



Thriving in Transitions: Beyond Survival Tactics

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Transitions

Significant event

Requires change

Inevitably creates a stress
reaction

Share with your neighbor:

*What was your most
recent transition and
how did it feel?*

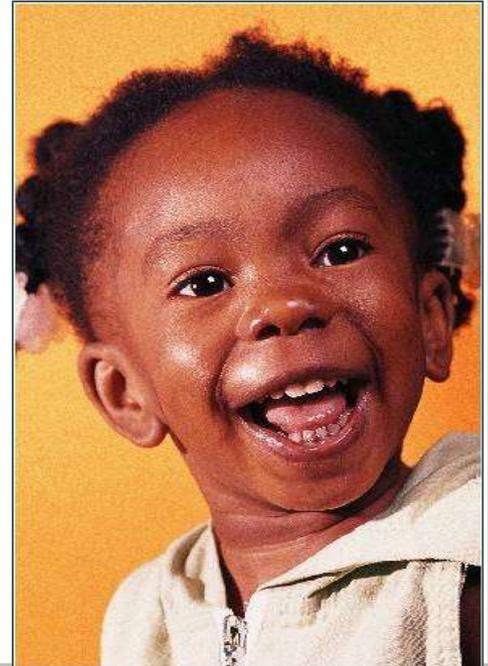


Successful
Transitions:
Positive
opportunity for
growth



Successful Transitions

- Positive perception
- Healthy coping skills – approach rather than avoid
- Social support
- Information and resources
- Personally significant growth as a result



Specific Transitions in College

The first year:

Do I know what it takes
to succeed here?

Do I have what it takes?

Do I belong here?



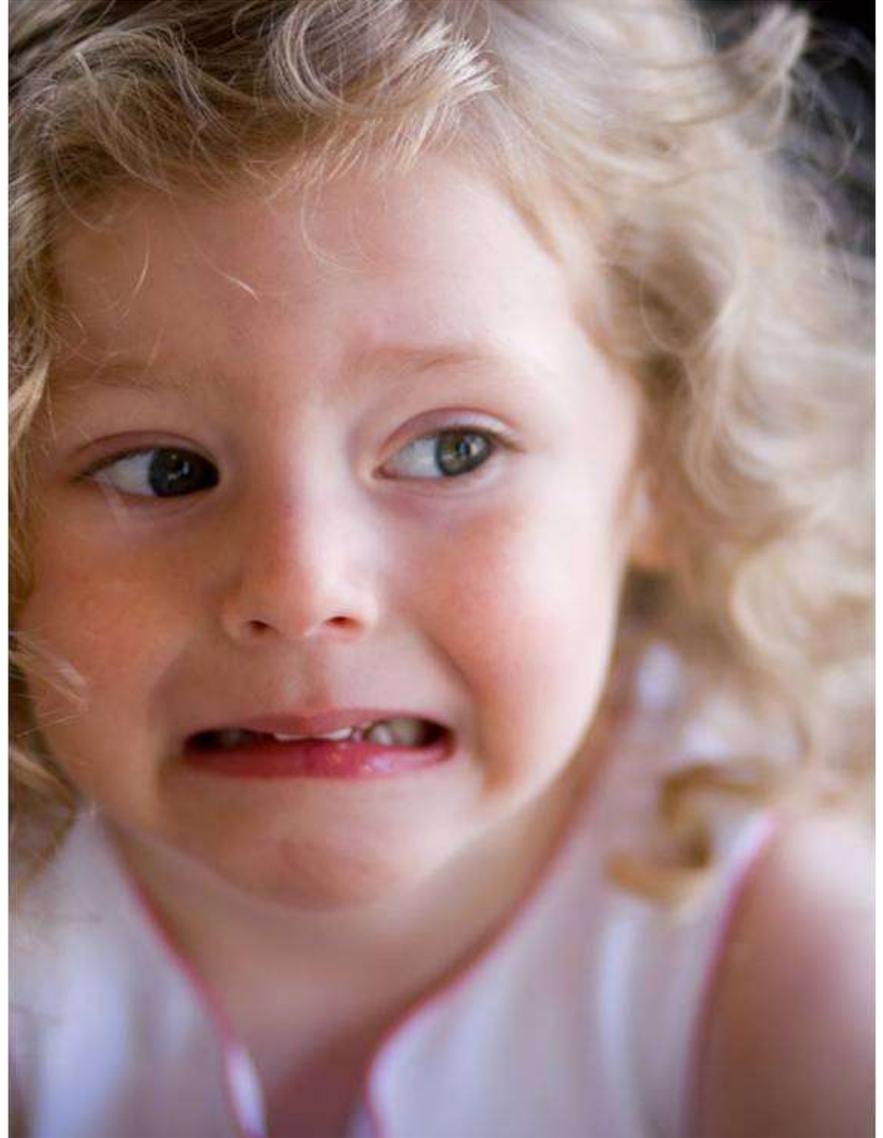
High-Risk Students

Why am I being labeled?

Why do I have to take all these remedial courses?

Do I have what it takes to succeed here?

What difference does effort make?



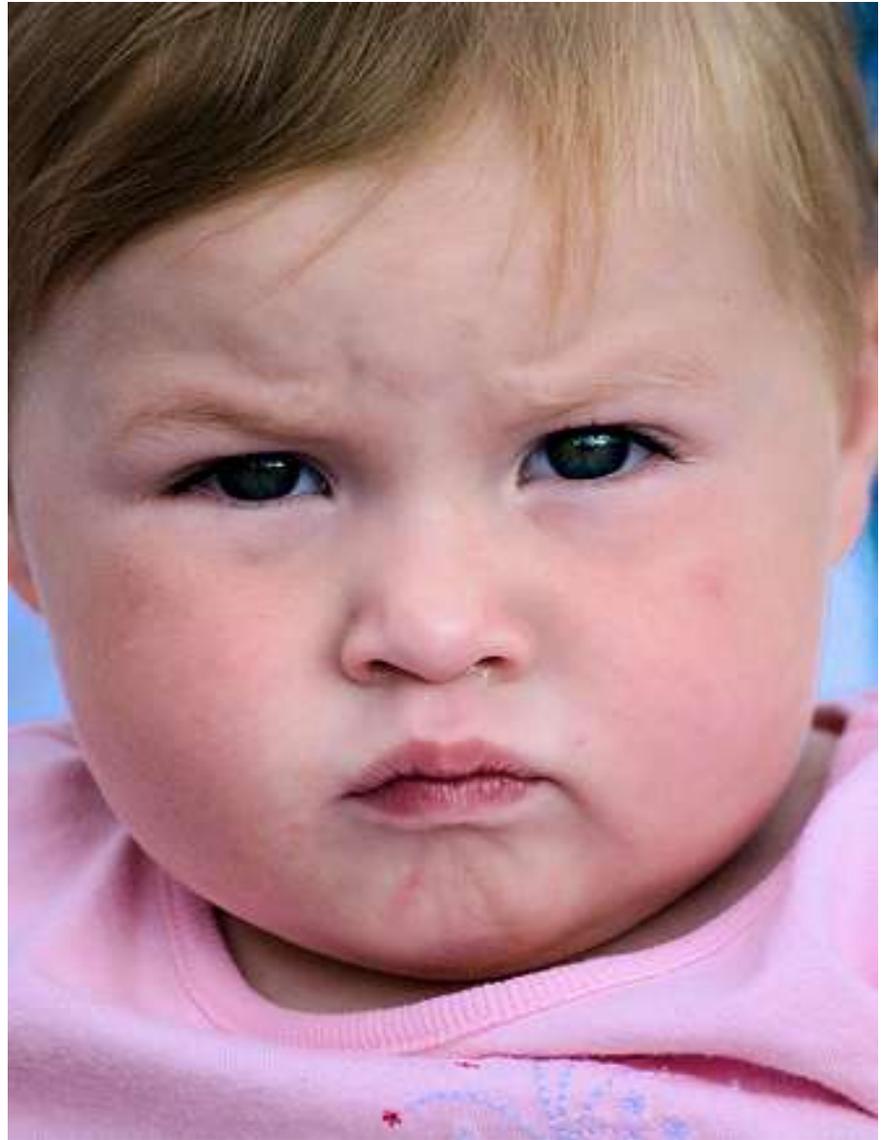
Sophomores

What happened to all the attention from last year?

What happened to my friends?

Why am I always last in line now?

What am I doing with my life?



Transfer Students

What does it take to succeed here?

Why have my grades taken a nosedive?

How do I get involved here?



Students of Color

Where are all the other people like me?

Why don't you see *me*?

Why do you think I can speak for my entire ethnic group?

What if I fulfill everyone's negative stereotype?

Do I belong here?



Seniors

Is there life after college?

Is there a job for me?

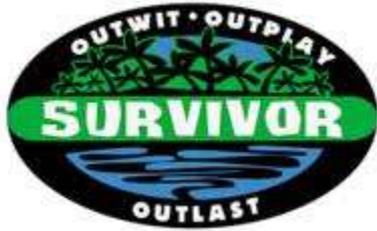
Will I ever find friends like this again?

How do I succeed in life?





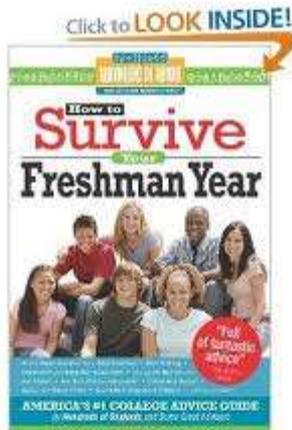
Where is our focus?



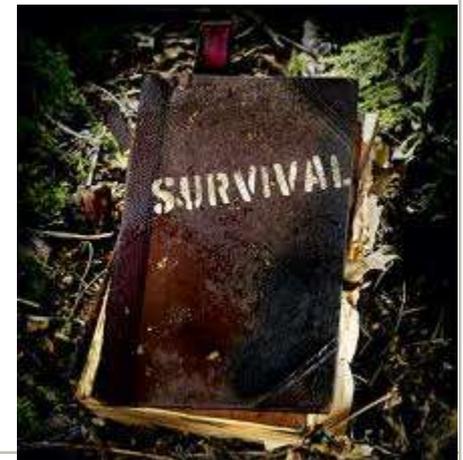
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE FOCUS ON SURVIVAL?

Failure prevention rather than success promotion

A focus on the demands and challenges, rather than the opportunities for growth



Minimal performance needed, rather than excellence



A Shift in Perspective



FROM

Surviving

**Who you are and where
you've been**

**Target the weakness and
fix it**

Failure prevention

TO

Thriving

**Who you can become
and where you're going**

**Target the talent and
build on it**

Success promotion

• **Psychosocial factors**
Motivation

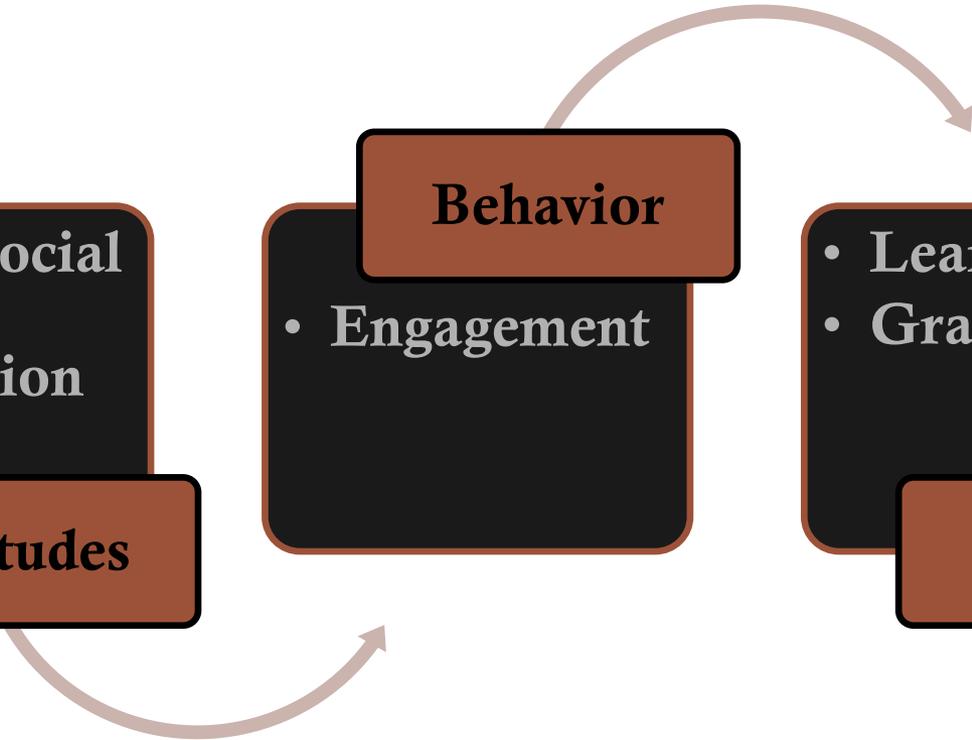
Attitudes

Behavior

• **Engagement**

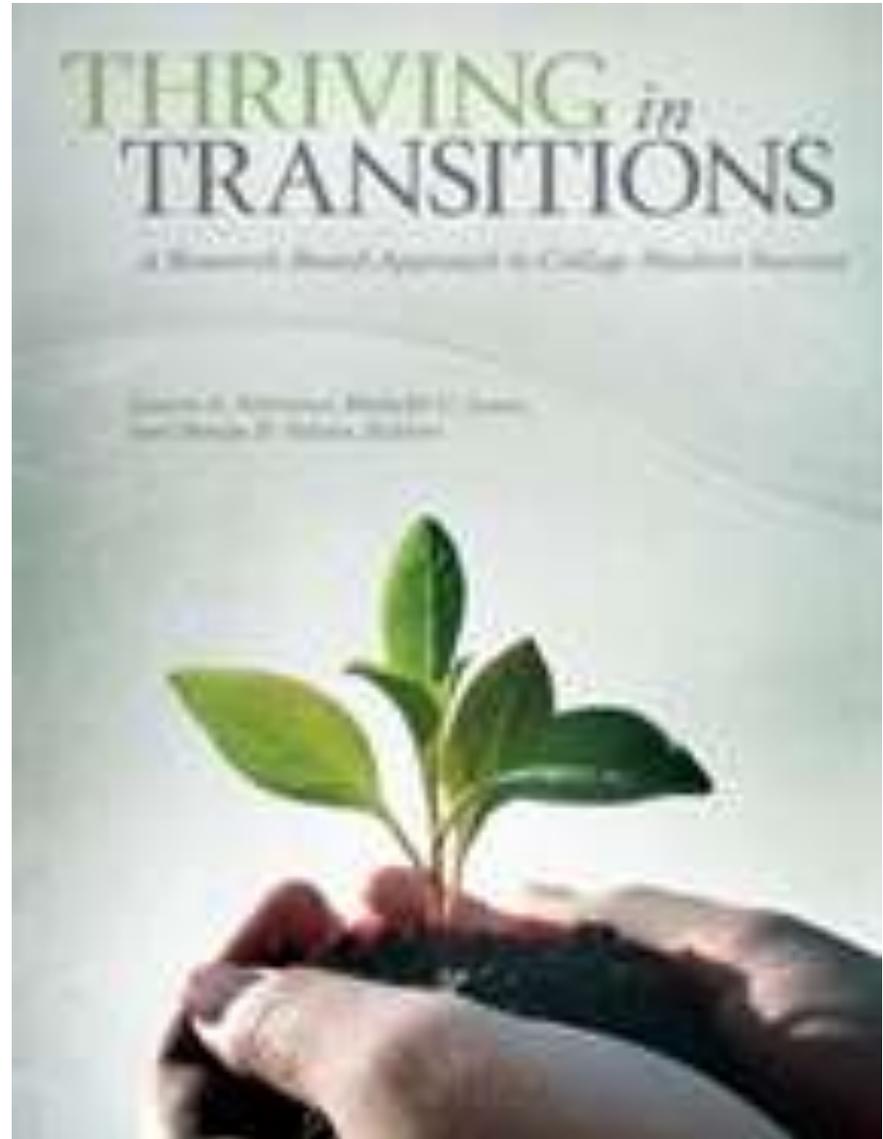
• **Learning**
• **Graduation**

Student Success



A New Vision for Student Success

Recently published
by the National
Resource Center for
First-Year Students
and Students in
Transition



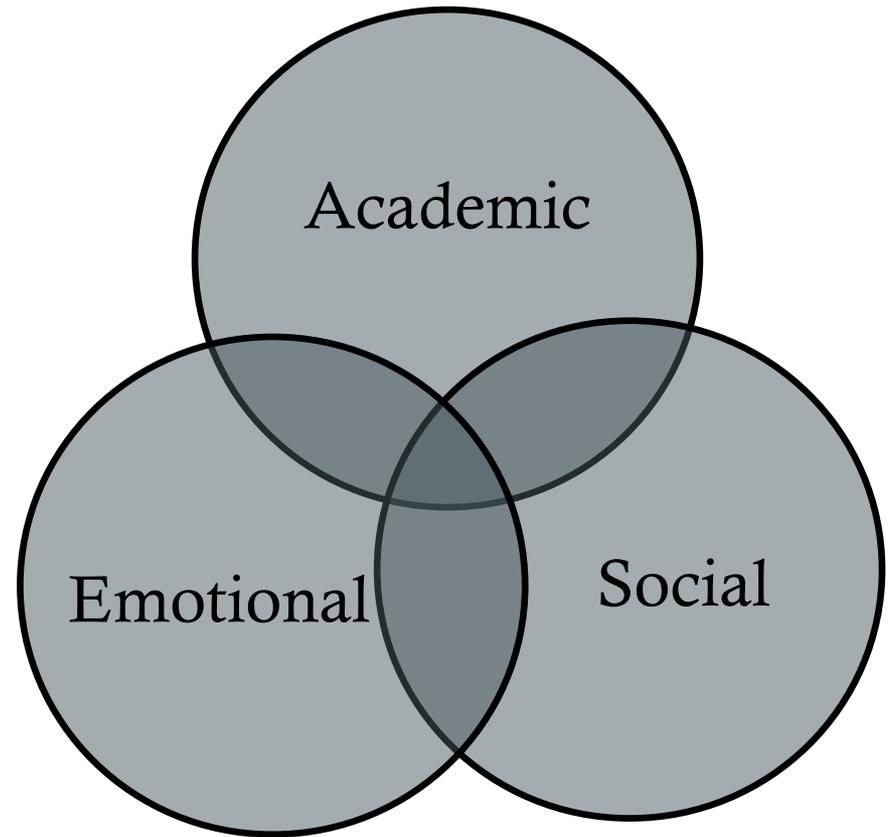
Why “Thriving”?



- Implies more than mere survival
- Psychological well-being + academic success
- Active word – vitally engaged, optimally functioning – an ongoing process
- Incorporates more than academic success and persistence to graduation – includes citizenship, relationships, and openness to diversity



THRIVING



Criteria for Including a Construct

- Measurable
- Empirically connected to student success
- Malleable (state vs. trait)
- Interventions make a difference

The Thriving Quotient



- TQ was constructed from theoretical concepts that had a demonstrated empirical connection to student success
- 26-item instrument with responses ranging on a 6-point Likert-type scale of *1=strongly agree* to *6 = strongly disagree*
- Coefficient alpha = .91
- Confirmatory factor analysis indicated excellent fit

The Thriving Quotient

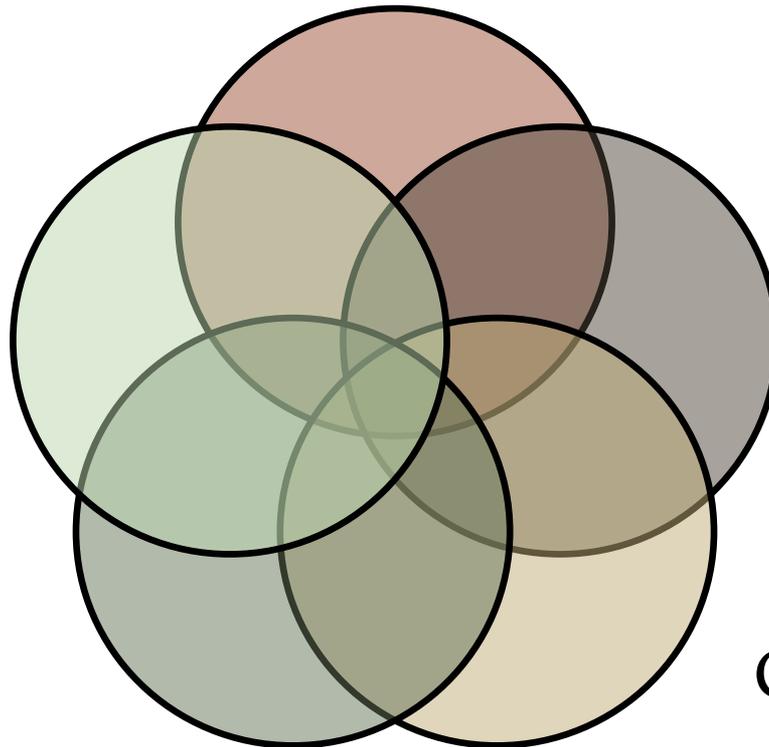
Engaged
Learning

Academic
Determination

Diverse
Citizenship

Positive
Perspective

Social
Connectedness



Five Factors of Thriving

ACADEMICALLY:

- **Engaged Learning**
 - Meaningful processing, focused attention, active participation in the learning process
- **Academic Determination**
 - Self-regulated learning, effort, coping skills, goal-directedness (hope), applies strengths to academic challenges

SOCIALLY:

- **Diverse Citizenship**
 - Making a contribution, appreciation of differences
- **Social Connectedness**
 - Positive relationships and access to friendships

EMOTIONALLY:

- **Positive Perspective**
 - Optimism and subjective well-being

Implications for Practice

Individual student level:

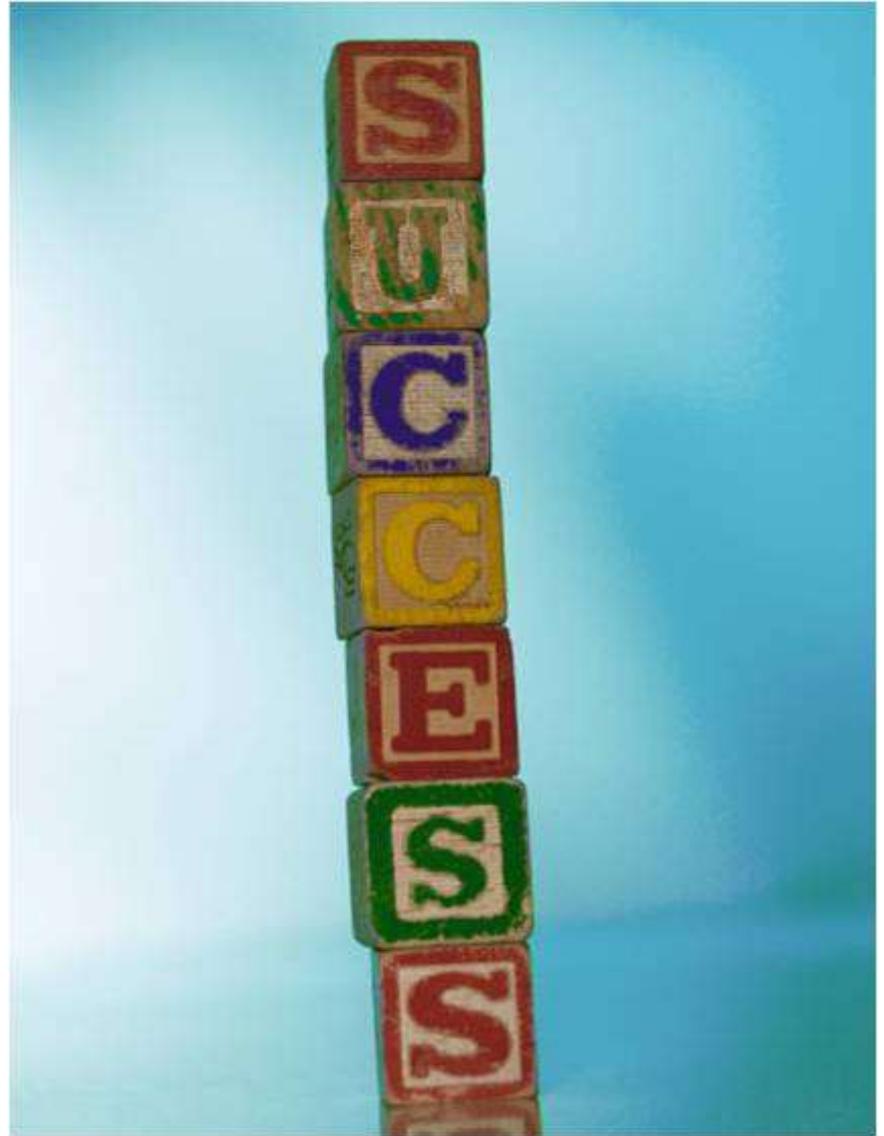
Interventions targeted to specific aspects of thriving

Institutional level:

Who is thriving?

In what aspects?

Targeting programs and services



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”



Positive Appraisal

Upcoming transition framed as a positive opportunity

Communicate what will happen and how they will benefit

Examples:

- End-of-year advising
- Summer letter to sophomores
- Sophomore Breakfast



Enhancing a Positive Perspective

Describe the challenges

Focus on the coping skills
needed

Emphasize applying
strengths to the challenge

Encourage a growth mindset



Mindset Matters



FIXED MINDSET

Academic ability is something very basic about a person that can't be changed very much

GROWTH MINDSET

You can always improve your academic ability

Fixed Mindset

Growth Mindset

Goals

Performance

Learning

Role of Effort

Avoid it—if you have to try, you're not smart

Plan on it—it's how you learn

Enjoyment

Only if I'm good at it

Love the challenge

Attributions for failure

"I'm not good at that subject"

"I didn't invest the right effort"

Strategies for success

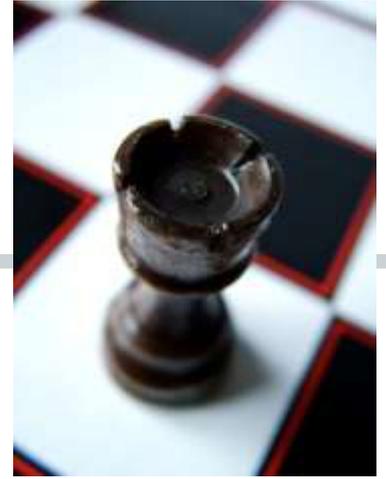
Defensive, avoid failure at all costs

Mastery-oriented and positive

Strategies for Encouraging a Growth Mindset

- Teach students about the brain and how it changes with practice – whatever you focus attention on repeatedly changes your brain!
- Share stories and examples of famous accomplished people who invest a lot of effort
- Emphasize the importance of practice and effort as key to the learning process (grit)

The Best of the Best ...



- Champion chess players
- World-class cellist Pablo Casals
- MVP basketball players

What do they have in common?



They Practice – A Lot!

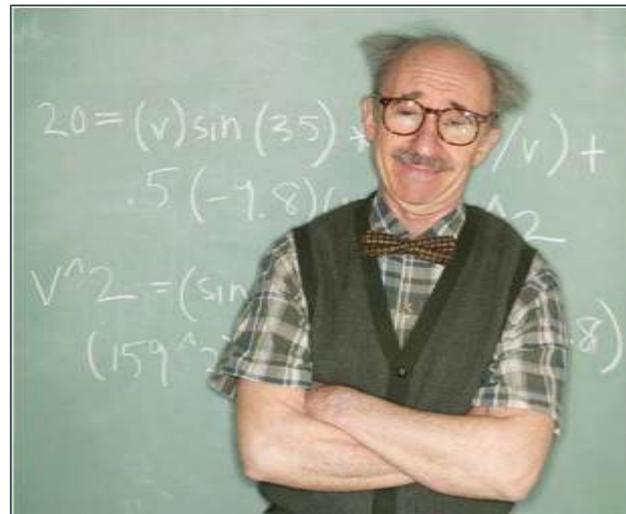


- Casals was one of the greatest cellists of all time
- In his eighties he still practiced for hours every day

When asked why he still practiced so much when he was already the best in the world, his reply was: “In order to play better!”

The First Day of Class

How faculty frame the course, their role, and strategies for success (with an emphasis on effort) can make a significant difference in student success



Students who know how to apply their strengths to academic tasks and challenges are significantly more likely to thrive than those who are unaware of their strengths or do not know how to apply them to academic challenges.





Strengths Philosophy

“Individuals gain more when they build on their talents, than when they make comparable efforts to improve their areas of weakness.”

Clifton & Harter, 2003, p. 112

Strength =



(Talent + Energy) x (Knowledge + Skill)



How does a talent become a strength?



Investment is a **MULTIPLIER** of
talent!

Investment includes time spent practicing, developing skills, & building knowledge

Louis, 2008

**It's all about
strengths
*development!***





- We don't abandon all the other practices we know work—we simply provide a motivational foundation for adding the necessary skills and knowledge
- *The student becomes a partner in the learning process!*

Thriving in Transitions: Provide Support

Effective support:

- Meets emotional needs
 - Provides assurance
 - Generates positive emotions
- Provides “just-in-time” information
- Connects students to campus resources
- Gives prompt feedback



Examples

Peer leaders, advisors, mentors
who have navigated the
transition successfully

Cohorts or blocked schedules

“Alpha Groups” at APU

Living-Learning Communities

Service learning



Diverse Citizenship: The Influence of Co-Curricular Learning



- Study abroad
- Service learning
- Living-learning communities

IF

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

Sense of community
is the single largest
contributor to
thriving for all
student groups.

When the community is
thriving, the individuals in it
tend to be, as well.



Thriving in Community

Membership

Symbols, signs, rituals
Not just “welcome” but a full member of the community → sense of belonging and validation

Relationship

Opportunities for positive interactions
Subgroups, friendships
Shared emotional connection

Ownership

Student voice
Contribution
Mattering to the institution

Partnership

Interdependence
Shared goals
Student-Faculty Research

Thriving in Transitions: Utilize Effective Strategies

- The best strategies involve both academic and psychosocial approaches (Robbins et al., 2006)
- What would it look like to apply our best strategies to
 - The First-Year Experience
 - Introductory survey courses
 - The sophomore year
 - Advising
 - Faculty development

Engaged Learning

A positive energy invested in one's own learning, evidenced by meaningful processing, focused attention on what is happening in the moment, and active participation in learning activities.



Schreiner & Louis, 2011, p. 6

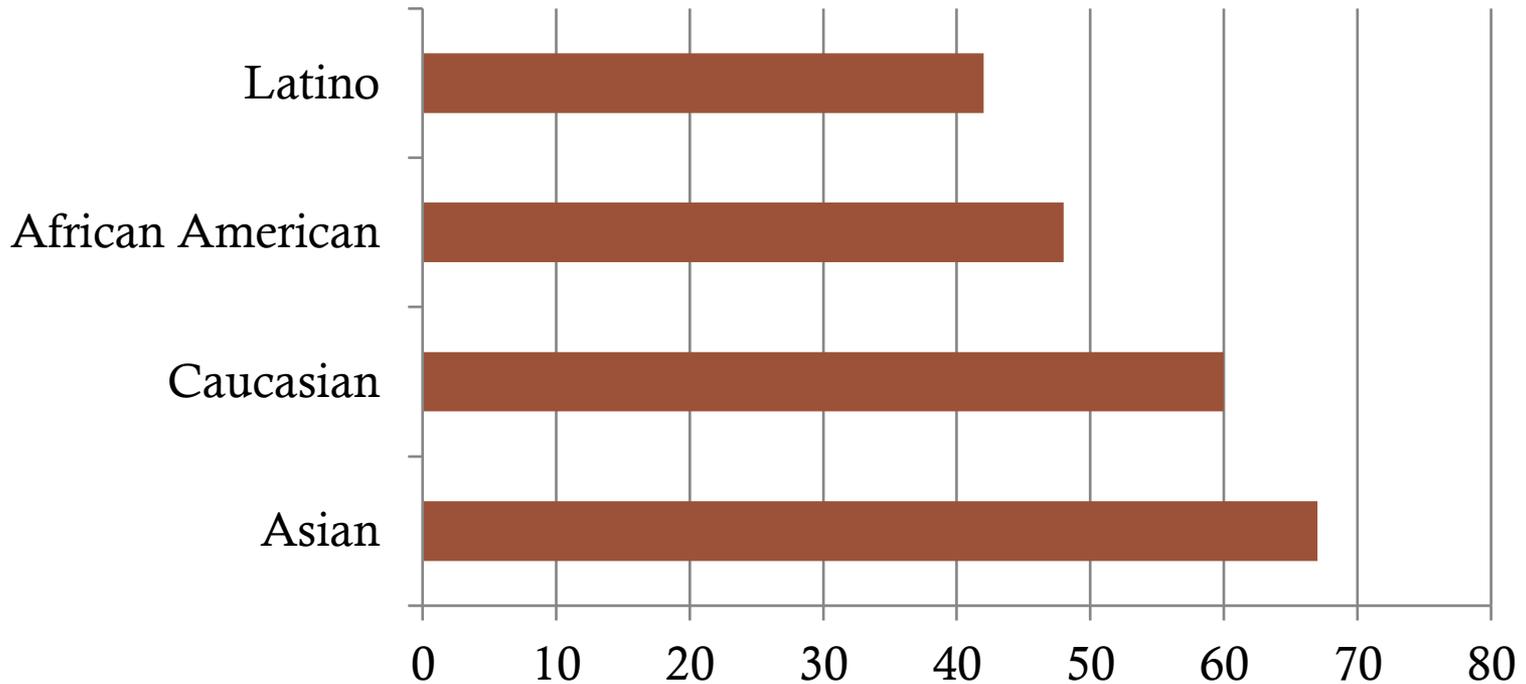
Engaged Learning

- Active participation
(involvement)
- Focused attention
(mindfulness)
- Meaningful Processing
(deep learning)



Closing the Gap

Six-Year Graduation Rates



Source: NCES 2010



Different Pathways to Thriving Among Students of Color

Sense of community is important for all, but what enhances a sense of community differs by ethnicity

Spirituality is a much more significant contributor to thriving in students of color than for white students

Faculty involvement contributes to thriving, but to a different degree across ethnicity

Campus involvement does not always lead to thriving among students of color

Where do we go from here?



- Recognize student success as more than grades and grads
- Measure thriving during transitions and direct students to specific resources and pathways that match their needs, interests, and strengths
- Encourage partnerships of faculty and student affairs professionals – it takes a village!
- Focus on building a sense of community across campus that values the strengths each member brings – it's the foundation for thriving

My Vision



That **every** student who enters college ...

- **Learns how to develop their strengths and apply them to the challenges of college**



Every Student

Engages in the learning process with faculty who encourage deep learning and connect with them in and out of class



Every Student

Experiences a
network of caring
people committed
to their thriving –
their academic,
social, and
emotional well-
being



Every Student

Connects with
advisors who help
them see their
potential and
envision their
future success

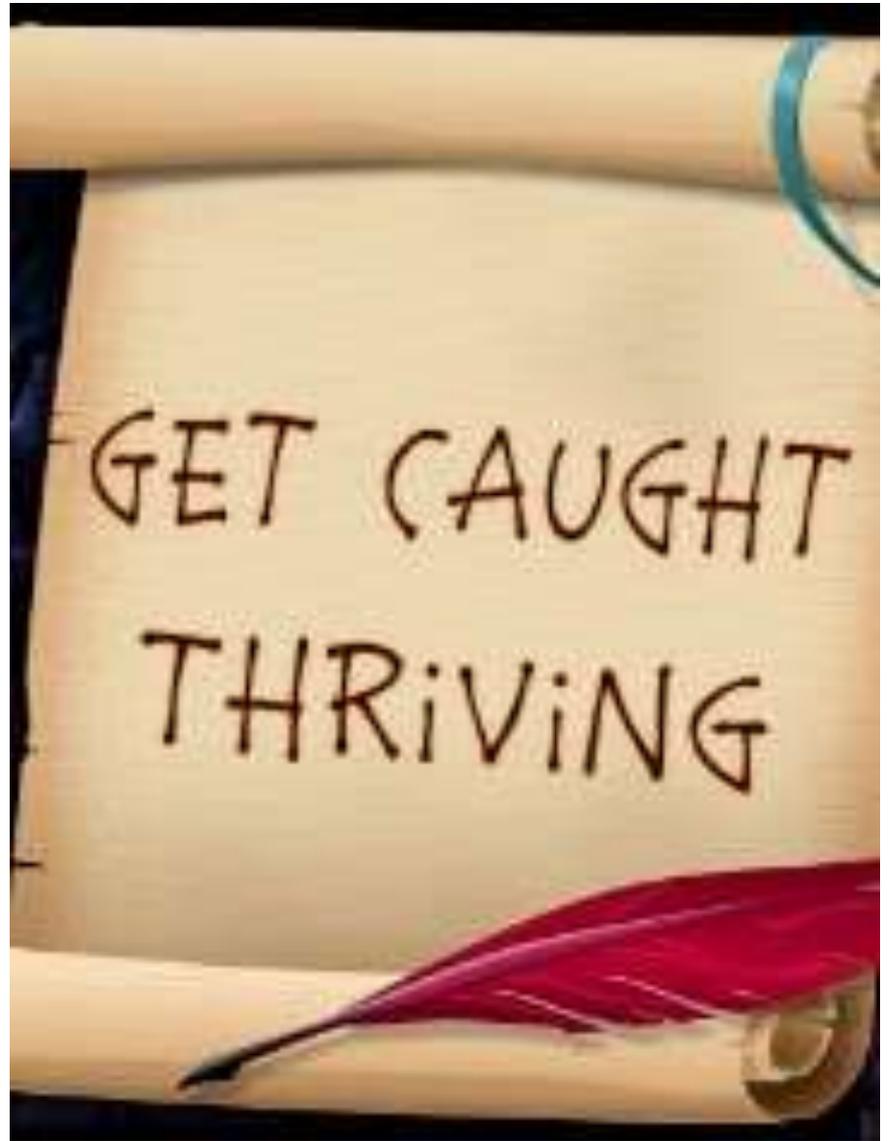


Every Student

Becomes part of a
community that
values them,
supports them,
and brings out
their best



Not only will
our students
thrive, but so
will we!





Join us in the Thriving Project!

www.ThrivingInCollege.org