

# FINAL REPORT

## President's Advisory Committee for Making Excellence Inclusive Thriving Inclusion Metrics and Evaluation Subcommittee

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### **TIME Leadership**

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### **TIME Membership**

The TIME subcommittee includes representation from students, faculty, and staff across campus:

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Chad Curtis, Assistant Professor of Economics  
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### **Introduction**

In concert with the President's Advisory Committee for Making Excellence Inclusive, the Thriving and Inclusion Metrics and Evaluation subcommittee's (TIME) charge was to establish a University of Richmond-centered definition of student thriving and identify metrics that permit a comprehensive assessment of student thriving at UR. The TIME subcommittee examined institutional data, including data collected by Keeling & Associates, consulted with stakeholders and subject matter experts from across campus, drew on the expertise of subcommittee members, and reviewed definitions of thriving at peer and aspirant institutions and in the scientific literature. These efforts informed our development of a set of recommendations that advocate for a data-driven approach to prioritizing, planning, and incrementally implementing initiatives to cultivate UR students' thriving.

## Recommendations

1. **At the University of Richmond, student thriving encompasses academic engagement and achievement; sociocultural competence and connectedness within the UR community; and physical and psychological wellness.** Consistent with most contemporary conceptualizations of thriving, we recommend a definition that emphasizes students' full engagement and learning in multiple domains (i.e., academic, social, and health and well-being), underscoring the multidimensional quality of thriving.<sup>1</sup> In recognition of the patterns of disparity and privilege that limit thriving among underrepresented students<sup>2</sup>, and given the University's commitment to diversifying the student body and dismantling structural inequities<sup>3</sup>, we further recommend that the assessment of student thriving occur within the context of four key pillars:

- i. *Thriving is interactive.* Students are embedded within various "contextual niches" (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000, p. 41), including that of the University. Factors within the university context, such as institutional norms, the composition of the student body, and stressful events, in conjunction with students' intrapersonal characteristics (e.g., feelings, motivations, goal orientations), affect their thriving (e.g., Cohen, Cimboric, Armeli, & Hettler, 1998).
- ii. *Thriving varies across individuals.* Students are unique individuals who come to UR with differing individual and environmental assets and challenges that facilitate and impede their ability to thrive. Recognizing, understanding, and appreciating the varied pathways that individual students may pursue towards thriving is an important prerequisite for institutional thriving.
- iii. *Thriving is dynamic.* Because thriving is a process, as opposed to a state or trait (Theokas et al., 2005, p.117), the extent to which students experience thriving is subject to change over the course of their tenure at the university. A developmental trajectory characterized by consistently high (i.e., stable) scores on thriving metrics is an unreasonable expectation for most individuals; therefore, active, positive, and improvement-seeking orientations (i.e., "thriving

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<sup>1</sup>We conducted an electronic search (search term: student thriving) on the websites of the top twenty-five liberal arts colleges according to *U.S. News & World Report* (2019). Search results yielded evidence of major student thriving initiatives at nine institutions (i.e., Bates, Bowdoin, Colgate, Grinnell, Harvey Mudd, Haverford, Wake Forest, Vassar, Williams), and the websites of three other institutions (i.e., Colgate, Harvey Mudd, Wake Forest) present multidimensional definitions of student thriving that include each of the key dimensions we propose. We summarize conceptualizations of thriving (or of closely related constructs; e.g., flourishing) within the empirical literature in Appendix B. <sup>2</sup>Results from Gallup's (2015) Executive Summary show that between 7% and 11%, of undergraduates, regardless of race or ethnicity, are thriving in all five of the interrelated elements of well-being that Gallup measures—purpose, social, financial, community, and physical—and that minority and underrepresented students are even less likely to thrive in all elements. Indeed, the Keeling & Associates Final Report (2019) provides both qualitative and quantitative data that suggest that UR students from underrepresented groups are "surviving rather than thriving". <sup>3</sup>See the University's strategic plan regarding a Thriving and Inclusive University Community.

orientations”; Ford & Smith, 2007) and/or improvements on thriving metrics constitute important markers of thriving.

- iv. *Thriving occurs along a continuum.* Thriving is not present or absent; rather, it ranges from low to high, and various positions along the continuum are possible (Gallup, 2015). It is unlikely that any individual student or group of students will exhibit evidence of thriving on all indicators (see Gallup, 2015; Scales et al., 2000). Similarly, every student or group of students will evidence thriving on some indicators.

**2. We recommend prioritizing student thriving within three key dimensions—Social, Academic, and Health and Well-Being—and administering a set of thriving metrics at regular intervals.**<sup>4</sup> Below and in Appendix A, we offer a framework for a Student Thriving Dashboard that includes proposed indicators and corresponding metrics for each dimension, a summary of the availability of each metric, and the recommended level of analysis for each metric.

- i. *Academic.* Indicators of academic thriving include achievement, engagement, curricular satisfaction, and post-graduation outcomes.
  - i. *Achievement* metrics: first- and last-semester GPA, start and end dates for academic probation, graduation in 4 and 6 years from UR or other college/university, and honor council violations.
  - ii. *Engagement* metrics: Participation in study abroad, internships, living-learning community participation, community service/community-based learning enrollment, undergraduate research (via UR or external funding), enrollment in TIDE-related courses and capstone projects/theses.
  - iii. *Curricular satisfaction* metrics: Satisfaction with coursework, satisfaction with instruction, and completion of chosen major.
  - iv. *Post-graduate outcomes* metrics: Satisfactory employment, graduate or professional school matriculation, and engagement with UR post-graduation (e.g., alumni giving, volunteering, alumni event attendance).
- ii. *Social.* Indicators of social thriving include interpersonal relationships, connectedness, cultural competence, and social competence.
  - i. *Interpersonal relationships* metrics: access to and quality of faculty, staff, and peer mentorship, perception of mutual respect and support from faculty, staff, and peers, nature and quality of friendships, quality of familial relationships, and intergroup relations.
  - ii. *Connectedness* metrics: perceptions of belonging and loneliness, participation in leadership roles, involvement in on-campus activities, attendance at UR-sponsored academic, social, and athletic events, engagement with the city of Richmond community (e.g., via community

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<sup>4</sup> A multi-method approach that includes subjective self-reports of thriving in addition to objective metrics, or metrics that emphasize quantity (e.g., GPA), presence versus absence (e.g., participation in a Living-Learning Community), and frequency (e.g., number of internships), is most likely to result in a comprehensive and valid assessment of thriving. The administration of metrics at multiple time points will permit an evaluation of the stability of thriving and growth assessment.

- service/community-based learning, internships), and participation in living-learning communities.
- iii. *Sociocultural competence* metrics: frequency and quality of intergroup contact, intergroup attitudes, participation in cross-cultural experiences (e.g., study abroad), enrollment in courses with a TIDE component, frequency of on-campus bias incidents/hate crimes, self-perceptions of social competence, acculturative stress, and perceived discrimination.
- iii. *Health and Well-Being*. Indicators of health and well-being include psychological adjustment, resilience and coping, physical wellness, purpose and identity, religiousness and spirituality, and financial well-being.
- i. *Psychological adjustment* metrics: positive well-being, depression and anxiety, eating concerns, self-injury, suicidal ideation, suicide plans, and suicide attempts, perceived need for mental health services, and alcohol use.
  - ii. *Resilience and coping* metrics: stressful life events, resilience, coping, grit and determination, and gratitude.
  - iii. *Physical wellness* metrics: General health, risk-taking behaviors (e.g., substance use, risky sexual behavior), nutrition, sleep habits, and physical activity.
  - iv. *Purpose and identity* metrics: meaning in life (i.e., MIL; comprehension, purpose, & mattering), authenticity, and commitment to institutional identity, vision, and practices.
  - v. *Religiousness and spirituality* metrics: participation in mindfulness, and religious and spiritual beliefs and practices.
  - vi. *Financial well-being* metrics: Financial stability and internal and external financial barriers.

Historically, UR student success has been assessed using predominantly academic indicators; as a result, data on academic indicators are generally available from various entities on campus (see Appendix A). Metrics of academic indicators are essential for the comprehensive assessment of student thriving; however, metrics of social and health and well-being indicators should be prioritized given the relative lack of available data within these dimensions.

To oversee efforts related to the administration, interpretation, and dissemination of thriving metrics, we recommend that the Institutional Coordinating Council include a permanent metrics subcommittee to work in tandem with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to obtain high-quality thriving data via a systematic, three-tiered approach. First, the subcommittee should take inventory of available metrics for thriving indicators. Second, in the absence of metrics for a given indicator, the subcommittee should identify optimal metric(s). Third, in consultation with University leadership and the VP for TIDE, the subcommittee should develop and implement a plan for administering the identified metric(s) and evaluating data at individual, student group/cohort, and institutional levels as appropriate.

3. **The evaluation of thriving should include analyses based on the hierarchical structure of the institution where individual students are nested within various groups and cohorts, which are nested within the institution.** Because research suggests that the development of programs and interventions that support thriving should focus on individuals, groups, and communities (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012), we propose metrics that assess thriving at multiple levels, including but not limited to:

- i. *Institution Level:*

We propose the use of metrics to evaluate institutional thriving, with an emphasis on the overall climate of the institution. An evaluation of thriving metrics at the institution level will elucidate the extent to which the University is progressing toward its stated goal of fostering a thriving and inclusive university community. Examples of institutional level data include community members' perceptions of the institution, such as students' overall satisfaction with the educational environment as reported through the Senior Exit Survey, and assessments of the institution's overall reputation, as reported by alumni in the most recent Simpson Scarborough Branding Survey. Institution level data are essential for strategic decision-making about University practices and programming, including TIDE initiatives. For instance, metrics that yield data suggesting students' dissatisfaction with the educational experience or a less than optimal reputation score should highlight areas needing intervention or support.

- ii. *Student Cohort/Group:*

It will be important to assess the extent to which thriving presents unevenly between cohorts or groups of students, and to identify factors, such as participation in certain programs or organizations, that promote thriving among underrepresented groups, in particular.<sup>5</sup> Members of underrepresented groups and other student groups (e.g., student athletes) report that they do not have full access to the array of opportunities available on campus (Keeling & Associates, 2019). Research indicates, however, that access to opportunities for fulfillment and growth, such as work, play, and socializing, are necessary for healthy development and may contribute to thriving (Feeney & Collins, 2015). Data should be analyzed with a focus on how demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, school, financial status) influence specific indicators (i.e., achievement, cultural-competence, and resilience) within each dimension of UR student thriving.

- i. *Individual Student*

We propose analyzing thriving metrics within each dimension at the level of the individual to facilitate an evaluation of the individual student experience. Examples of important individual level student metrics include enrollment in capstone and TIDE-related courses (academic), access to faculty and peer mentorship (social), and

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<sup>5</sup>For example, research suggests that certain factors (e.g., social support, spirituality) contribute uniquely to the resilience, and possibly thriving, of students from specific diverse groups and backgrounds, such as Latinx students (Morgan Consoli et al., 2015).

matter to the university and the freedom to express one's authentic self (health and well-being). Metrics such as these will provide important data on indicators of student thriving at UR. Individual level metrics may also illuminate the unique pathways that students take towards thriving. For example, whereas some students may thrive because they are fully engaged academically, others may demonstrate thriving on multiple indicators within all three dimensions (i.e., academic, social, and health and well-being). Importantly, an assessment of individual-level thriving data promises to highlight strengths and limitations of University practices and programming, including TIDE-related initiatives.

- 4. We recommend utilizing UR student thriving data to engage university constituents in a data-driven approach to prioritizing, planning, and incrementally implementing TIDE initiatives.** Using proposed metrics (see Appendix A) a subcommittee focused on the continuous evaluation of thriving should aim to establish a dashboard and benchmarking approach for the routine monitoring of key indicators of thriving. Through purposeful selection, the committee should identify metrics that will best summarize and determine the state of thriving at three levels - for the institution, student groups, and individual students. Student thriving data should inform the community, via modes of investigation, analysis, and reporting deemed appropriate by a metrics committee, about the state of thriving at the University of Richmond. University leadership should regularly evaluate key thriving indicators to inform strategic decision-making about appropriate interventions and improvements, and to assess university progress toward its thriving and inclusive university community goal. Measurements of thriving within the institution, across various student groups, and for the individual student, should be reviewed to determine the extent to which interventions implemented to support TIDE efforts yield desired outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

We propose a definition of UR student thriving, and a set of indicators and corresponding metrics, that will lay the groundwork for a systematic analysis of student thriving at the level of the individual, group or cohort, and the institution. The set of metrics proposed within this report is neither exhaustive nor fixed. The utility of the proposed metrics is contingent upon student demographics and institutional strategic priorities and goals and therefore should be reevaluated and adapted on a continuous basis.

Integral to this vision is the establishment of a permanent metrics committee that is responsible for purposefully selecting metrics, analyzing thriving data at multiple levels, and recommending modes for disseminating findings to appropriate members of the UR community. We intend for student thriving data to generate action and serve as a catalyst for change by informing the development and refinement of TIDE initiatives. Success in these efforts will create a context in which students of all identities and backgrounds may thrive rather than simply survive, reach their full potential, and derive the maximum benefit of their educational experience at UR.

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## APPENDIX A

### Proposed Thriving Indicators and Metrics, Level of Analysis, and Availability of Measures

Academic	Metric	Level of Analysis	Currently Measured
Achievement	- First- and last-semester GPA	Individual, Cohort	Yes
	- Start and end dates for academic probation	Individual	Yes
	- Graduation in 4 years & 6 years, from UR or other college/university	Cohort	Yes
	- Honor council violations	Individual	Yes
Engagement	- Study abroad	Individual, Cohort	Yes
	- Internships	Individual, Cohort	Yes
	- Participation in living-learning community	Individual, Cohort	Yes
	- Community service/community-based learning enrollment	Individual	Yes
	- Undergraduate research	Individual, Cohort	Yes
	- Enrollment in TIDE-related courses	Individual, Cohort, Institution	No
	- Capstone projects/theses	Individual	Yes
Curricular satisfaction	- Satisfaction w/ coursework	Institution	Yes
	- Satisfaction w/ instruction	Institution	Yes
	- Completion of chosen major	Individual, Cohort	Yes
Post-graduate outcomes	- Satisfactory employment	Individual, Cohort, Institution	No
	- Graduate or professional school matriculation	Individual, Cohort, Institution	Yes
	- Engagement w/ UR post-graduation	Individual, Cohort, Institution	Yes
<b>Social</b>			
Interpersonal relationships	- Access to and quality of faculty, staff, and peer mentorship	Individual, Cohort, Institution	Yes
	- Perceptions of mutual respect and academic and personal support from faculty, staff, and peers	Individual, Cohort, Institution	No
	- Nature and quality of friendships	Individual	No
	- Quality of familial relationships	Individual	No
	- Intergroup contact	Individual, Cohort, Institution	Yes
Connectedness	- Perceptions of belonging and loneliness	Individual, Cohort, Institution	Yes
	- Participation in leadership roles	Individual, Institution	No
	- Campus community involvement	Individual, Cohort, Institution	No
	- Attendance at UR-sponsored academic, social, and athletic events	Individual, Institution	No
	- Engagement with the city of Richmond community	Individual, Institution	No
	- Participation in living-learning community	Individual, Cohort, Institution	Yes

Sociocultural competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequency and quality of intergroup contact</li> <li>- Intergroup attitudes</li> <li>- Engagement in cross-cultural experiences</li> <li>- Enrollment in courses with a TIDE component</li> <li>- Frequency of on-campus bias incidents/hate crimes</li> <li>- Self-perceptions of social competence</li> <li>- Acculturative stress</li> <li>- Perceived discrimination</li> </ul>	<p>Individual, Cohort, Institution Cohort Individual, Cohort Individual Institution Individual, Cohort Individual Cohort</p>	<p>No No No No Yes No No No</p>
<b>Health &amp; Well-Being</b>			
Psychological adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive well-being</li> <li>- Symptoms of depression and anxiety</li> <li>- Eating concerns</li> <li>- Self-injury</li> <li>- Suicidal ideation, suicide plans, and suicide attempts</li> <li>- Perceived need for mental health services</li> </ul>	<p>Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution</p>	<p>Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes</p>
Resilience and coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stressful life events</li> <li>- Resilience</li> <li>- Coping</li> <li>- Grit and determination</li> <li>- Gratitude</li> </ul>	<p>Individual Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution</p>	<p>No Yes Yes No No</p>
Physical wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General health</li> <li>- Risk taking behaviors</li> <li>- Nutrition</li> <li>- Sleep habits</li> <li>- Physical activity</li> </ul>	<p>Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual, Cohort, Institution</p>	<p>Yes No Yes No Yes</p>
Purpose & identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meaning in life, including comprehension, purpose, &amp; mattering</li> <li>- Authenticity</li> <li>- Commitment to institutional identity, vision, and practices</li> </ul>	<p>Individual Individual Individual</p>	<p>Yes No No</p>
Religiousness & spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation in mindfulness</li> <li>- Religious and spiritual beliefs and practices</li> </ul>	<p>Individual, Cohort, Institution Individual</p>	<p>Yes No</p>
Financial well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial stability</li> <li>- Internal and external financial barriers</li> </ul>	<p>Individual, Cohort Individual, Cohort, Institution</p>	<p>Yes Yes</p>

## APPENDIX B

### Conceptualizations of Thriving in the Empirical Literature

Source	Definition	Indicator(s)	Sample
Cohen, Cimboric, Armeli, & Hettler, 1998	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social relationships/relatedness</li> <li>- New possibilities</li> <li>- Personal strength/resources</li> <li>- Spiritual change</li> <li>- Appreciation of life/life philosophy</li> <li>- Coping skills</li> </ul>	College students following a trauma or significant stressor.
Diener et al., 2010	Social-psychological prosperity and subjective well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive and negative experience</li> <li>- Social relationships</li> <li>- Purposeful and meaningful life</li> <li>- Engagement, interest, competence with respect to activities</li> <li>- Self-respect and optimism</li> <li>- Positive and negative affect</li> </ul>	689 college students from 6 locations.
Feeney & Collin, 2015	Thriving manifest through relationships, exist as a multidimensional construct supported by mechanisms of social support, and the result of coping with adversity and seeking opportunities for exploration and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coping successfully with life adversities</li> <li>- Pursuing opportunities for growth</li> <li>- Resilience</li> <li>- Supportive relationships</li> </ul>	N/A
Ford & Smith, 2007	Thriving with social purpose results when the four components of human motivation (i.e., goals, capability beliefs, context beliefs, emotions) are amplified in dynamic, mutually reinforcing patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social purpose</li> <li>- Personal optimism</li> <li>- Mindful tenacity</li> <li>- Emotional wisdom</li> </ul>	N/A
Keyes & Haidt, 2002	Filled with emotional, psychological, and social well-being and free of mental illness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive affect</li> <li>- Happiness</li> <li>- Life satisfaction</li> <li>- Warm, trusting relationships</li> <li>- Empathy</li> <li>- Intimacy</li> <li>- Self-acceptance</li> <li>- Purpose in life</li> <li>- Mastery</li> </ul>	N/A

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Autonomy</li> <li>- Positive relations with others</li> </ul>	
Morgan Consoli, Delucio, Noriega, & Llamas, 2015	Being “better off” after adversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family support (<i>familisimo</i>)</li> <li>- Spirituality</li> <li>- Hope</li> <li>- Social support</li> <li>- Cultural pride</li> </ul>	121 English-Speaking Latino/a undergraduate students.
Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012	A psychological state in which individuals experience a sense of vitality and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning</li> <li>- Vitality</li> </ul>	175 undergraduates and 410 young professionals.
Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000	Desirable positive developmental outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School success</li> <li>- Leadership</li> <li>- Valuing diversity</li> <li>- Physical health</li> <li>- Helping others</li> <li>- Delay of gratification</li> <li>- Overcoming adversity</li> </ul>	6,000 youth in Grades 6-12 within six ethnic groups.
Schreiner, 2010	Thriving students are fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaged learning</li> <li>- Academic determination</li> <li>- Positive perspective</li> <li>- Diverse citizenship</li> <li>- Social connectedness</li> </ul>	College students.
Theokas et al., 2005	Thriving youth are engaged in mutually beneficial interactions with their multilevel context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social conscience</li> <li>- Risk avoidance</li> <li>- Interpersonal values</li> <li>- Activity participation</li> <li>- Personal values</li> <li>- Rules and boundaries</li> <li>- School engagement</li> <li>- Positive identity</li> <li>- Family, school and community connections</li> <li>- Adult mentors</li> <li>- Contextual safety</li> <li>- Parent involvement</li> </ul>	50,000 middle and high school students.