Positive Psychology Approach
Empowering Students through Education & Communication
86% of our students return after year one

70% of our first-year students graduate

Why?
Common Reasons

Realistic expectations of college
Financial security
Academic integration
Sense of belongingness
Connection between college, the real world, and a world they want to experience now
We need a Cultural Strategy – Gen Z

• Gen Z is not waiting for their turn to lead
  • There are more demonstrations, social movements, and protests today than at any given time in history.

• Gen Z is the most inclusive generation ever
  • By 2025, Gen Z will make up 29% of the population, making it the largest generation ever.

• Gen Z is seriously questioning higher education
  • 75% of GZ say there are other ways of getting a good education than going to college.

Source: Archrival.com/insights
A disciplined, focused strategy is required
Historically...

We ask student scholars to conform to our norms. Assimilate.

We ignore the individual perspectives each student scholar brings to the table.

Student scholars are punished for their academic preparedness before college.
A deficit mindset impedes our student scholars’ success by limiting their potential. To enhance their success, we encourage the shift from a deficit to a strengths-based mindset.
Now, by no means would I advocate ignoring that F.
In a rigid, uncertain world, we are a university built on empowering each student by developing their potential.
Science of Positive Psychology

- Growth Mindset
- Self-Determination Theory
- Grit
- Hope
UT’s Definition of Positive Psychology

CONFIDENCE
We believe that our student scholars can learn at high levels. We share this message often and consistently.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS
We challenge every student scholar intellectually. We believe expectations are attainable.

EVERY STORY MATTERS
We will provide the structures necessary for every student scholar to reach their potential.
PERMA by Seligman

• Positive Emotions
• Engagement
• Relationships
• Meaning
• Accomplishments
### PERMA Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Local Community</th>
<th>Faculty/Administration</th>
<th>Residential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive emotions</strong></td>
<td>Curriculum development using PP constructs (e.g. gratitude)</td>
<td>Strengths-focused social events</td>
<td>Movie screenings with positive psychology content</td>
<td>Integrate PP principles into team development activities</td>
<td>Implement “strengths spotting” among residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Teach students about flow and what promotes it</td>
<td>Mindfulness reflection groups</td>
<td>Free seminars and talks on the importance of flow and absorption</td>
<td>Recognize workplace initiatives designed to enhance flow</td>
<td>Residential events for increasing flow (e.g. African drumming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Design strengths-based group assignments</td>
<td>Implement programs that encourage random acts of kindness</td>
<td>Offer parenting workshops on active constructive responding</td>
<td>Recognize and reward work output at the team level</td>
<td>Celebrate national holidays to promote cross-cultural learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td>Get students to contribute ideas to curriculum</td>
<td>Assess levels of social capital</td>
<td>Promote the university as a virtuous organization</td>
<td>Encourage job crafting to help staff develop congruent career paths</td>
<td>Enable residents to tangibly express the values of the residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accomplishment</strong></td>
<td>Implement assessments for learning, as well as of learning</td>
<td>Acknowledge individuals who positively contribute to campus life</td>
<td>Give awards for outstanding contributions to campus life</td>
<td>Infuse performance appraisal systems with PP approaches</td>
<td>Offer evidence-based coaching to enhance academic performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Positive Psychology Framing Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Strengths-Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Student Scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve, Support</td>
<td>Enhance, Enrich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors</td>
<td>Learning Consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>Sharpen, Hone, Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>Facilitate, Benefit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive Psychology Framing Examples
First-Year Volunteers’ Strengths

78% of first-year students enrolled in the Vol First-Year Experience took the CliftonStrengths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All – First-Year Students Top Five</th>
<th>Students of Color – First-Year Students Top Five</th>
<th>First-Generation – First-Year Students Top Five</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td>Restorative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Achiever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Futuristic</td>
<td>Futuristic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positivity</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VP Williams’ Interpretation

• UT’s first-year students’ strengths align with the national landscape.
• Facilitating an environment where student scholars understand outcomes (futuristic, competition, and achiever) and have the ability to solve real world problems (restorative and empathy) may increase student engagement.
• Our student scholars are resilient and agile (adaptability and restorative).
• Creating a campus where the intensity with which we challenge (restorative, competition, futuristic, achiever) each other matches the goodwill (positivity and empathy) we display to look out for one another may help our student scholars thrive.
Undergraduate Student Success Goals

Retention Goals

UT will increase first-to-second-year retention rate by supporting all students while paying particular attention to the achievement gaps for first-generation and underrepresented minority students.
Undergraduate Student Success Goals

Engagement Goals

• Every scholar meets with a member of their Vol Success team each semester. (First-generation and Students of Color at least twice.)

• Every scholar participates in at least one high-impact practice their first year of college.

• The majority of our first-year class engaged in the Vol Study Center, Math Place, or Judith Anderson Herbert Writing Center.
Undergraduate Student Success Goals

Academic Belongingness Goals

Coordinated by the Postsecondary Research Center, UT will measure how many student scholars will respond with positively agree or strongly agree to the following academic belongingness survey questions:

- I feel a part of the UT community.
- I believe that I will excel academically at UT.
- I would rate my current overall stress level since enrolling at UT this fall.
You are Key

We must build our student scholars up when the world tears them down.

It’s more than going to a great school, studying hard, and being smart.

It requires infrastructure, a community, a campus.

It requires you.
In a rigid, uncertain world, we are a university built on empowering each student by developing their potential.
Amber Williams
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