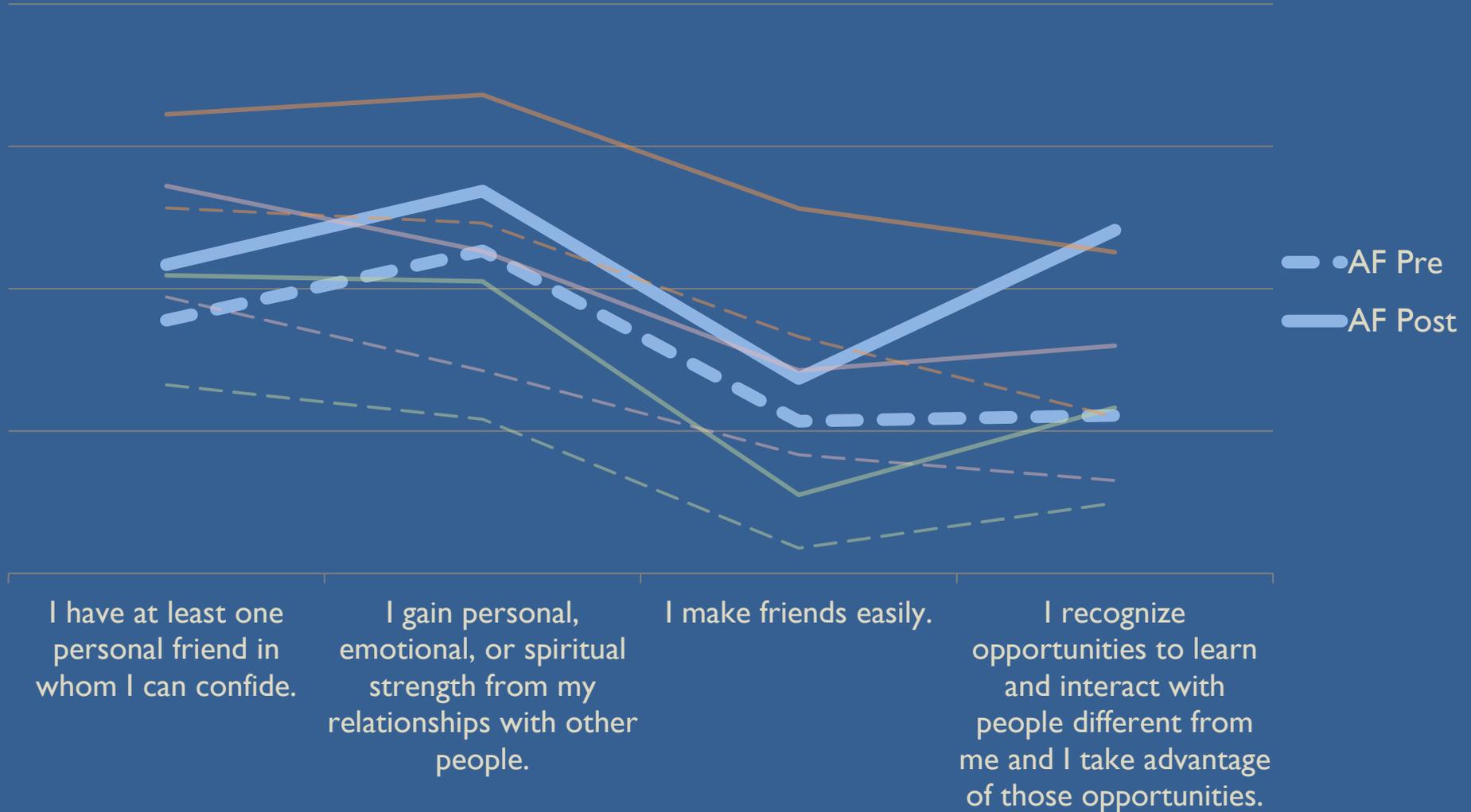
Intellectual Constructs

“Balanced” Cluster



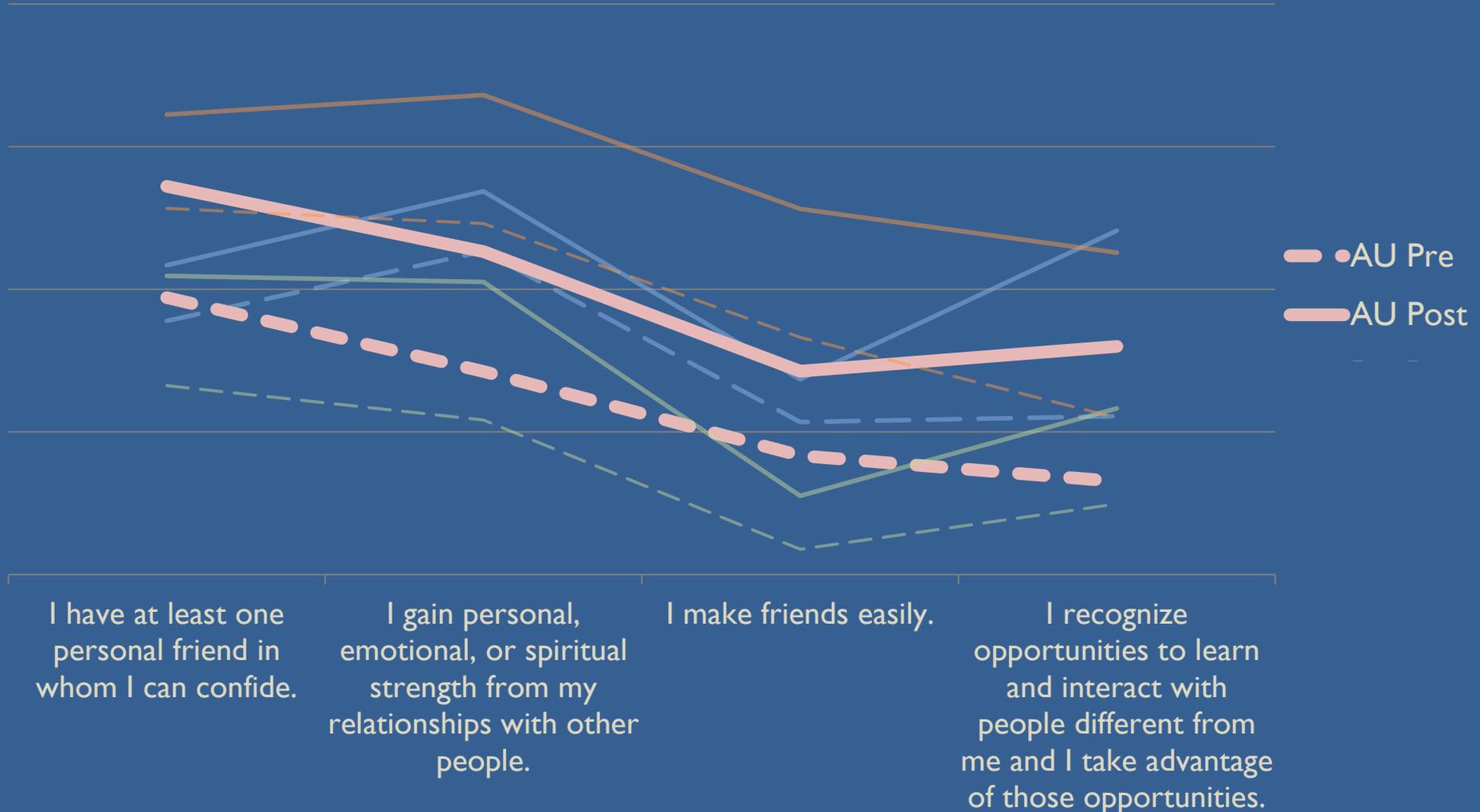
Social Constructs

“Academically Focused” Cluster



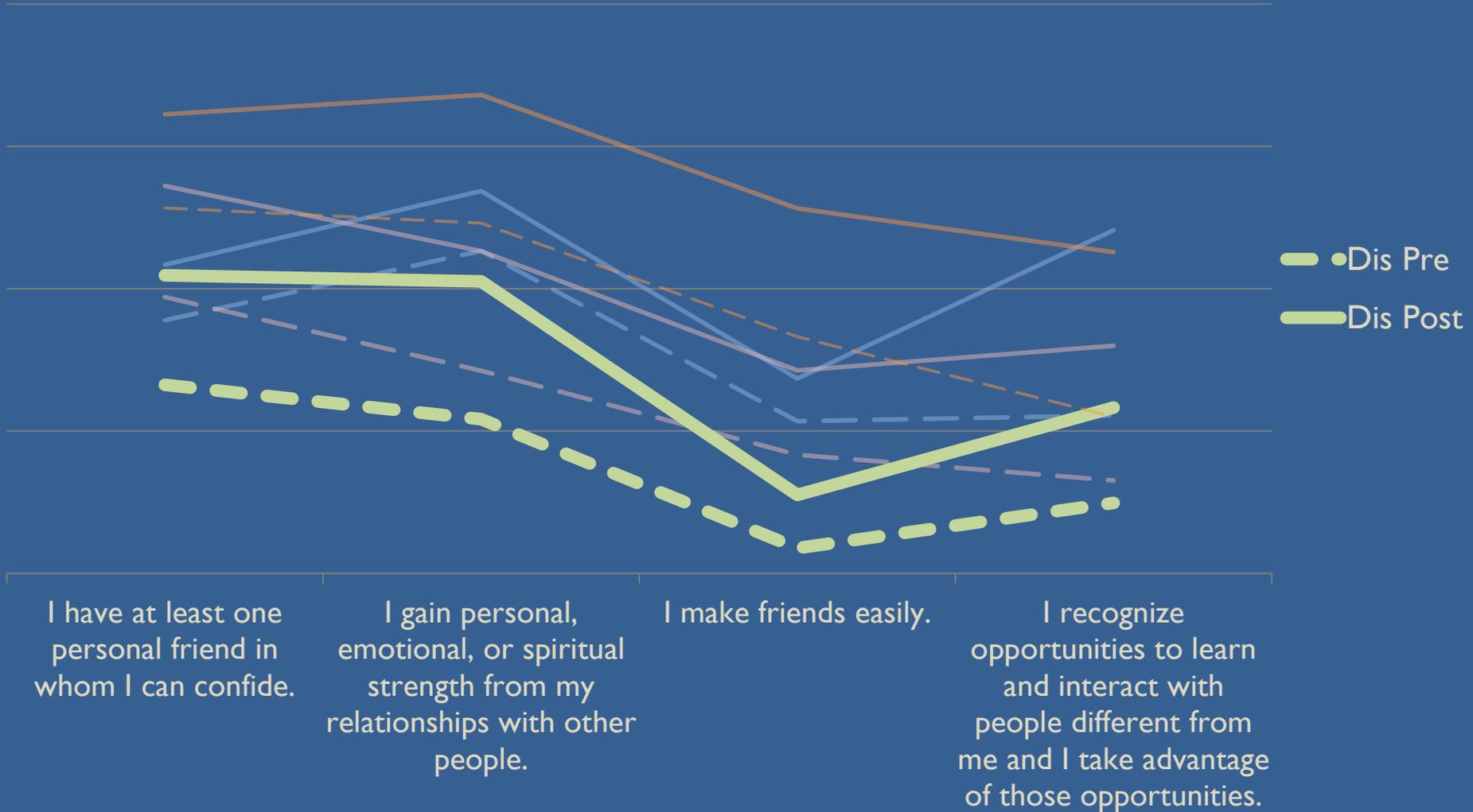
Social Constructs

“Academically Undeveloped” Cluster



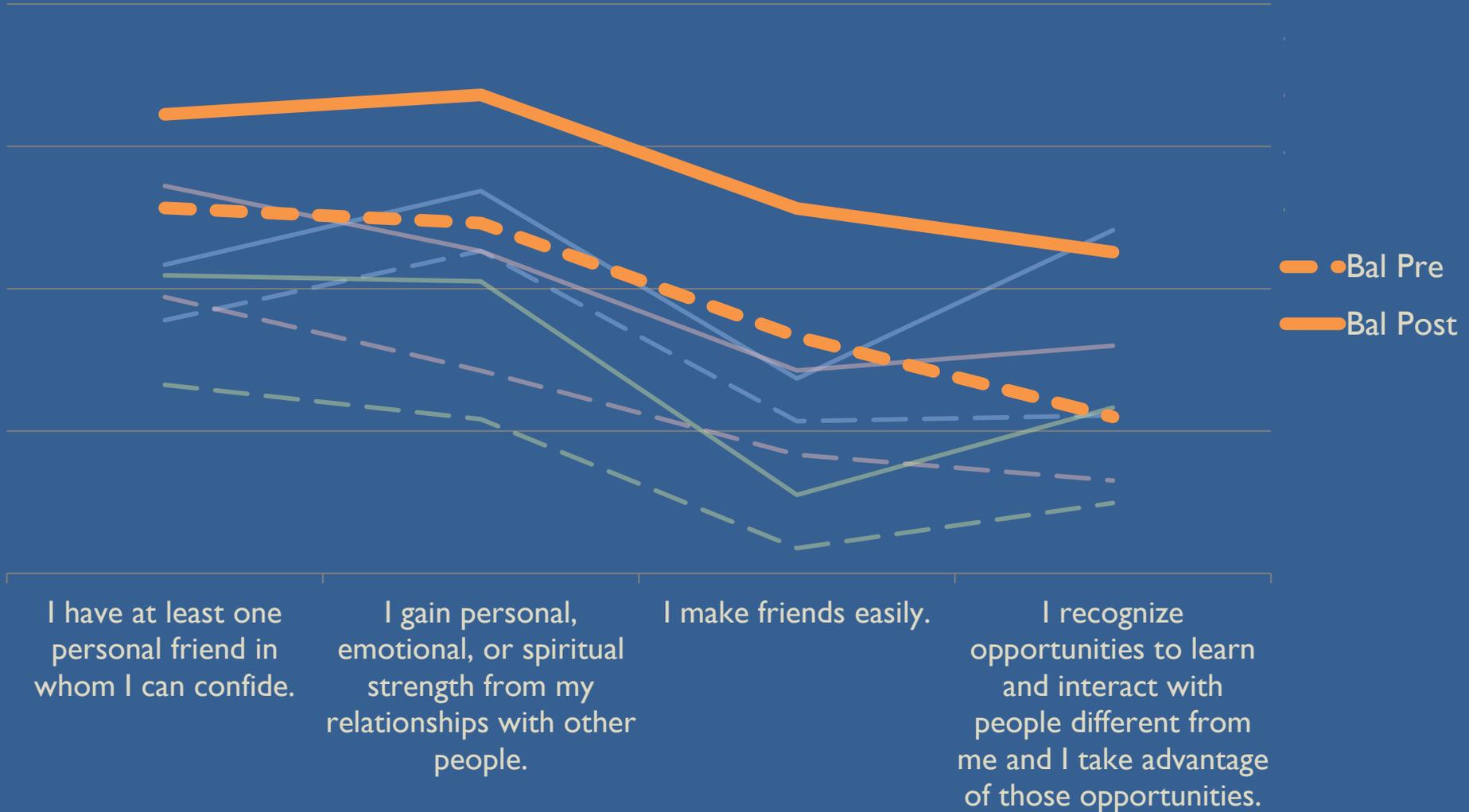
Social Constructs

“Disengaged” Cluster



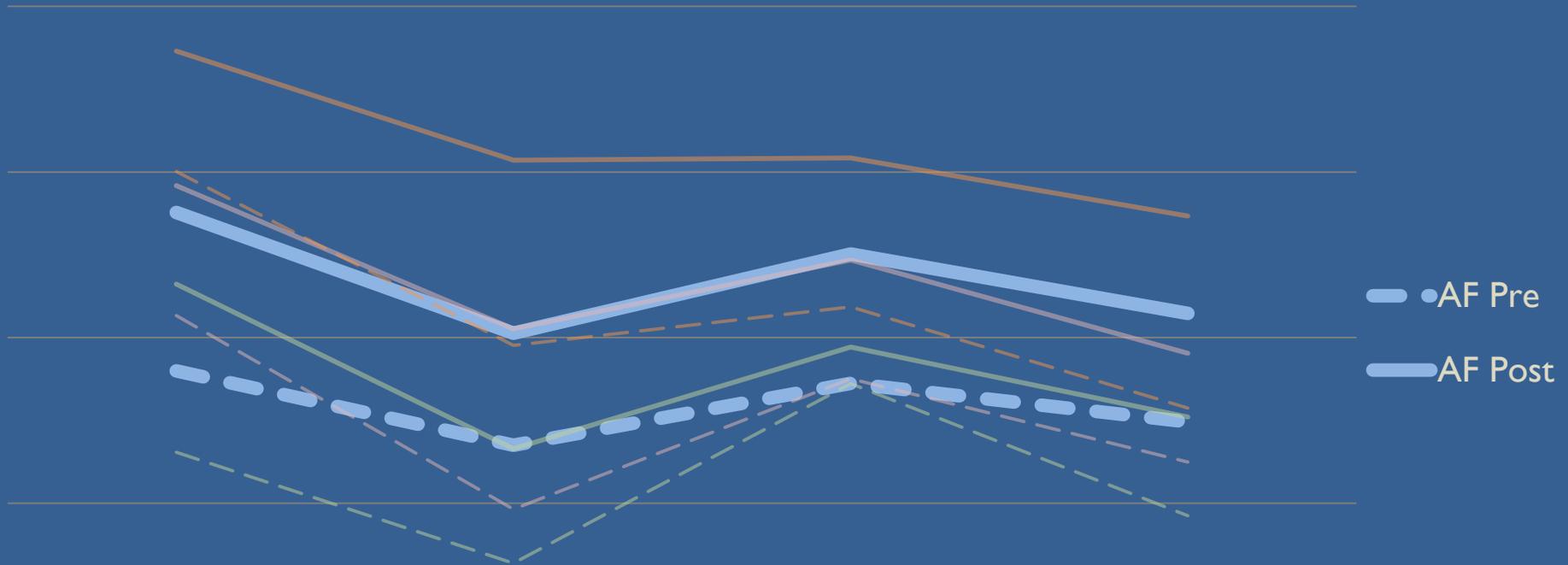
Social Constructs

“Balanced” Cluster



Spiritual/Character Constructs

"Academically Focused" Cluster



My relationship with God provides me with a sense of peace and optimism about my life.

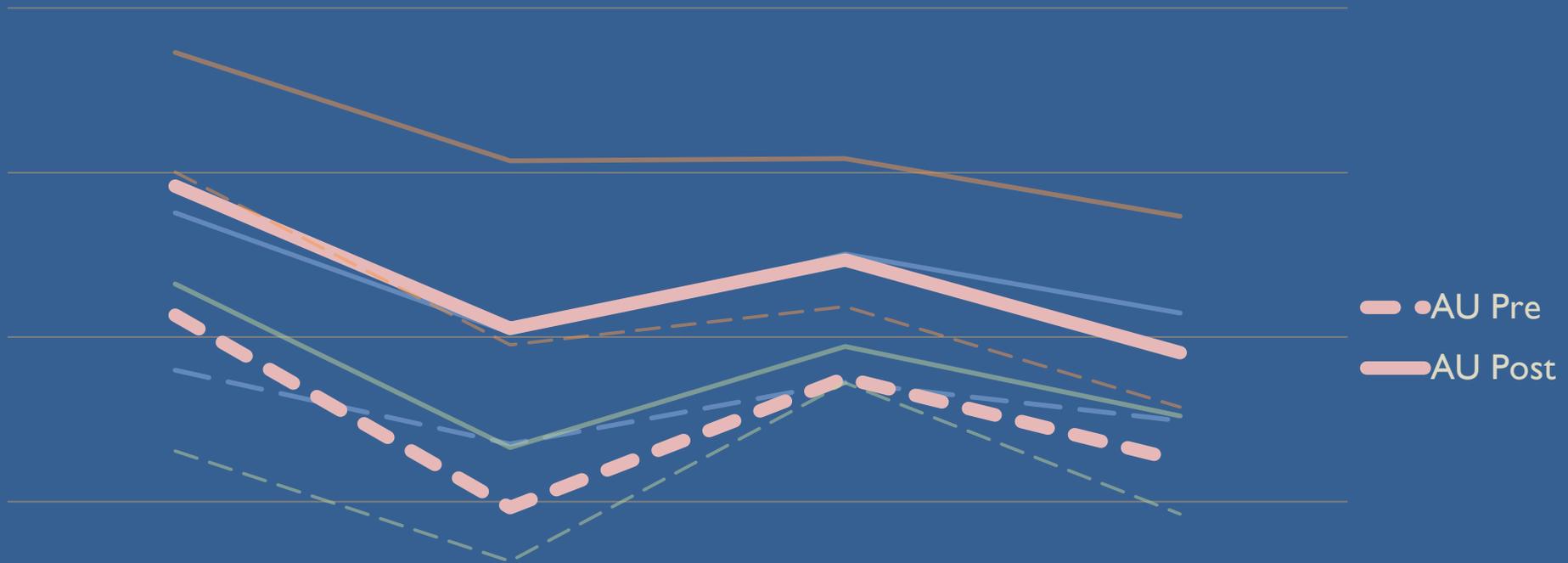
I successfully translate scriptural principles into personal behavior.

I do what I know I should do, even when no one else will know.

When someone offends me, I forgive him or her readily.

Spiritual/Character Constructs

"Academically Undeveloped" Cluster



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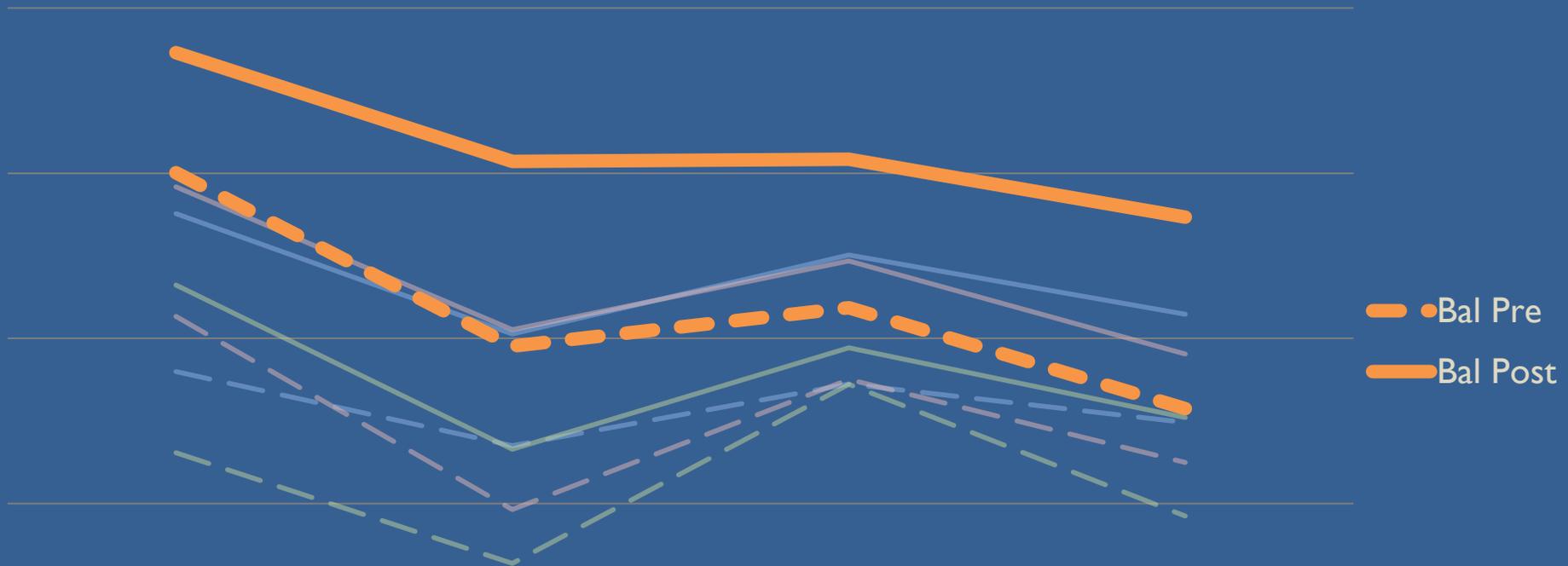
Spiritual/Character Constructs

“Disengaged” Cluster



Spiritual/Character Constructs

“Balanced” Cluster



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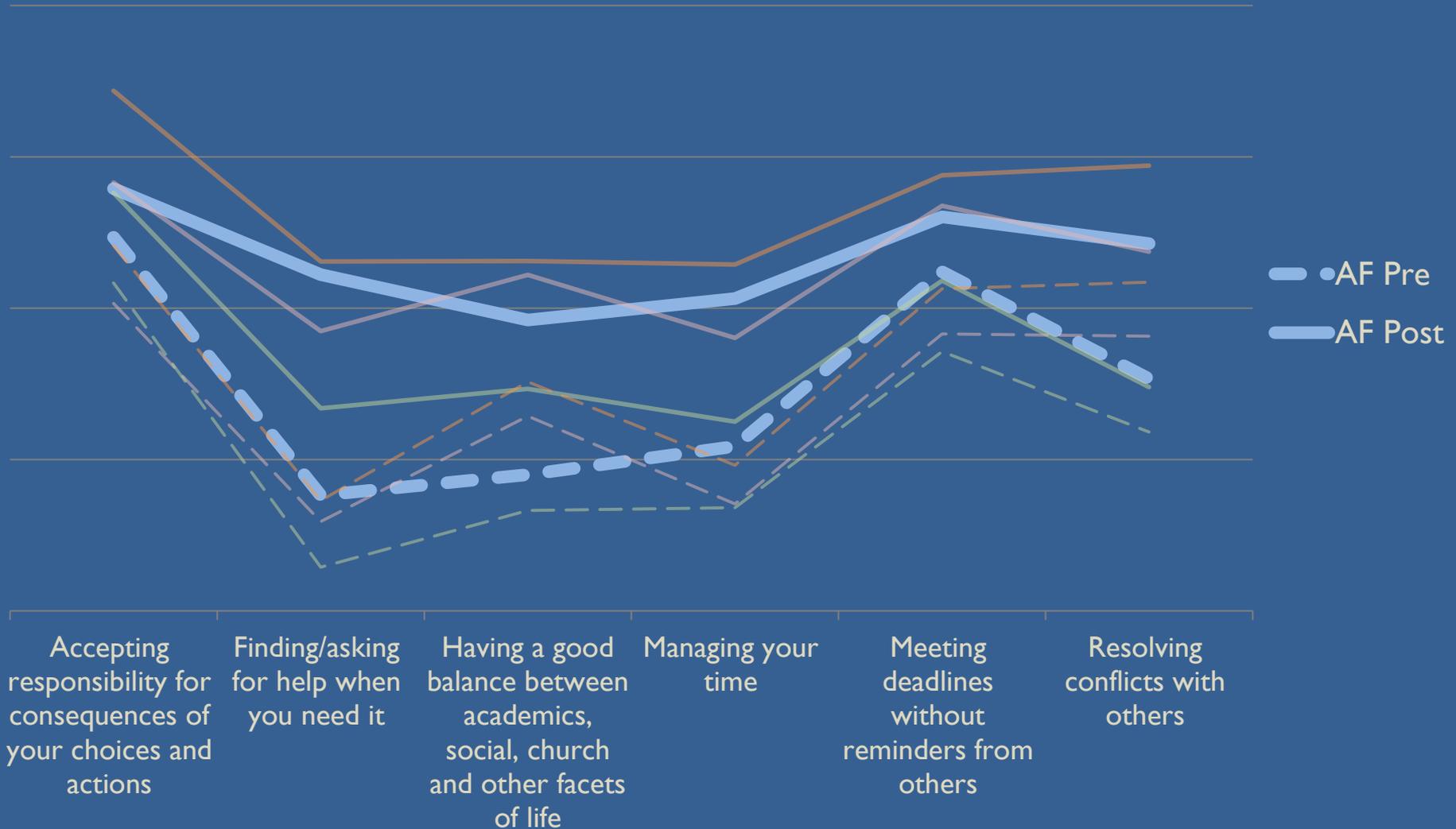
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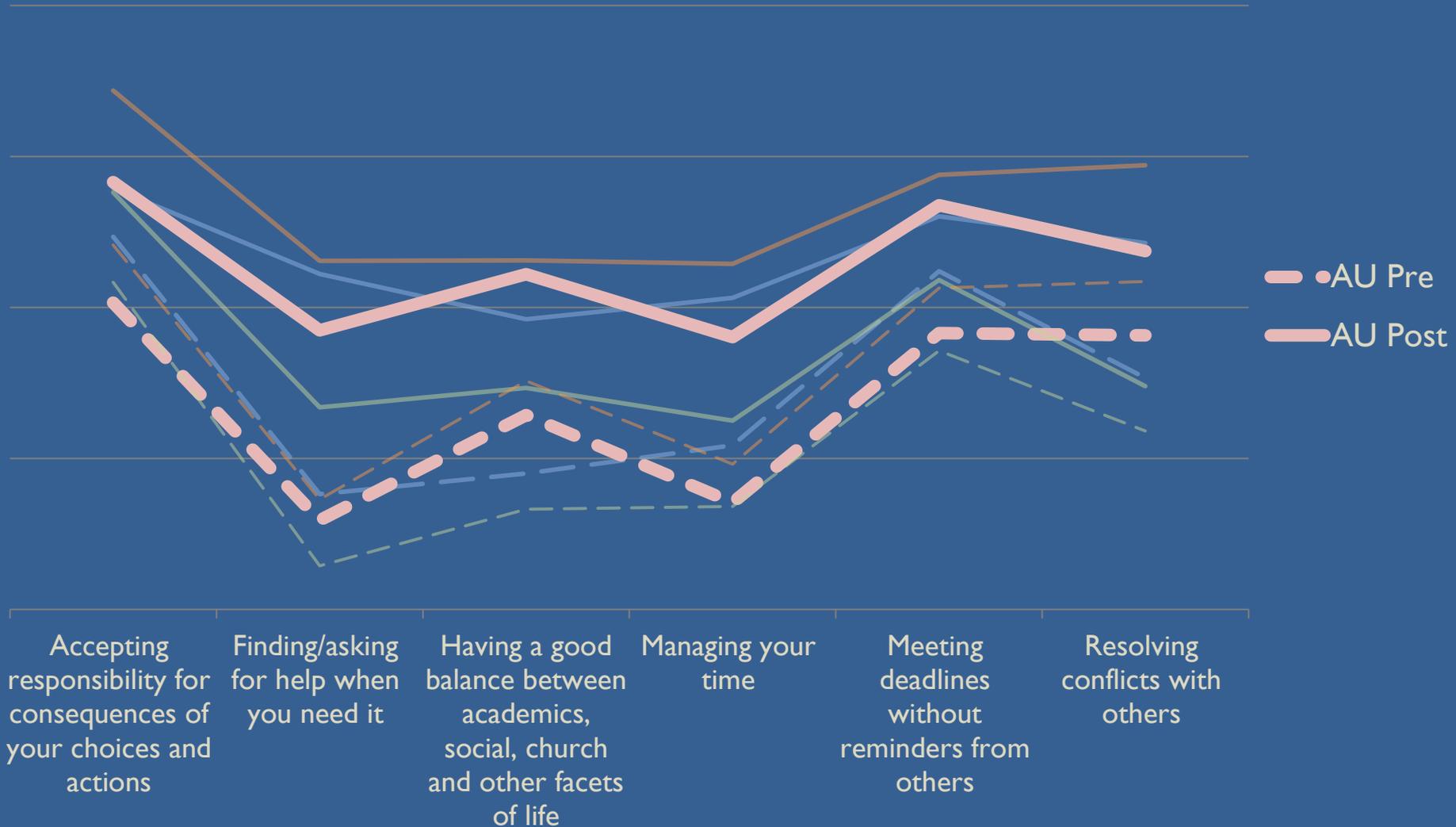
Independent Living Constructs

“Academically Focused” Cluster



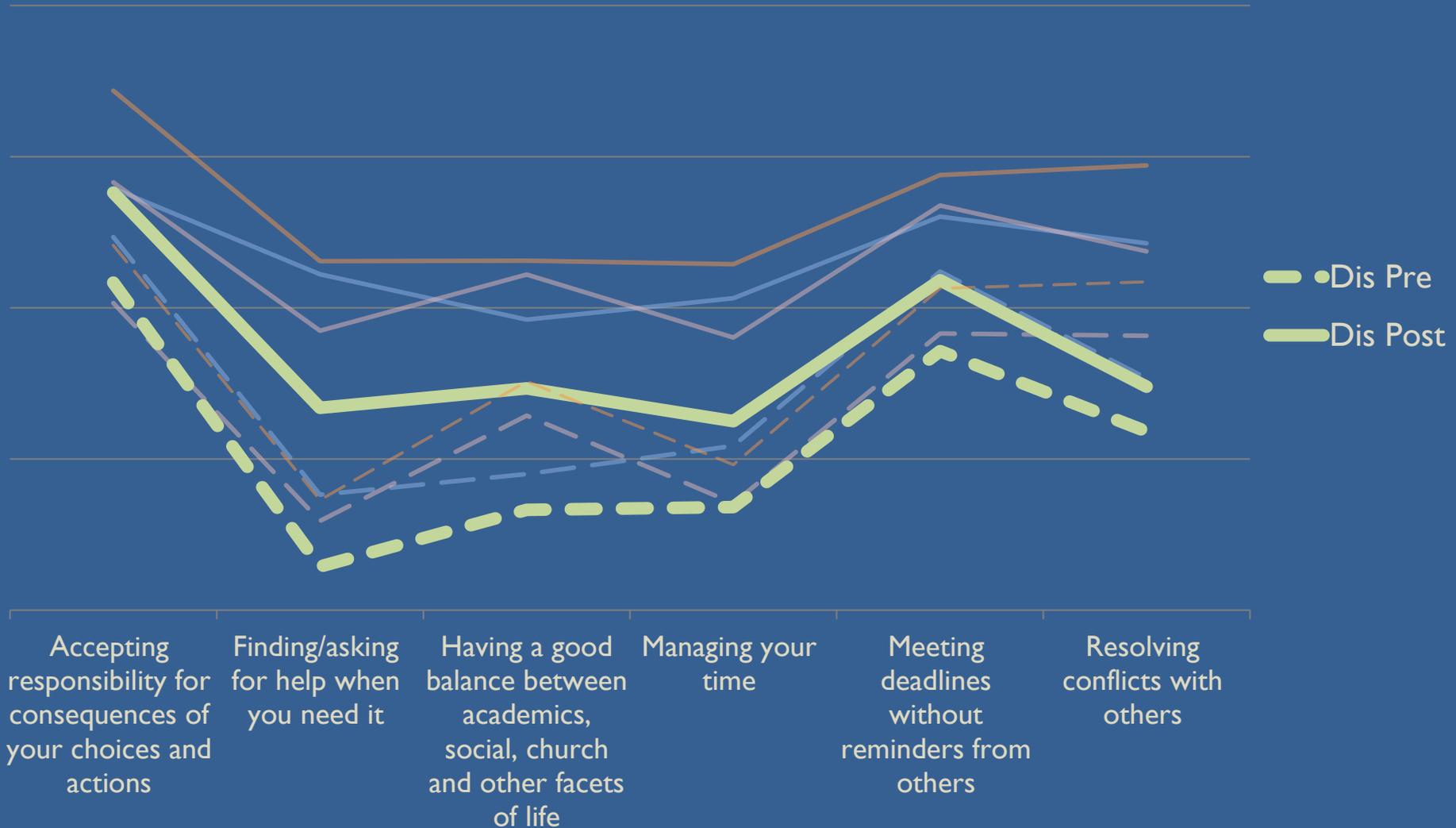
Independent Living Constructs

“Academically Undeveloped” Cluster



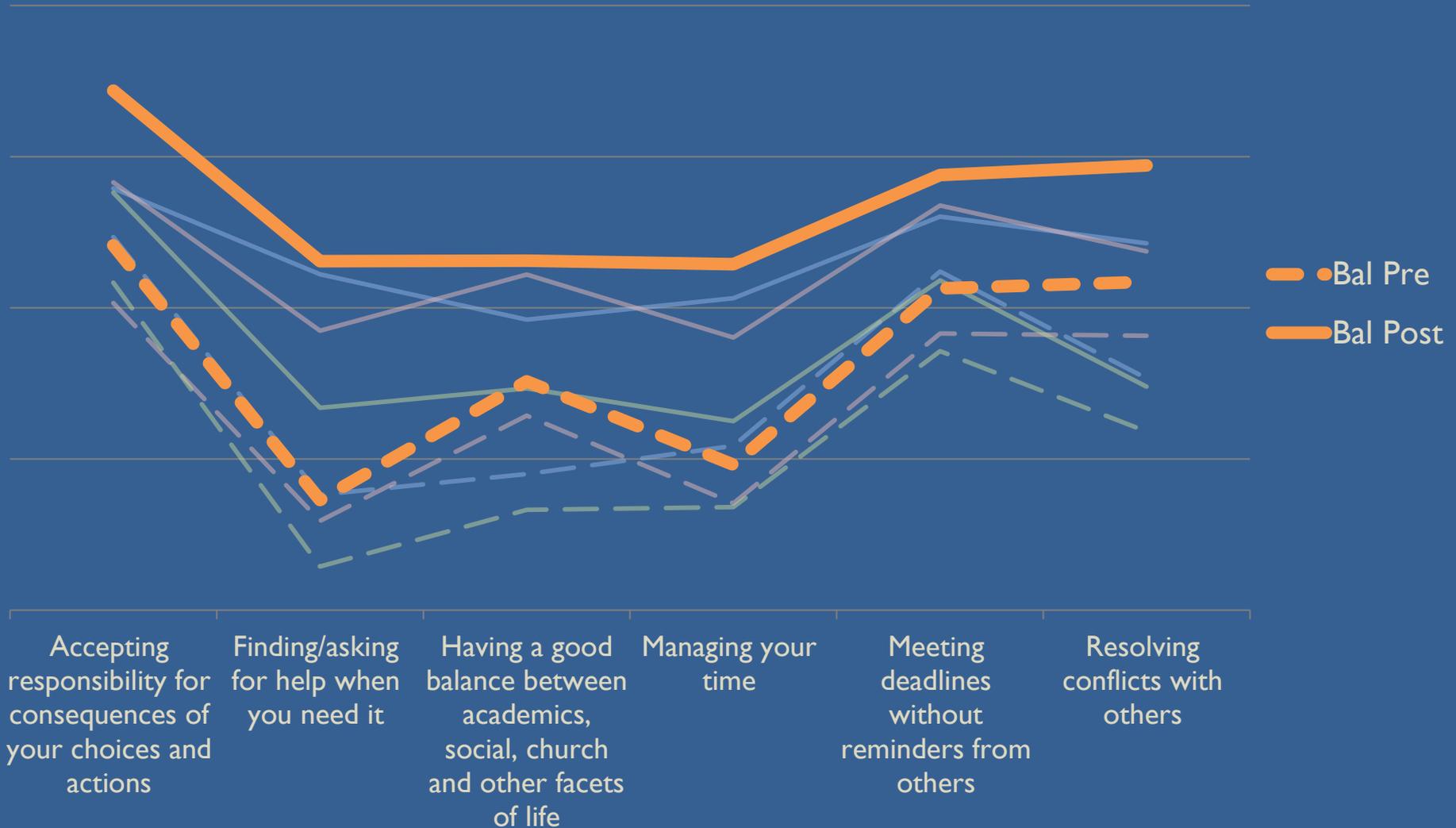
Independent Living Constructs

“Disengaged” Cluster



Independent Living Constructs

“Balanced” Cluster



Cluster summary

1. Academically focused (AF)

- Driven academically; less engaged/comfortable socially
- Perfectionistic, anxious, self-critical—in danger of burn out?

2. Academically undeveloped (AU)

- Less motivated academically, lower performing
- Muddling through first year

3. Disengaged/reticent (Dis)

- Intelligent but unmotivated, don't want to be here
- Report least accomplishment & growth, least happy with themselves

4. Balanced/well adjusted (Bal)

- Lowest performing academically, but engaged in all facets of FYE
- Happy with experience, accepting

Discussion

- Who are the students who flourish and flounder on your campus?
- How can/do you identify them?
- What are the implications for working with students who flourish and flounder?

Implications for Intentional Action

	Academically Focused	Academically Undeveloped	Disengaged	Balanced
Admissions				
Orientation				
Seminars				
Learning Communities				
Residence Life				
Advisement				
Curriculum				
Assessment				

Contact information

- Pat Esplin: pat_esplin@byu.edu
- Larry Nelson: larry_nelson@byu.edu
- Steve Wygant: steve_wygant@byu.edu