A Study Exploring Student Thriving in Professional Programs: Expanding Our Understanding of Student Success

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Success in professional programs is attributed and easily quantified by graduation rates and pass rates on certification exams, however, what is missing is a holistic understanding of students' thriving. This study utilized data from students in Clinical Laboratory Science, Occupational Therapy, and Therapeutic Recreation who completed the Thriving Quotient survey. Students' thriving in the three domains of academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal were explored. This study revealed three important results: 1) students are thriving academically 2) they have difficulty juggling the demands of school and work, 3) and they struggle to make social connections. Structures and immersive, experiential learning activities inherent in professional programs support academic thriving. Efforts and strategies are needed to increase students' coping skills and interpersonal thriving. Recommendations are offered to educators about helping students thrive in professional programs and beyond.

Keywords: thriving, student learning, student success, professional programs, health science

INTRODUCTION

Students often make the following comments, "I'm just surviving," "I don't know how I am going to make it through this week/semester, etc." "This semester is so hard." "I am barely keeping my head above water." As faculty in three professional programs; clinical laboratory science (CLS), occupational therapy (OT), and therapeutic recreation (TR), we are interested in knowing if students are thriving in our programs or just surviving our programs.

We hypothesize that students in our programs are thriving despite such negative comments. Many of the factors that contribute to thriving and enable students to get the most out of their college experience, such as high impact practices (Schreiner, 2010), are found in our professional programs. However, we have little empirical data to support how high impact practices and other student experiences within our programs contributes to students' thriving.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations of this study. Only half of the students completed the survey. Bias in responses may include; students who did not complete the survey may have been too overwhelmed, or they felt they are thriving and did not connect with the topic; students who completed the survey may have been enthusiastic about their experiences, or may have been extremely dissatisfied with their experiences. Our study is limited to three health professions programs potentially limiting generalizability to other health professions programs.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Predicting Student Success

Many studies have looked at a variety of factors to predict student success and attrition (Akos & Kretchmar, 2017; Horton, 2015; Stewart, et. al., 2015; Sulaiman & Mohezar, 2006). Predictors include grit, gender, previous level of GPA, designation as a First Time in Any College student (FTIAC), amount of work experience, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Many of the factors that decrease success, such as age, FTIAC, and ethnicity cannot be changed. The risks for attrition for FTIAC students include being academically underprepared and difficulty adjusting (Tinto, 1997); risks for mid-degree students include financial, health problems, family/personal issues, and mental health issues were prevalent (Jevons & Lindsay, 2018).

At our university, located in the midwest, many of the factors that are predictive of decreased success are present in the general student population. Seventy-seven percent of the student population are designated as FTIAC (Institutional data, 2019). Many students are working more than one job, taking five or more years to finish an undergraduate degree, and are undergoing socioeconomic stressors. Latest overall data from the institution revealed student fall-to- fall retention was 70.5% in 2018 (Institutional data, 2019). When students leave the university, (55% in 2017), they cite many personal and financial reasons (Institutional data, 2017).

A variety of co-curricular activities are designed to support student success. Students are encouraged to join organizations, attend social events, and on-campus workshops. Many students may have difficulty participating in on-campus activities given the added pressure of "personal and financial" concerns (Dean, 2015). Many students commute and are only on campus to attend classes, further limiting engagement in co-curricular activities. It is important that we identify the role academic programs play in enhancing student success given the limited participation in co-curricular activities.

Professional programs within higher education include competencies and standards that students must meet for entry into the field. All professions possess commonly accepted core characteristics that includes control over the knowledge and service they provide, autonomy in decision-making, commitment to a calling to provide their services, and prolonged training within an organization that controls entry (Weidman, et. al., 2001). Professional programs provide the core curriculum of technical knowledge with opportunities to practice the technical skills in the field. To bridge the gap between technical knowledge and practice, students are exposed to "high impact" practices which may include fieldwork, internships, writing intensive experiences, research with faculty, student laboratory experiences, and learning communities (Kuh, 2008).

Surviving and Thriving

Overall, grades and GPA are the most commonly used measure of student success (York, et. al., 2015). Professional programs look to degree completion, retention rates, certification scores, and job attainment to evaluate program effectiveness, which may then be used as a proxy for student success (Dean, 2015; Pelton, 2017). Accreditation and credentialing bodies require reporting of certification exam results to ensure programs are preparing students for entry into the profession.

Graduation rates and certification exam pass rates are easily measured and quantified for comparison purposes. Both metrics provide a snapshot of the effectiveness of CLS, OT and TR programs nationally. If

a high pass rate score indicates success, then most students in CLS, OT and TR programs across the country are surviving the professional education experience. Yet, little is known about students' holistic success and well-being.

We argue that graduation rates and pass rates on national exams give us a measure of students' "surviving" in our programs, but not their "thriving". The above criteria should not be the only data used to measure the success of our students or the effectiveness of our programs, additional social and psychological factors require in-depth exploration. The concept of "thriving" provides a more holistic view of student success and was used in this study to help us understand what constitutes and contributes to "thriving" in the professional education experience.

Aspects of thriving are linked to positive psychology theory, as described in Seligman's Flourishing Model (2011). High levels of emotional, psychological, and social well-being are indicators of flourishing. Schreiner's (2010) Thriving Quotient draws on aspects of Seligman's Flourishing Model and provides an instrument to evaluate an expanded holistic view of student thriving. Schreiner describes three domains which are considered "malleable" or open to change, namely "academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal". There are seven categories, (1) engaged learning, (2) academic determination, (3) positive perspective, (4) diverse citizenship, and (5) social connectedness (Schreiner, 2010); (6) psychological sense of community and (7) institutional integrity were added in 2019.

Thriving college students are, "academically successful; they also experience a sense of community and a level of psychological well-being that contributes to their persistence to graduation and allows them to gain maximum benefit from being in college" (Schreiner, 2010, p. 4). Thriving students are much more likely to perceive the tuition they pay as a worthwhile investment, earn higher grades (Schreiner et al., 2013), and are more likely to engage in civic activities that benefit their communities and promote social justice (Schreiner, 2010).

Researchers have studied different aspects of thriving with the Thriving Quotient. The items that contribute to thriving were identified as: student success related to participation in learning communities, academic success, didactic content around leadership and strength-based approaches for first-year students (Romero 2012; Cuevas, et. al.2017; Stephens and Beatty 2015; Soria, et. al. 2019). These studies provided a holistic view of thriving by studying the individual domains of Schreiner's Thriving Quotient (Schreiner, 2010).

Despite the inherent barriers to success present in our student population, professional programs may ameliorate the risks and contribute to students' thriving. We need to better understand what may help a student thrive in our programs and implement program changes that continue to support students to "thrive" in their college journey and as professionals.

Resilience and Burnout

Educators in professional programs are charged with ensuring students are competent entry level practitioners who are resilient and can withstand complex and stressful work environments. The terms resilience and grit have become buzzwords in higher education as students navigate the stressors of their college experience. Grit and resilience are not individual personality traits, rather, they are developed with practice (Brown & Kafka, 2020) and are "malleable" (Schreiner, 2010). Resilience is defined as a process that decreases stress enabling students to use behaviors and actions to "bounce back" and move forward with stronger coping skills leading to career success (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004; Keyes, 2003; York, et. al., 2015).

A lack of coping skills may lead to feelings of "occupational burnout". "Burnout" was first defined by Freudenberger in 1975 during his research on medical clinic volunteers. The WHO (2019) classification of symptoms of exhaustion or depleted energy, increased mental distance from one's job, negative and cynical feelings towards or related to one's job, and decreased professional efficacy led to the designation of Occupational Burnout, as a billable code in the International Classification of Diseases-11 (ICD-11, May 28, 2019). Females have a higher burnout rate than males (Wozencroft, et. al., 2019); important to note as, CLS, OT and TR are female dominated professions.

We postulate that understanding students' thriving in professional programs may lead to opportunities for program evaluation and improvement which will increase resilience and better prepare students for the stresses of working in healthcare. Our goal is to identify how "thriving" as a college student may be related to working professionals' ability to remain resilient.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question guiding this study is as follows: (1) Are students in professional programs (CLS, OT, TR) thriving as measured by the *Thriving Quotient*? Secondary research questions are: (2) Do professional programs provide opportunities for students to thrive? (3) Are there aspects of professional programs that do not lead to students' thriving?

Instrument and Methods

The study was a mixed methods cross sectional, longitudinal study of 110 students across three professional programs, CLS, OT, TR. The study has two phases. Phase one of the study consists of four steps; (1) administering the Thriving Quotient to current students, (2) conducting interviews with students, (3) completing the Resilience Scale with alumni in practice, and (4) interviews with alumni. Phase two consists of implementing program changes based on the results found in phase one, administering the Thriving Quotient, and following students into practice for three years post-graduation. The results of this study are from phase one of the larger research project.

Study Population

This study takes place at a university in the midwest. The university has approximately 18,000 students. The majority of students, 85%, commute to campus for classes (IRIM, 2019). Many students work several jobs off-campus and have family responsibilities.

The occupational therapy program (OT) is an entry-level Master program and combined Bachelor/Master program. Master students enter the program with a Bachelor degree. Combined students are admitted to the program after completing their junior year. The program admits a cohort of 38 students once per year in January. The clinical laboratory science (CLS) program is an entry-level Bachelor program. Students enter a second admission process before their junior/senior year. The program admits 10-15 students who have completed the necessary prerequisite courses. The therapeutic recreation (TR) program is an entry-level Bachelor program. Students can begin anytime but typically will enter the specific courses in their junior year. The average number of students that enter the program each semester is 12-15.

After approval from our Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Thriving Quotient survey was distributed electronically via email to all current students in CLS, OT and TR. Students in CLS and TR were invited in November, 2019 to complete the undergraduate version of the Thriving Quotient and OT students were invited to complete the graduate version. Seventy-seven surveys were sent to OT students, 45 were completed for a 58% response rate. Sixty-nine surveys were sent to TR students, 47 were completed for a 68% response rate. Fifty surveys were sent to CLS students, 19 were completed for a 38% response rate. Overall response rate across all three programs was 54.6%.

The Thriving Quotient is a 35-item instrument with seven constructs: Engaged Learning, Academic Determination, Social Connectedness, Diverse Citizenship, Positive Perspective, Psychological Sense of Community and Institutional Integrity. Each item is a statement that requires students to respond on a 6-point Likert scale with answers ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.

At the end of the survey, students were asked to rate their overall level of thriving in a question presented as: "Thriving is defined as, getting the most out of your college experience, so that you are intellectually, socially and psychologically engaged and enjoying the college experience. Given that definition, to what extent do you think you are THRIVING as a college student this semester?" Students rated their overall level of thriving from; consistently thriving, thriving most of the time, somewhat thriving, surviving, barely surviving, not even surviving. In addition, students were asked to describe the factors

contributing to their rating given in an open-ended question, "What has happened this semester that has led to your perception of whether you are thriving or not?"

RESULTS

This section presents data from questions that were common to both the undergraduate and graduate survey, along with quotes from the open-ended question. Student demographics are shown in Table 1. Students are predominantly female, identify as Caucasian and are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six. Approximately half reported an annual household income of $59,999 or less. When asked to rate how difficult it is for them to pay for school after considering financial aid received and the money they have 53% CLS, 33.3% OT, and 46% TR reported little or no difficulty in paying for school expenses; 37% CLS, 60% OT, and 34% TR expressed some or a fair amount of difficulty; 10% CLS, 6.7% OT, and 11% TR reported great difficulty. Most students report working; approximately half work less than 20 hours/week, a third work 21-40 hours/week, 11% TR indicated they work more than 40 hours per week.

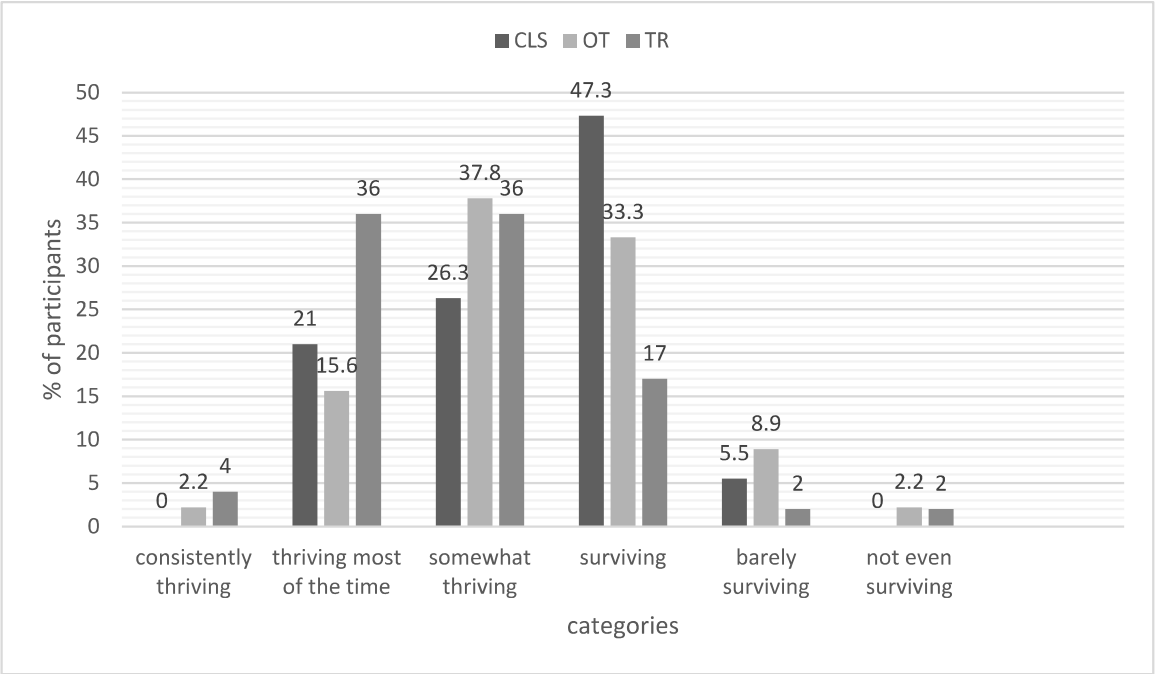
TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Program	CLS	OT	TR
Male	2 (11%)	5 (11%)	3 (6%)
Female	16 (89%)	40 (89%)	44 (94%)
Age	18-20 (10) 56% 21-23 (4) 22% 24-26 (1) 5% 27-30 (3) 17%	21-23 (25) 56% 24-26 (11) 24% 27-30 (6) 13% 31-34 (2) 4.4% 47-50 (1) 2%	18-20 (17) 36% 21-23 (23) 49% 24-26 (5) 10% 27-30 (1) 2% 39-42 (1) 2% Over 50 (1) 2%
Race & Ethnicity	Caucasian 17 (94 %) Prefer not to respond 1(5%)	Caucasian 42 (93%) Arab American 1 (2%) Asian-American/Asian/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 1 (2%) Prefer not to respond 1 (2%)	Caucasian 38 (80%) African-American/Black (5) 10% Asian-American/Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1) 2% Latino/Hispanic (3) 6% Arabic (2%)

Overall Level of Thriving

Overall levels of thriving varied across students in the three programs; 47.3% CLS, 55.6% OT, and 76.5% TR students indicated some level of thriving. See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
SUMMARIES OF THRIVING AND SURVIVING



Academic Thriving

Academic thriving includes two scales; engaged learning and academic determination. These two scales allow evaluation of whether or not students are feeling engaged in the learning and "taking charge of the learning process" (Schreiner, 2010).

Engaged Learning

Engaged learning is when students are meaningfully processing course material that they may have interest in and making connections between new knowledge and prior knowledge. Students focused and actively thinking about new learning opportunities, and discussing with others what they are learning has been termed "deep learning" (Tagg, 2003). In short, students are energized by the learning process.

There was an overwhelming positive response to most statements in the domain of academic thriving, with 95.5% of students across all three groups (CLS, OT, and TR) indicating they are engaged in their learning. Most students report feeling energized by the ideas they are learning with the highest percentage in TR 98%, followed by CLS 89%, and OT 86.7%. Most students agree with the statement regarding being able to apply what they are learning in class to something else in their life (100% CLS, 87.8% OT, 100% TR). Opportunities to apply content occur frequently in fieldwork and internships, giving students a sense of confidence. "Learning new content that is applicable in the school setting" and "the feeling of confidence I get while attending fieldwork." In addition, most students felt as though they are learning material in classes that are worthwhile to them as people (94% CLS, 95.6% OT, 98% TR).

Academic Determination

Academic determination is characterized by an investment of effort, an ability to manage one's time and the multiple academic and personal demands of the college environment. It includes a motivation to succeed, and the intentional pursuit of one's goals. Ability to apply strengths to academic tasks leads to higher levels of confidence and self-efficacy (Lopez and Louis, 2009).

Most students expressed confidence about reaching their educational goals (99.9% CLS, 88.8% OT, 97.9% TR). The majority of students agree with the statement, "Even if assignments are not interesting to

me, I find a way to keep working on them until they are done well" (95% CLS, 97.7% OT, 98% TR). All of the students felt that others would say they are a hard worker.

When asked if they know how to apply their strengths to achieve academic success, 94.1% CLS, 95.6% OT, and 100% TR students agree. When asked if they were good at juggling all the demands of college life 89.4% CLS, 78.1% OT and 85.4% TR students agree with this statement. While many students feel they can "juggle demands", the qualitative comments reveal that they have many demands; namely heavy and difficult course loads, family obligations, and a need to work. Many students made comments similar to this one by a TR student, "I have had a very big workload this semester at school on top of making money and working. This makes it difficult to cram everything in," which contributes to perceptions of only surviving. Students also shared their difficulty with scheduling everything as one TR student stated, "I'm super busy both in school and at home that the two paths often cross and it's been difficult to thrive."

Occupational therapy students were less able to juggle all the demands of academic life; responses to the open-ended question echo survey responses. Demands were identified by a student as, "Amount of class load, school work, lack of sleep, amount of readings, practicing outside of class, finding ways to pay tuition". One student expressed an impact on both physical and mental health but acknowledged personal growth at the same time. "However, I do feel I am learning and growing as a person, I just need to develop healthier habits throughout school and I cannot stay consistent with this due to the rapid changes in intensity of school work." The ebb and flow of school work may make it difficult for students to establish a consistent way of creating balance in their lives. Another student expressed doubt that anything could change, "But that is sort of the nature of graduate school, it requires a lot of time and effort and I expected that! Not sure that can be altered. Resigned to the fact that there isn't time for anything but school".

Interpersonal Thriving

Two aspects of interpersonal thriving are social connectedness, and diverse citizenship which includes personal relationships, and attitudes, values that drive interactions with others.

Social Connectedness

Social connectedness includes having good friends, being in a relationship with others who listen to them, and feeling connected to others so that one is not lonely; it measures the presence of healthy relationships and friendships in students' campus experiences (Schreiner et al., 2013). Connectedness contributes to a sense of belonging to a community larger than oneself. The significance of social connectedness, as Seligman (2011) points out is that, "very little that is positive is solitary (p. 20)."

The response to the statement, "I feel like my friends really care about me," is positive (100% CLS and TR, 97.8% OT agree). Most students report feeling content with the kinds of friendships they currently have (100% CLS, 91.1% OT, and 98.9% TR agree). In response to the statement, "I feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns", (28.9% CLS, 26.3% OT, and 36% TR students agree). They believe others make friends more easily (37.3% CLS, 42.2% OT, and 51.1% TR agree). In response to the statement, "I don't have as many close friends as I wish I had", most of the students (73.6% CLS, 73.3% OT, and 64% TR disagree) indicating that they are satisfied with their number of close friends. When asked if it is hard to make friends in their program 36.8% CLS, 24.4% OT, and 42.5% TR students agree. The cohort format of the OT program may make it easier for students to make friends in the program, accounting for their lower agreement with this statement.

Multiple demands on time creates a barrier to engage socially with family and friends. An OT student shared the following, "I have had little time for social interaction. I feel like I have lost a lot of ties to other things I identified as and my identity is mostly around being a student." A CLS student attributed lack of social experiences outside of school to, "Lost a job, finding a new job and juggling work, research and classes". A TR student commented, "No time for socialization due to [the] amount of assignments and hours I have to work to pay for my schooling."

Maintaining relationships is challenging if others do not understand the demands of school and some students expect a loss of friendships. One OT student states, "I have made excellent friends and still make time to spend time with them, my significant other, family members, and close friends. Other friends

however, do not understand the workload and high expectations of a graduate program." An OT student shared, "I have lost many friends due to this program which was expected but I wish I was closer to my family to compensate for this loss."

A TR student states, "I feel that I am becoming more and more excited about the things I am doing; however, I have found myself feeling a bit isolated and lonely at times and I feel that I can't tell anyone about it because everyone else is struggling too."

Involvement in student organizations and other program events help to improve students' level of interpersonal thriving. Several TR students noted their involvement with student organizations and making connections contributes to their level of thriving. One states, "I have joined STRO, and have become more acquainted with fellow students in my program. I feel that I have found my place here through this program."

Diverse Citizenship

Diverse citizenship refers to an openness of valuing differences, and active involvement with others to make the world a better place. Thriving students are open to diverse viewpoints and believe that it is their responsibility to contribute a positive difference to the community around them.

Many students agree with the statement, "My knowledge or opinions have been influenced or changed by becoming more aware of the perspective of individuals from different backgrounds" (89.1% CLS, 95.6% OT, 98% TR). Students agree with the statement, "I value interacting with people whose viewpoints are different from my own" (89.5% CLS, 95.5% OT, 95.7% TR). The majority of students agree, with the statement, "It is important to become aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds" (100% CLS, 100% OT, 91.5% TR). Students express agreement with statements about contributing to the community, however, 35.5% of OT and 33% of CLS report engaging frequently in community service activities, while 60% of TR students report doing so.

Intrapersonal Thriving

Intrapersonal thriving is reflected in a positive way of viewing the world and the future.

Positive Perspective

Positive perspective represents the way in which students view life. This factor encompasses optimism and an expectation of positive outcomes. When students have a positive perspective, they view the world and their future with confidence; they expect good things to happen and recover more quickly from negative events by reframing them as learning experiences.

The majority of students state that they tend to see the glass as "half full" rather than "half empty" (73.65% CLS, 82.2% OT, 87.5% TR) and that they look for the best in situations even when things seem hopeless (100% CLS, 91.1% OT, 95.7% TR).

Psychological Sense of Community

According to Schreiner (2013), psychological sense of community makes the greatest contribution to thriving levels of college students and is the single best way to help all students thrive. Psychological sense of community refers to the collective experience rather than individual; it is a sense of belonging or membership in a community. A psychological sense of community contributes to feelings of ownership, of being valued, a desire to contribute to the community, and enhances emotional connections with community members and interdependent partnerships.

Most students expressed a sense of belonging in the program (94.7% CLS, 89% OT, and 97.9% TR). The majority also agreed with the statement, "I feel proud of the program I have chosen to attend" (100% CLS, 91.1% OT, 97.9% TR). When asked if there is a strong sense of community among students in this program, 78.6% CLS, 84.5% OT and 100% TR students agree.

Institutional Integrity

Institutional Integrity is defined as the level to which the institution fulfills its mission and goals. In response to the statement, "My experiences in this program so far have met my expectations" 84.7% CLS, 80% OT and 97.8% TR agree. When asked if the program was accurately portrayed during the admissions process 63.3% CLS, 77.8% OT, 80.8% TR agree. CLS students did not elaborate on the admissions process. Many students have communicated anecdotally that the program is difficult to find within the university when they are freshmen. Most students agree that the actions of faculty, staff, and administrators of the program are consistent with the mission of the program (100% CLS, 84.5% OT and 93.6% TR). OT students agree less with statements regarding institutional integrity. Responses to the open-ended question reveals students have negative feelings about changes in the program, particularly the structure and delivery of fieldwork. They acknowledge the changes as necessary but feel they are not getting the same experience as previous students. As one student states, "There has been a lot of dissatisfaction with events that have occurred within the program, even though we understand that they have been out of the staff's control".

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In part, the results support our hypothesis that students are thriving in our programs with nearly half of CLS and OT students reporting some level of thriving and three quarters of TR students doing so. Examining each domain helps us develop a more nuanced understanding of students' thriving; identifying what supports and inhibits thriving in each domain allows us to develop targeted interventions. Ideally, we would like to see all students consistently thriving and are interested in moving the (47.3% CLS, 33.3% OT, & 17% TR) students who are surviving towards thriving and help the 5.5% CLS, 8.9% OT, 2% TR students barely surviving and the 2% OT, 2% TR students who are not even surviving by developing targeted and individualized interventions. In this section we will discuss the elements of professional programs that contribute to student thriving and suggest interventions that will improve the thriving of all students.

Students are thriving academically and there are multiple contributing factors within our programs that support their thriving. Students have clarity in terms of their long-term educational goal and what they want to do; become members of CLS, OT, and TR. Establishing an academic or graduation goal or both can lead to a more successful collegiate experience (Sriram and Vetter, 2012). Students confident in their chosen major are highly likely to be thriving (Schreiner et. al.,2012). Most students (95% CLS, 93.4% OT, and 93% TR) are sure of their chosen major which corresponds with the 95.5% that are thriving academically.

Their educational goal is clear and students know exactly what to do to achieve it. Students move systematically through coursework, internships, the certification exam, and enter the profession. Clarity is enhanced by curriculum design within professional programs. Although curriculum design is often ignored as an intervention that supports thriving; research supports the power of an integrated and coherent curriculum in supporting student success (Braskamp, et. al., 2006). The structured (OT) and semi-structured (CLS & TR) curriculums are integrated and targeted towards performance as a member of the profession. Content and skills taught in one course often builds on content taught in other courses.

Opportunities to envision achieving their goal and participating as members of the profession occur frequently through labs, internships, and fieldwork. These immersive learning experiences provide students with opportunities to make relevant and meaningful connections to course content as it is applied to practice. Taking classes in their profession can combat the slump students may experience in their academic career. CLS and TR students are taking fewer general education courses which may not be of any interest to them and OT students are taking only OT courses.

Interactions with the same faculty occur frequently. The more students interact with faculty the greater their level of engagement and effort (Schreiner et al, 2012). The type of institution dictates the amount of teaching assigned to faculty. As a teaching university, faculty have a higher teaching load, making it more likely that a student will have the same faculty for multiple courses. This repetition allows the relationship between student and faculty to build across time. Students become familiar with faculty teaching styles and faculty become familiar with students' learning styles.

Indeed, students and faculty are most likely to interact in the classroom. Students report meeting infrequently with faculty during office hours (67% CLS, 75.5% OT, and 81% TR). Despite not meeting with faculty outside of class, many students (78% CLS, 77.8% OT, 79% TR) report some level of satisfaction with the amount of contact and interactions. Interaction may be further facilitated by the small class sizes (average of 16 students/class) within each program.

Each program uses some form of strengths assessment to help students identify and develop their strengths. TR and OT use Clifton Strengthsfinders and CLS uses the Kiersey Temperament Sorter. Using a strengths-based approach is considered a best practice and is a positive approach, focusing on strengths versus weaknesses, or deficits. According to the Gallup Strengths Center (2015) individuals who use their strengths are more likely to be engaged on campus; and six times more likely to be engaged in their jobs and three times more likely to say they have a great quality of life. All three programs see the need and an opportunity to further develop and increase the use of StrengthsFinders and the Kiersey Temperament Sorter.

Managing the demands in their lives is the one area within the domain of academic thriving in which students are struggling and requires increased attention and intervention. The demands of school and work and a lack of coping skills can lead to what was stated by one OT student as, "feeling burnt out". Students who have difficulty coping with the multiple demands of school may also be at greater risk for burnout as practitioners.

One way to address this issue is through advising. Schreiner, et. al., (2012) recommend adopting strengths-based or appreciative advising to help students consider how their strengths can be mobilized and developed (p. 192). The set curriculum in OT does not require advising regarding which courses to take; faculty advisors have the opportunity to help students develop their strengths and increase coping skills. CLS and TR do not assign faculty advisors to students in the program, students meet with the program director and members of the faculty upon request to discuss academics, nuances of the profession, and consultation on their unique progression to the profession.

An ongoing relationship with someone who knows the institution, the profession, and the student is the perfect vehicle for helping students develop coping skills, develop their strengths, and explore how they can contribute and connect with the profession in ways that are unique to them. The advising relationship may be the means to work with students who are barely surviving or not even surviving. These students may have issues that require the need for other services. Through the advising relationship we can help normalize the help-seeking process as more and more students experience mental health issues.

In the domain of interpersonal thriving responses on the scale for social connectedness were less positive. Approximately 30% of students feel lonely and wish they had more close friends. The demands of school and work make it difficult for students to engage in and maintain social connections. Institutional support in the form of co-curricular activities do not work well for the majority of our students who commute. Programmatic support for students to network exists in the form of student organizations. Despite opportunities students struggle to make friends indicating a need for further intervention.

Connections can be relational and cognitive (Schreiner, et. al., 2012). Cognitive connections include linking what is learned in class to things in life and developing a connection between current circumstances and the future. Students in professional programs spend most of their time engaged with people who are working on and interested in the same goals. Responses in academic thriving indicate that students are able to make these cognitive connections.

An increased focus on academics may contribute to lower scores on social connectedness. Students may experience pressure to maintain their GPA to remain in the program, to move forward, or for scholarships; leaving little time for social interaction. Cuevas et. al. (2017) found that being focused on academics was one of the reasons honors students scored lower on social connectedness. They also found that personal issues rather than limited opportunities were a barrier along with struggles with belonging, and not feeling a sense of community.

A sense of community involves membership—a sense of belonging, of feeling at home and having a rightful place in that community (Strayhorn, 2012). Belonging can be at the level of the profession, the institution, the program, the classroom, within student organizations, and within groups of students.

Membership matters most when students are new. Entering into the professional program is a transition which is marked and recognized in different ways for each program, such as new student orientations. Nelson and Vetter (2012) recommend ongoing academic and social structures to support students throughout the year versus short term events.

The importance of the classroom in developing a sense of community cannot be overstated, as many of our students are commuters and engage with faculty and peers predominantly within the classroom. Taking multiple classes together or being in a cohort can have many benefits; increased social support, cohesiveness, and feelings of affiliation but these positive outcomes are not guaranteed. A dysfunctional group culture can result in negative outcomes such as interpersonal conflict and unacceptable behaviors within the group. Jensen (2019) found that anger was able to influence the affective tone of a group more than happiness. He recommends educators address the emotional contagion or the source of the anger directly and promptly and educate students on how group-level emotions influence the student experience.

Faculty's role in creating a classroom environment that is welcoming and supportive of all students is critical. At the institutional level, faculty development programs can help faculty and teach them how to utilize active learning, connect with students in and out of class, and teach students strategies for how to be successful (Schreiner, 2012). Faculty must adopt the belief that they are responsible for delivering course content and helping students develop the skills needed to thrive beyond our programs.

Incorporating service learning into the curriculum is an important approach to engaging students in diverse citizenship. Students report their desire to serve the community but do not have the time. Weaving service learning into the curriculum, brings the opportunity to them. The TR and OT programs currently have some opportunities for students to engage with diverse populations through service learning but it is an area ripe for growth. Given the barriers to students engaging with the community these types of experiences should be a consistent part of the student experience. Making a difference in the community and society is consistent with the civic engagement goal of higher education since enhancing community engagement, partnerships and academic service learning opportunities are goals of our university.

Many students feel a sense of belonging in their program. However, scores on social connectedness were lower indicating a need for further investigation and intervention. Belonging is multifaceted in professional programs therefore, the solutions will be complex and involve students, faculty, practitioners supervising students on fieldwork and internships, and community partners. The investment is worth it; creating a sense of community holds the greatest promise for making the kind of difference in students' lives that will help them thrive (Schreiner 2013).

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We identified that students are lacking in the social connections which are needed to build resilience and purport that building social connectedness in the academic setting is crucial since students are limited in their ability to interact outside the classroom. This study is in response to the Critical Care Societies Collaborative (2016) call for educators to put more emphasis on coping and resilience strategies such as social connections during didactic education and suggest more quality time be spent on counseling and career preparedness. The present study highlights the critical role faculty have in supporting students' thriving. However, if faculty are not thriving they will not be able to support students' thriving. Future research is needed to understand and support faculty thriving.

We have elaborated on the inherent high impact practices present in professional programs. Future directions should explore students' perception of thriving in other professional programs and in nonprofessional programs. Further examination of students who experience a high level of thriving, coupled with a longitudinal look at students as they enter the workforce may illuminate the link between thriving and resilience in the workplace. This ongoing work is critical to the thriving of future healthcare professionals and the people they serve.

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