

The Adult Thriving Quotient™

The Adult Thriving Quotient™ is a reliable ($\alpha = .91$), valid instrument that was developed to measure the academic, social, and psychological aspects of adult students' experience that are most predictive of academic success, institutional fit, satisfaction with their college experience, and ultimately graduation. The 24 items on the TQ cluster onto five scales:

- **Engaged Learning** – ($\alpha = .89$) A measure of the degree to which students are meaningfully processing what happens in class and energized by what they are learning. Sample item: "I feel energized by the ideas I am learning in most of my classes."
- **Academic Determination** – ($\alpha = .87$) A measure of students' goal-directedness, investment of effort, and regulation of their own learning and use of time. Sample item: "I am confident I will reach my educational goals."
- **Positive Perspective** – ($\alpha = .73$) A measure of students' optimism and explanatory style. Sample item: "I look for the best in situations, even when things seem hopeless."
- **Social Connectedness** – ($\alpha = .79$) A measure of students' involvement in healthy relationships and social support networks, whether on or off campus. Sample item: "I feel like my friends really care about me."
- **Diverse Citizenship** – ($\alpha = .85$) A measure of students' desire to make a difference in the community around them, as well as their openness to differences in others. Sample item: "I value interacting with people whose viewpoints are different from my own."

Examining thriving among adult learners developed out of a desire to understand student success more holistically than previous higher education research that had focused solely on student retention. Dr. Laurie Schreiner developed the Thriving Quotient™ (TQ) using concepts from positive psychology (i.e., flourishing) and Bean and Eaton's (2000) retention model to introduce the term *thriving* to "describe the experiences of college students who are fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally" (Schreiner, 2010, p. 4). Thriving is not about personality traits, but rather describes malleable qualities within a student, meaning that institutions can teach students to thrive. Years of research has documented specific experiences that serve as significant pathways to adult student thriving; these pathways are also measured in the online survey:

The following report contains your institution's comparisons to the national norms for adult students, which are based on the mean and standard deviation of responses from 569 adult students who completed the Adult TQ in the Fall of 2024 at 8 CCCU institutions.

ADULT THRIVING QUOTIENT - FALL 2024

Bethel University

ALL ITEMS ARE SCORED ON A 6-POINT SCALE. *INDICATES A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE FROM THE NORMS.

Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following: (1=Strongly disagree, 6=Strongly agree)	CCCU Norms (N=569)		Your Institution (N=61)	
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
Thriving Quotient				
Engaged Learning Scale	5.12	0.92	5.15	1.01
1. I feel as though I am learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person.	5.28	1.05	5.28	1.11
2. I can usually find ways of applying what I'm learning in class to something else in my life.	5.25	0.97	5.30	1.01
3. I find myself thinking about what I'm learning in class even when I'm not in class.	5.05	1.10	5.10	1.16
4. I feel energized by the ideas I'm learning in most of my classes.	4.91	1.14	4.93	1.29
Academic Determination Scale	5.15	0.70	5.13	0.61
5. I am confident I will reach my educational goals.	5.41	1.03	5.28	1.16
6. Even if assignments are not interesting to me, I find a way to keep working at them until they are done well.	5.16	0.99	5.03	1.18
7. I know how to apply my strengths to achieve academic success.	5.17	0.99	5.20	0.96
8. I am good at juggling all the demands of life.	4.65	1.11	4.75	0.94
9. Other people would say I'm a hard worker.	5.39	0.81	5.34	0.70
10. When I'm faced with a problem in my life, I can usually think of several ways to solve it.	5.15	0.81	5.15	0.68

ITEM	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
Social Connectedness Scale (<i>note: items are reverse scored as indicated so that higher scores indicate higher levels of social connectedness</i>)	4.25	1.02	4.04	1.10
11. Other people seem to make friends more easily than I do. (R)	3.63	1.50	3.52	1.52
12. I feel like my friends really care about me.	5.02	1.00	4.84	1.05
13. I don't have as many close friends as I wish I had. (R)	3.68	1.63	3.34	1.73
14. I feel content with the kinds of friendships I currently have.	4.98	1.02	4.70	1.15
15. I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns. (R)	4.27	1.59	4.23	1.51
16. It's hard to make friends at this institution. (R)	3.98	1.48	3.59	1.61
Diverse Citizenship Scale	5.16	0.65	5.14	0.62
17. I spend time making a difference in other people's lives.	4.99	0.93	5.07	0.83
18. I know I can make a difference in my community.	5.28	0.81	5.26	0.79
19. I value interacting with people whose viewpoints are different from my own.	4.97	0.90	4.87	1.02
20. It's important for me to make a contribution to my community.	5.19	0.89	5.33	0.83
21. It is important to become aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds.	5.56	0.74	5.54	0.92
22. My knowledge or opinions have been influenced or changed by becoming more aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds.	4.97	0.95	4.80	1.22
Positive Perspective Scale	4.99	0.84	5.06	0.78
23. My perspective on life is that I tend to see the glass as "half full" rather than "half empty."	4.84	1.10	4.82	1.04
24. I look for the best in situations, even when things seem hopeless.	5.15	0.79	5.30	0.72
Thriving Quotient Mean Score	4.91	0.62	4.87	0.58
Thriving Self-Assessment (1=Not even surviving, 6=Consistently thriving)	4.28	1.32	4.32	1.31

ITEM	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
<i>Psychological Sense of Community Scale</i>	4.91	1.00	4.62	1.21
25. I feel like I belong in this program.	5.10	1.14	4.70*	1.38*
26. Being a student in this program fills an important need in my life.	4.88	1.13	4.66	1.30
27. I feel proud of the college or university I have chosen to attend.	5.19	1.10	5.10	1.37
28. There is a strong sense of community among the students in this program.	4.44	1.33	3.93*	1.61*
<i>Spirituality Scale</i>	5.26	1.01	5.04	1.26
29. My spiritual or religious beliefs provide me with a sense of strength when life is difficult.	5.37	0.99	5.30	1.12
30. My spiritual or religious beliefs give meaning and purpose to my life.	5.29	1.07	5.03	1.37
31. My spiritual or religious beliefs are the foundation of my approach to life.	5.10	1.19	4.78	1.60
<i>Institutional Integrity Scale</i>	5.01	1.09	4.97	1.23
32. My experiences at this institution so far have met my expectations.	4.98	1.18	4.87	1.38
33. The institution was accurately portrayed during the admissions process.	4.94	1.22	4.92	1.34
34. Overall, the actions of faculty, staff, and administrators at this institution are consistent with the mission of the institution.	5.11	1.13	5.13	1.13
<i>Friend and Family Support</i>				
35. My close friends encourage me to continue attending this school.	5.04	1.14	4.98	1.11
36. My family encourages me to complete my degree.	5.46	0.89	5.38	0.90
<i>Outcome Measures:</i>				
37. I am confident that the amount of money I'm paying for school is worth it in the long run.	4.51	1.32	4.25	1.54
38. I intend to complete my degree from this institution.	5.71	0.55	5.72	0.58
39. Given my current goals, this program is a good fit for me.	5.37	0.95	5.23	1.25
40. If I had to do it over again, I would choose a different institution. (R)	4.56	1.52	4.62	1.44
41. I enjoy being a student here.	5.18	1.02	5.02	1.35

LEVELS OF SATISFACTION

Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following: (1 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied)	CCCU Norms		Your Institution	
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
1. The amount you are learning in your classes.	5.13	1.01	4.90	1.32
2. The amount of contact you have had with your professors this year.	4.89	1.05	4.68	1.28
3. The interaction you have had with your academic advisor this year.	4.63	1.32	4.42	1.48
4. The quality of the interaction you have with faculty at this institution so far this year.	4.95	1.07	4.81	1.33
5. Professors' sensitivity to the needs of diverse students.	5.01	1.05	4.91	1.23
6. The degree to which your instructors include diverse perspectives in the curriculum.	5.03	1.07	5.02	1.22
7. Professors' encouragement for students to contribute different perspectives in class discussions.	5.08	1.07	5.07	1.28
8. The level of compassion your instructors have shown this year as you have faced challenges.	5.12	1.11	5.24	1.22
9. The level of service provided by university staff.	4.76	1.22	4.81	1.31
10. The kinds of interaction you have with other students at this institution this year.	4.87	1.06	4.46*	1.36*
11. The interactions you have had this year with students of different ethnic backgrounds.	4.95	1.06	4.71	1.49
12. Your current living situation.	5.10	1.05	5.08	1.12
13. Your current physical health.	4.60	1.25	4.52	1.33
14. Your current mental health.	4.65	1.22	4.68	1.31
15. Your overall experiences at this university.	5.08	1.06	5.00	1.29

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

ALL ITEMS ARE RATED ON A 6-POINT SCALE, WITH 1=NEVER AND 6=VERY FREQUENTLY. AN ASTERISK DENOTES SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES FROM THE NATIONAL NORMS.

How often this year have you:	CCCU Norms		Your Institution	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Connected with your academic advisor	3.79	1.27	3.36*	1.35*
Discussed career or grad school plans with a professor	3.05	1.57	2.66*	1.46*
Discussed academic issues with a professor	3.41	1.45	3.22	1.43
Conducted research with a professor	2.20	1.53	1.68*	1.11*
Connected with your instructors outside of class	2.36	1.53	2.27	1.40
Attended campus events or activities	1.86	1.33	1.83	1.23

CCCU SPIRITUAL LIFE ITEMS

CCCU SPIRITUAL LIFE ITEMS (Items are on a 6-point scale, with 1 indicating “never” and 6 indicating “very frequently”) <i>Any significant difference from the norms is denoted with an asterisk</i>	CCCU NORMS (N = 569)		YOUR INSTITUTION (N = 61)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
CCCU Spiritual Life Scale	4.67	1.23	4.50	1.34
I have experienced spiritual growth at this college.	4.69	1.33	4.46	1.59
My college helps me integrate my faith into my life.	4.83	1.32	4.76	1.39
My college has helped me explore my faith.	4.78	1.33	4.81	1.43
My college peers have positively impacted my faith.	4.35	1.41	3.95*	1.52*
The faculty and staff at my college have positively impacted my faith.	4.70	1.36	4.51	1.50

IMPACT OF SCHOOL ON RELATIONSHIPS

	Not Applicable		Significantly Negative		Moderately Negative		Somewhat Negative		Somewhat Positive		Moderately Positive		Significantly Positive	
	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst
Impact on:														
Spouse/partner	35.1	31.6	2.1	3.5	2.6	7.0	13.6	12.3	14.5	15.8	13.3	19.3	18.7	10.5
Relationship with children	34.3	53.4	0.9	5.2	2.3	5.2	11.7	8.6	14.0	5.2	15.9	10.3	21.0	12.1
Relationship with other family members	23.5	27.6	1.2	1.7	3.5	3.4	8.0	8.6	18.8	15.5	23.3	20.7	21.6	22.4
Relationship with friends	23.1	22.8	2.6	3.5	3.5	5.3	10.1	14.0	19.5	14.0	22.8	24.6	18.4	15.8
Co-workers	33.6	43.1	0.5	0	2.3	1.7	6.6	6.9	19.0	17.2	20.9	17.2	17.1	13.8
Relationship with boss or supervisor	31.2	39.7	0.5	0	1.6	3.4	6.8	5.2	20.4	10.3	20.0	20.7	19.5	20.7

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS

Item	Percent		Item	Percent	
	CCCU	Institution		CCCU	Institution
Gender			Number of Children		
Female/Woman	81.1	65.5	None	32.0	50.8
Male/Man	17.6	32.8	1-2	34.5	22.0
Non-binary (if institution included that option)	-	-	3-4	25.9	22.0
Prefer not to respond	1.4	1.7	5 or more	7.5	5.1
Sexual Orientation (if institution included)			Race/Ethnicity		
Straight (heterosexual)	92.2	89.7	African American/Black	14.5	8.5
Gay/Lesbian	2.2	-	Native American/Alaskan Native	2.8	6.8
Bisexual	1.1	1.7	Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	6.7	-
Prefer not to respond	4.4	8.6	White/European	42.5	61.0
Marital Status			Latino/a or Hispanic	23.6	15.3
Never married	36.4	35.6	Multiethnic	3.9	3.4
Married	44.8	44.1	Other	1.4	-
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	18.9	20.3	Prefer Not to Respond	4.6	5.1
Age:			Household Income		
Under 25	10.9	11.9	Less than \$30,000 per year	22.1	17.2
25-29	14.8	27.1	\$30,000 - \$59,999 per year	29.8	27.6
30-34	14.6	10.2	\$60,000 - \$89,999 per year	20.7	19.0
35-39	14.4	11.9	\$90,000 - \$119,999 per year	12.4	15.5
40-44	18.5	11.9	\$120,000 and over	14.9	20.7
45-49	9.6	6.8	Type of Program:		
50-54	10.3	11.9	Cohort program	60.2	40.7
55-59	4.6	3.4	Traditional undergraduate program	10.5	8.5
60 or older	2.5	5.1	Other	26.8	50.8
Percent who are Veterans	3.4	-	Percent who are First-Generation Students	53.3	25.4

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Face to face in the classroom on the main campus of my university		Face to face in the classroom at a regional center or off-campus site		Combination online and face to face on the main campus		Combination online and face to face offsite or on a regional campus		Online	
CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst
16.2	-	5.7	-	7.1	8.5	7.1	13.6	64.0	78.0

HIGH SCHOOL GRADES

Mostly A's		Mostly A's and B's		Mostly B's		Mostly B's and C's		Mostly C's		Below a C Average	
CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst
18.0	30.5	34.1	32.2	11.7	11.9	19.6	5.1	11.7	15.3	4.9	5.1

UNDERGRADUATE GRADES

Mostly A's		Mostly A's and B's		Mostly B's		Mostly B's and C's		Mostly C's		Below a C Average	
CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst
52.2	79.3	26.2	15.5	7.6.0	1.7	10.4	3.4	2.1	-	1.2	-

HOURS WORKED EACH WEEK

None		10 or less hours/week		11-20 hours per week		21-30 hours/week		31-40 hours/week		More than 40 hours/week	
CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst
8.6	11.9	5.6	8.5	7.9	11.9	11.8	8.5	34.6	27.1	31.6	32.2

CONSIDERING THE FINANCIAL AID YOU'VE RECEIVED AND THE MONEY YOU AND YOUR FAMILY HAVE, HOW MUCH DIFFICULTY HAVE YOU HAD SO FAR IN PAYING FOR YOUR SCHOOL EXPENSES?

No Difficulty		A Little Difficulty		Some Difficulty		A Fair Amount of Difficulty		Great Difficulty	
CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst
28.6	39.7	19.5	15.5	24.7	24.1	15.6	12.1	11.6	8.6

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE THRIVING AS A COLLEGE STUDENT THIS SEMESTER?
(THRIVING IS DEFINED AS GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE, SO THAT YOU ARE INTELLECTUALLY, SOCIALLY, AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY ENGAGED AND ENJOYING THE EXPERIENCE.)

Not even surviving		Barely surviving		Surviving		Somewhat thriving		Thriving most of the time		Consistently thriving	
CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst	CCCU	Inst
1.9	1.8	9.4	12.5	17.5	10.7	19.9	16.1	32.1	44.6	19.1	14.3

STUDENT COMMENTS

What has happened this semester that has led to your perception of whether you are thriving or not? (Student comments are copied verbatim in a separate file, with no editing)

See separate file.

PREDICTIVE MODEL

Due to a sample size less than 300, we could not create a predictive model of thriving for your adult students. We recommend that you begin to address your findings by examining the areas where your students scored significantly higher than the CCCU norms, as these are areas of institutional strength you can capitalize on to address areas of concern. Then focus on the areas where your students scored significantly lower than the CCCU norms, where there were significant racial differences, and where student comments indicate areas that warrant attention.

The predictive model for the total CCCU sample was able to explain 58% of the variation in adult student thriving. The only demographic characteristic that was predictive of thriving was students' high school grades, which was not as statistically significant as the major predictors of the variation in thriving listed below:

1. **Satisfaction with one's current level of mental health**—The top predictor of whether adult students are thriving is their satisfaction with their current mental health. Those who are experiencing mental health struggles find it challenging to thrive. Providing free or very low-cost counseling services that are easily accessible to adult students, such as through telehealth options, can address mental health crises. More importantly, proactive approaches that equip adult students with the coping skills to manage stress can prevent challenges from becoming crises. Incorporating wellness topics in the orientation to the degree program could be a helpful strategy, as could providing faculty development to raise faculty awareness of student mental health issues and how to respond to students in crisis, as well as how to teach in an inclusive manner that addresses not only students' intellectual needs, but also their spiritual and psychological needs. Advisors and staff who are attentive to mental health issues and can make appropriate referrals could also enable more adult students to thrive.
2. **Satisfaction with learning** – Adult students are often very pragmatic: they want to see the connection between what they are learning in class and what they need to know to be successful in their work or future career. The more faculty can actively engage students in the learning process and use authentic assessment that mirrors the demands of the profession, the more students will learn. We recommend providing faculty development opportunities that focus on engaging today's adult professionals through culturally-relevant and inclusive pedagogy, and particularly to intentionally include adjunct instructors in this professional development opportunity. Equipping faculty with the specific strategies for creating a successful virtual learning environment may be particularly important, if your adult programs are primarily delivered online.
3. **Spirituality** – defined as students' sense of meaning and purpose and the extent to which their spiritual or religious beliefs are a source of strength during difficult times and a lens through which they see the world and make decisions. Among adult

students, faith-learning integration in the classroom that clearly communicates respect for different faith traditions can enhance thriving, as can providing sacred spaces and opportunities physically and virtually for reflection and meditation. Additionally, sensitivity to differing faith traditions in course syllabi and messaging from the department can be helpful. Many adult students have not chosen their institution because of its faith-learning integration, so helping students understand that component from admissions through orientation and in each class could be helpful, as well. Incorporating spiritual wellness practices and opportunities in the curriculum may also be helpful.

4. **Sense of community in their program/department**—In adult professional programs, sense of community happens within students' program or department, not as much within the institution as a whole. Sense of community has four components: (1) **membership** – a sense of belonging (which is strongly tied to engaged learning in the classroom, as well); (2) **ownership** – having a voice, feeling that one matters and has a contribution to make; (3) **relationship** – positive emotional connections with others, opportunities to celebrate with one another, and frequently cross paths with one another; and (4) **partnership** – synergy, and working together on issues bigger than any single person could accomplish. Enhancing a sense of community within an adult professional program begins with orienting students to the academic and social environment of the program, so that they feel connected to their peers and to faculty within the program and are confident they can meet the demands of the program. Other ways of enhancing a sense of community within a program include using a cohort model, implementing a student advisory board, and examining the physical structure of the classrooms and areas where students interact to determine whether there are attractive gathering places for students and faculty to interact, as well as places for students from particular cultural backgrounds to feel at home. Because many adult programs are fully online, equipping instructors to build a sense of community in the virtual environment, through synchronous opportunities to engage as a cohort or class, as well as opportunities to meet faculty synchronously online, can be effective.
5. **Institutional Integrity** – One of the major contributors to a sense of community, that also directly predicts adult students' thriving levels, is their perceptions of institutional integrity: meeting students' expectations, portraying the degree program accurately during the admissions process (especially important for students of color and low-income students), and ensuring the daily actions of faculty, staff, and administrators are congruent with the mission of the institution. When students feel the institution (as represented by their degree program) is delivering on its promises, they are significantly more likely to feel they belong there. If they have negative perceptions of institutional integrity, they are not only less likely to thrive, but are also less likely to feel that the program is a good fit for them or to enjoy being a student there, and they are not as likely to say they would choose the institution again if they had it to do over.

6. **Satisfaction with peers from a different racial or ethnic background** – students’ satisfaction with the quality of their interaction with their peers of a different race or ethnicity is a significant predictor of adult student thriving. For adult returning learners, this peer interaction is happening almost exclusively in class, so equipping faculty (including adjunct faculty) to build a sense of community in the classroom and find ways of encouraging students to get to know one another better in their classes can be a helpful strategy. Learning how to engage in dialogue with others who are from different backgrounds is a key skill employers desire, so including these skills in the curriculum benefits students in multiple ways. When classes are held fully online, creating strategies for high-quality peer interaction as part of class assignments is vital.
7. **Encouragement of friends to continue attending this institution** – for adult students, the support of their friends often “keeps them going” when they encounter challenges of going back to school. Although this predictor is not under the control of the institution, talking candidly about the importance of social support to their success can be a helpful reminder to students that they are not alone in this endeavor.
8. **Frequency of interaction with faculty** – Directly predictive of adult student thriving is how frequently they interact with faculty outside of class. This interaction may include in-person or virtual office hours, connecting socially, talking with faculty about career or grad school plans, discussing academic issues, or doing research with faculty. When faculty create an atmosphere in the classroom that signals their approachability and personal interest in students, students are more likely to interact with them outside of class. Additionally, our research has shown that faculty who include diverse examples in their curriculum, welcome diverse perspectives in class discussions, and are sensitive to the needs of diverse learners are the faculty students are most likely to seek out—and the ones from whom students feel they are learning the most. Equipping faculty for inclusive pedagogy can be one of the best ways to help adult students thrive in the classroom.