Beyond GPA: Exploring Factors of Student Thriving to Elevate Student Success

Dana M. Horne
Today’s Objectives

Introductions
What is success?
Graduate Thriving Quotient
Application to practice
Disclaimer
The Challenge

- How do we assess “success”?
  - GPA
  - GRE/MCAT/LSAT/Other cognitive assessments

- How do we assess “potential”?
  - Recommendations
  - Personal Statements

- What does “success” look like in a graduate program?
You have **ONE** seat remaining – *Who do you offer admission to?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A</th>
<th>Student B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.98 UG GPA</td>
<td>3.24 UG GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High GRE Score</td>
<td>Low to Average GRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Letters of Recommendation</td>
<td>Strong Letters of Recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly written personal statement</td>
<td>Average written personal statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Interview</td>
<td>Strong Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ?</td>
<td>Student ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Poor interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong self-reflection</td>
<td>Poor self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in school/university committees</td>
<td>History of disruptive behaviors in both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship/Practicum site rave about</td>
<td>classroom and Internship/Practicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student’s ability and performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average test/papers scores</td>
<td>High test/paper scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts and applies feedback</td>
<td>Closed off to feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
But what if you knew the following – Who would you offer admission to?

Student B
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Strong self-reflection
- Engaged in school/university committees
- Internship/Practicum site rave about student’s ability and performance
- Average test/papers scores
- Accepts and applies feedback

Student A
- Poor interpersonal skills
- Poor self-reflection
- History of disruptive behaviors in both classroom and Internship/Practicum
- High test/papers scores
- Closed off to feedback
What are indicators of success?

- GPA
- Scholarship (financial)
- Scholarship (academic – publications/presentations)
- Elite Internships/Fellowships
- Leadership Positions
- Engaged in school/university community
- Degree Completion Rates

Other Factors:
- Grit
- Determination
- Perseverance
- Resiliency
- Employability
- Well-balanced
  - Time management
  - Self-Care
  - Strong support network
Beyond what we know from historical literature, what might predict success in a graduate program?
Concept of Thriving

Students who demonstrate high levels of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and academic well-being tend to experience greater success and are described as students who thrive.
Thriving

Academic Thriving + Interpersonal Thriving + Intrapersonal Thriving = STUDENT THRIVING
According to Schreiner (2012), thriving students are fully engaged in the learning process, as evidenced by:

- investing effort to reach important educational goals,
- managing their time and commitments effectively,
- connecting in healthy ways to other people,
- being optimistic about their futures,
- being positive about their present choices,
- being appreciative of differences in others,
- and being committed to enriching their community. (p. 5)
## Domains of Thriving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Thriving</th>
<th>Interpersonal Thriving</th>
<th>Intrapersonal Thriving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Determination</td>
<td>Social Connectedness</td>
<td>Positive Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>Diverse Citizenship</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Graduate Thriving Quotient

The Graduate Thriving Quotient is available through The Thriving Project:

http://www.thrivingincollege.org/thethrivingproject/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though I am learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person.</td>
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<td>I can usually find ways of applying what I’m learning in class to something else in my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once I start a project, I stick with it until I am finished.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I find myself thinking about what I’m learning in class even when I’m not in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other people would say I’m a hard worker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel energized by the ideas I am learning in most of my classes.</td>
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<td>I know how to apply my strengths to achieve academic success.</td>
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</tbody>
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Petridis (2016)

- Explored the relationships among department climate, student-faculty interaction, family-friend support, and a psychological sense of community, as well as how these relationships contribute to the variation in graduate student thriving.
- Finding: Students’ psychological sense of community was the largest predictor of thriving, followed by the support of family and friends and a positive department climate.
What Studies Have Found

- Horne (2016)
  - Explored the relationships between emotional intelligence and student success in a Masters of Social Work program.
  - Findings: A students’ pre-program levels of emotional intelligence were significant predictors of Graduate Thriving Quotient total mean scores, indicating that pre-emotional intelligence predicts thriving in a graduate MSW program. Additionally, students’ end of year emotional intelligence correlated with their levels of thriving in an MSW program.
Create environments conducive to graduate students’ success and well-being:

- Increase opportunities for students to engage in school initiatives, committees, research projects with faculty.
- Provide professional development opportunities to grow students interpersonal and intrapersonal skillsets.
- Build a community of support among students, faculty, and staff.
- Increase and support opportunities for students to connect with their peers both in formal and informal settings.
Beyond cognitive measures, how could student success or potential for thriving be screened:

- Letters of reference that include behavioral based questions
  
  “Describe a situation in which Student A overcame a challenge”

- Reference questions that assess beyond academic ability
Questions?

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THANK YOU!