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# Thrive 101: cultivating resilience, self-efficacy, and coping strategies for college student success

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Doctoral Project

# THRIVE 101:

# CULTIVATING RESILIENCE, SELF-EFFICACY, AND COPING STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS

by

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## DEDICATION

This doctoral project is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Diane Rice, who taught me to value the power, versatility, and brilliance of women. She modeled the importance of lifelong learning, finding opportunities to help others succeed, and that my potential as a woman has no limits. Her legacy continues to guide every step of my journey.

This work is also lovingly dedicated to my children, Neiley and Easton. May you find inspiration, joy in the pursuit of learning, and confidence in the boundless possibilities within you. My greatest hope is that you carry forward the values of curiosity, resilience, limitless potential, and that you always trust the strength within you.

To the college students who feel overwhelmed, uncertain, and still choose to show up. This program is dedicated to you. May Thrive 101 be a guide in your voyage of finding your inner resilience, place of belonging, and inner voice to persevere in following your dreams.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To my classmates from around the world, whose work strengthens our profession and impacts so many lives, it has been an honor to learn alongside you.

**THRIVE 101:**

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**COPING STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS**

**CINDY RIPP**

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ABSTRACT

Thrive 101 is a proactive, occupation-centered educational intervention designed to support emerging adults during the challenging transition to college. Grounded in evidence regarding the importance of resilience, self-efficacy, and experiential learning, the course equips first-year college students with practical coping strategies, resilience tools, growth in self-efficacy, self-awareness and guided opportunities to apply new skills in real time. Delivered through a hybrid model facilitated by occupational therapy students, Thrive 101 addresses common barriers to academic persistence by strengthening emotional regulation, social connectedness, executive functioning and adaptive routines. The program aims to enhance student's capacity to navigate academic, social, and emotional demands, promoting long-term well-being and success in college and beyond.

## PREFACE

I have had the privilege of working with bright, compassionate, and deeply capable students in an occupational therapy program, yet every year I witnessed a pattern that became impossible to ignore. Students who were exceptionally well-suited for our profession found themselves overwhelmed by the demands of rigorous coursework, financial responsibilities, and the broader transition into adulthood, who would question their ability to continue in the academic program. Not because they lacked dedication or hard work but because they lacked the tools and routines needed to navigate this intense and formative phase of life.

It became clear that there was a need for a program that could help students' resilience, self-efficacy, coping, and succeed. Thrive 101 emerged as a proactive, evidence-informed program for helping students with foundational skills for managing stress, building healthy routines, and understanding their own capacities. My hope for this program is to help students follow their dreams and flourish in this pivotal time and gain skills that will carry them through life.

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# CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

## Problem Description

The prevalence of psychological stress among college students is staggering and on the rise. According to the National Education Association, more than 60% of college students report at least one mental health diagnosis, representing a 50% increase since 2013 (Flannery, 2023). Students experience multiple stressors during college years, including balancing work, life, and school responsibilities, heavy academic loads, high achievement expectations, new adult roles, and creating new relationships. For a large percentage of students, this can lead to worsening mental health symptoms, and in some cases, academic failure and program dropout. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) found that 64% of students who had dropped out of college cited mental health as a reason for leaving. Similarly, Bestcolleges reported that more than three-quarters of college students experienced moderate to serious psychological distress, which correlates with declines in academic performance (Bryant & Welding, 2023). Graduate students are particularly vulnerable, with rates of depression and anxiety six times higher than those of the general population (Evans et al., 2018).

The problem addressed in this doctoral paper is the rising mental health concerns among Gen Z college students who display low levels of psychological resilience, coping skills, and self-efficacy. This author has designed a program called Thrive 101 to address these concerns among college students by introducing first-year students to strategies to strengthen resilience, enhance coping, and develop self-efficacy. The program will begin as a pilot program of sixty students with the intention of expanding to all first-year

students. Resilience has been shown to protect students against psychological stressors, enabling them to adapt to changes and take responsibility for overcoming challenges (Arria & O'Hara, 2023). Higher levels of resilience have been linked to reductions in depression and anxiety, while low resilience exacerbates vulnerability to stress. Self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to overcome challenges, is a critical component of resilience. Self-efficacy helps individuals reject negative thoughts about their abilities, persevere through stressful times, and has links to positive academic performance. Resilient students not only adapt well in the face of adversity or significant stress but can achieve an even greater level of functioning as a result (Arria & O'Hara, 2023). An adaptive mindset further supports resilience by enabling students to recover from adversity more effectively. Coping strategies provide practical tools for managing stress and contribute to the development of self-efficacy (Buizza et al., 2022). Together, resilience, coping, and self-efficacy form a triad of protective factors essential for student success.

**Why This Problem Matters**

At the individual level, low resilience can lead to a decline in a student's mental health and could change the trajectory of their life plan in devastating ways. Mental health challenges may prevent students from finishing their degree, securing employment, or achieving financial independence, while worsening their overall well-being. Colleges and universities across the country are reporting similar patterns of rising stress, burnout, and mental health concerns in diverse fields of study. In the higher education context, resilience encompasses more than just overcoming obstacles; it

involves developing the ability to thrive amid academic challenges, unfamiliar settings, and new responsibilities that are common to students, regardless of institution or demographic. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF-4) identifies health management as a domain that supports individuals in developing routines to promote wellness (AOTA, 2020). During the transition to college, shifts in daily structure, social roles, and new environmental demands often create occupational disruption or imbalance for college students and may interfere with the student's ability to sustain routines in self-care, sleep, work, leisure, and education. Mental health directly impacts performance in activities of daily living, including self-care, sleep, work, leisure, and education. Because occupational therapy is grounded in the importance of occupation and how habits, routines, roles, and environments can shape participation, occupational therapy students are uniquely equipped to help students restore balance in these areas. Teaching resilience skills provides students with health management tools that support self-care, wellness, and occupational participation. Wellness is defined as both physical and mental balance that can arise from health promotion efforts. According to OTPF-4, prevention, health and wellness, and quality of life are all essential outcomes that enable engagement in occupations such as health management, education, and work. Incorporating mindfulness and resilience training into occupational therapy curricula promotes holistic interaction of mind, body, and spirit, while reinforcing professional cornerstones such as evidence-based practice, lifelong learning, self-advocacy, and self-reflection.

Several factors contribute to the rising mental health concerns among college students, including:

- Imbalance of Attributes to Demand: Many students enter college without fully developed resilient behaviors, coping mechanisms, or strategies to manage stress, which can lead to heightened risks for psychological distress. Emerging adults may not have had prior opportunities to build self-efficacy or resilience before transitioning to higher education. Life autonomy and subjective well-being can enhance individual self-efficacy and self-regulation and strengthen psychological resilience (Song et al., 2024).
- Developmental Timing: Early adulthood coincides with the peak onset of many mental health conditions. This developmental stage is marked by identity formation, increased independence, and new responsibilities, which can exacerbate vulnerability to stress and mental health challenges.
- Increased Academic and Personal Demands: The transition from structured environments in school and home to the complex demands of college often exceeds students' ability to manage effectively. Limited self-efficacy and executive functioning lead to decreased problem-solving, time management, and growth-mindset development, which can further reduce opportunities for students to focus on self-care and wellness routines.
- Inadequate or Inappropriate Resources: Although counseling and supportive services are available on many campuses, stigma surrounding mental health can deter students from seeking help, which can result in a mismatch between available services and consequently lead to unmet mental health needs. Gen Z

often prefers to rely on peers or virtual platforms for support rather than participating in counseling sessions.

Given these multifaceted challenges, there is a need for a structured, evidence-based program that equips students with the skills and support necessary to foster resilience, coping, and self-efficacy.

**Proposed Solution: Thrive 101**

The proposed program, Thrive 101, is designed as a resilience-building, integrated into occupational therapy curricula, program that meets the mental health resource preferences of Gen Z students. Occupational therapy students will implement resilience programming to first-year college students as part of level I fieldwork. The program will provide these students with evidence-based knowledge and practical tools to enhance resilience, self-efficacy and overall mental health early in their academic careers to improve student attributes to managing demands. By fostering self-awareness, coping strategies, and self-efficacy, Thrive 101 aims to prepare students to manage stress effectively. Short term outcomes include measurable improvements in students' level of resilience, coping skills, and self-efficacy within the first few weeks of the program, demonstrated through validated resilience and perceived stress questionnaires and self-reported improvements in wellness routines. Intermediate outcomes reflect behavioral application of these skills, including more consistent wellness and self-care routines, engagement in mindfulness practice, and improved organizational habits, as evidenced by academic success, subjective reports during student interviews. Long term outcomes will be evident through academic engagement and persistence in courses with improved

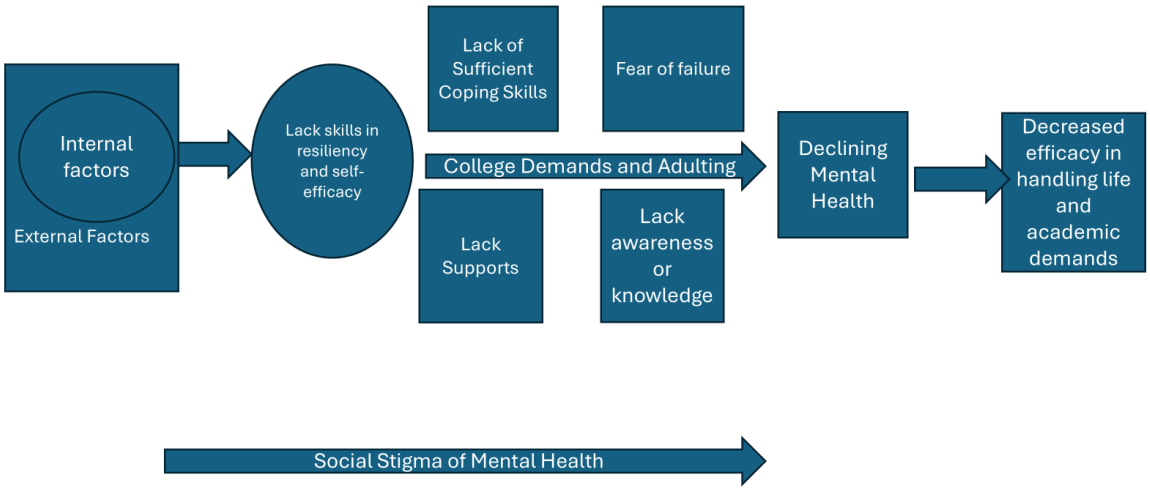
student retention through graduation, and the development of habits that will take them beyond their college program and into the workforce.

The implementation of Thrive 101 has benefits that extend beyond individual student outcomes to broader institutional and societal levels. At the institutional level, resilience programming can contribute to improved student retention, reduced dropout rates, and enhanced academic performance, thereby strengthening the reputation and financial stability of colleges and universities. Institutions that prioritize student mental health and resilience also foster a culture of belonging and support, which can improve faculty-student relationships and promote inclusive learning environments. At the societal level, equipping students with resilience, coping strategies, and self-efficacy prepares them to enter the workforce as healthier, more adaptable professionals who can manage stress and contribute productively to their communities. This ripple effect can reduce the long-term burden of mental health challenges on healthcare systems, increase workforce stability, and promote civic engagement. By embedding resilience training into higher education, Thrive 101 addresses not only the immediate needs of students but also the broader societal imperative to cultivate a generation of resilient, self-aware, and capable leaders.

## Chapter Two – Project Theoretical and Evidence Base

The transition to college is widely recognized as a pivotal developmental milestone, marked by profound changes in neurobiological, psychological, personal factors, and social domains. A visual explanatory model (Figure 1) was created to illustrate the problem of students entering college programs with insufficient levels of resiliency and self-efficacy to handle the increased demands of college, which can ultimately lead to worsening mental health.

**Figure 1:** Explanatory Model of Causal Pathway of Low Resilience in GenZ College Students




Before entering college, students' resilience and self-efficacy are shaped by a range of internal and external factors. Internal factors impacting student's resilience can include neurobiological and psychological factors that may alter the normal developmental timing and sequence of adolescence. These include puberty, epigenetics, and brain development, especially in areas of the limbic system, prefrontal cortex, and HPA axis. These areas of the brain help with self-regulation, impulse control, self-awareness, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and recall of emotional events that can foster

improved resilience (Nicholson, 2020). Once on campus, additional internal factors of poor coping skills, poor self-care, and insufficient time management can make the additional responsibilities of living independently, managing coursework, and finances feel overwhelming.

External factors further impacting a student's resilience include parenting styles, the quality of relationships outside the family group, role models, toxic stress, health disparities, pollution, poverty, education, bias and discrimination, and technological advancements. Parenting styles that are supportive, consistent, and protective can make the biggest difference (Weir, 2017). External factors can also extend in systems beyond the adolescent's main supports, including effective schools, neighborhood safety and opportunities, spiritual support, and public policy (Weir, 2017). Substance abuse may be a result of either intrinsic or extrinsic factors and further impede the development of healthy resilience. These factors may contribute to worsening mental health in adolescence even before the start of college, resulting in insufficient coping strategies as they transition into an unfamiliar environment with increased academic, social, and financial demands. The size of the college selected major, and relationship with faculty, may also influence a student's sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and confidence in managing these obligations. If some students have never had to assume the roles of self-care, IADL's, financial management, independent time management, and the added component of an unfamiliar environment, new relationships, and, in some situations, isolation. Social support may also be lacking and difficult to create, depending on these factors. Despite the high percentage of cases of students who experience moderate mental

health problems on college campuses, there is still a stigma around seeking mental health services or discussing problems openly. This is illustrated in the explanatory model as a continuous line to signify the magnitude of stigma. Aside from students who experience academic challenges in college, 76% experience moderate to serious psychological distress, 36% are diagnosed with anxiety, and 28% are diagnosed with depression (Bryant & Welding, 2024). The issue of insufficient support and resources serves as a moderator in this model. A Student Voice Survey from Inside Higher Education revealed that half the students on college campuses report mental health as fair or poor, and half of the students with mental health conditions have not accessed counseling services on campus (Flaherty, 2023). Faculty, advisors, and student mentors can also serve as campus support. Some research points to a lack of knowledge or understanding among faculty about methods for addressing the problem, or more likely, time constraints that restrict their ability to intervene (Wiest & Treacy, 2019). The Student Voice Survey also strongly indicated that students believe that faculty, advisors, and non-counseling employees on campus play a role in students' mental health (Flaherty, 2023). The focus on mental health may be more effective if geared toward teaching self-care and resilience tools rather than crisis intervention, as evidenced by the Student Voice Survey (Flaherty, 2023). These challenges can create a disproportionate imbalance between stressors and coping ability, resulting in decreased persistence in the goals established when entering college. A lack of coping strategies may include self-care, which includes proper sleep, nutrition, exercise, and leisure habits. Students may not be aware of relaxation techniques to help alleviate stressful feelings. The ultimate goal for a college student is success after

graduation. This may mean achieving graduation, securing employment immediately after graduation, continuing to graduate school, maintaining a specific GPA, or simply maintaining a healthy balance after completing a college program. Experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress in college can significantly change the trajectory of a student's future.

While insufficient resilience, or the adaptive response to negotiating challenges, and self-efficacy, or confidence in one's capability to execute actions, may stem from both internal and external influences, students with low resiliency often struggle to manage the academic pressures, stress, and responsibilities associated with college life. Over time, this imbalance of attributes to demand may result in increased mental health problems, which will then lead to poor success. This simplified model illustrates other moderators that may influence a college student's ability to manage all the responsibilities in college, including caring for oneself, responding to financial responsibilities, performing IADL's, and making time for academic work. These moderators include insufficient support on campus, fear of failure, inadequate coping skills, including self-care, and a lack of knowledge about which skills to develop or how to create change.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

In alignment with the explanatory model and the factors listed above, three main theories help understand the problem and provide guidelines for intervention. Together these theories show that student well-being is not solely an individual responsibility but a product of personal, social, and systemic factors. The Social Cognitive Theory, Social

Ecological Model, and the Transtheoretical Change Model all illuminate how both internal capacities and external conditions shape college students' mental health.

**Social Cognitive Theory**

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) considers the relationship between a person's personal characteristics, behaviors, and the environment to understand the factors that lead to positive or negative levels of resilience and self-efficacy. It emphasizes that learning occurs best within a social context through observation, modeling, and reciprocal influence of individual beliefs, actions, and environments which helps to mold a student's level of emotional resilience (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). For college students, prior life experience and learned coping styles influence their confidence and emotional resilience. Campus environments, socio-economic conditions, and social supports further modify behavior and well-being. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework, 4th edition, illustrates the importance of environmental and personal factors as influences in shaping how an individual participates in meaningful daily activities (2020). The environment can play a significant role in emotional well-being for college students who are living away from home for the first time and may not have the social support they are accustomed to. SCT highlights peer modeling, skill practice, and opportunities for mastery as key influencers for building self-efficacy and resilience (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

**Application of SCT to the Explanatory Model**

SCT develops a method to understand how the transition to college can affect students differently, considering personal factors and how individuals interact with their

environment. Personal factors may predispose an individual to low self-efficacy and resilience upon entering college. It also highlights the benefits of developing self-efficacy as a tool for students to advocate for themselves, seek help when needed, and exercise control over future events. SCT highlights the importance of peer instruction and modeling as a primary mode of implementing the tools offered by this program. The level of resiliency a student possesses can be influenced by self-efficacy, which helps students feel they are in charge of their own behaviors and outcomes. The second model used to explain factors of health and well-being and examine the decreased resilience of college students is the Social-Ecological Model. This model focuses on bi-directional interactions with an individual and the environmental factors that influence them. Like the SCT model, it helps explain the relevance of environmental factors, supports, programs, and other health-determining variables to an individual's emotional health and growth (Guy-Evans, 2024).

**The Social-Ecological Model**

Bronfenbrenner originated the social-ecological model, which is divided into five systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Guy-Evans, 2024). These systems are indicative of the internal and external factors described in the explanatory model that led to low resiliency skills. The microsystem is the most influential level and affects the adolescent directly through their immediate environment of family, peers, and school (Guy-Evans, 2024). The model positions the individual at the center of the cascading circle, emphasizing their unique demographic, physiological, behavioral, knowledge, and belief characteristics and how outside influences cascade

back to the individual and affect health, sleep, stress, and emotional development. Late adolescence and emerging adulthood, typically spanning ages 18 to 25, represent a critical period of physiological and cognitive development. An article in the National Academies of Sciences in Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), define this period as occurring from puberty until the mid-20's, noting that late adolescence is an especially opportune time for interventions that foster emotional resilience and self-efficacy due to the rapid neuronal changes in the brain, stages of brain development, and neural plasticity (National Academies of Science, 2019). This model acknowledges the interplay between science and genetics, but also the interpersonal factors that may delay puberty due to a lack of social support or environmental support, called epigenetics. The next outer circle around the individual is described as the microsystem, which directly affects the individual and includes factors such as the type of parenting, availability of role models, whether the adolescent was introduced to life skills, cultural beliefs about emotional health, stigma of self-help tools, and the types of peer groups they associate with. According to the text, supportive parenting is an important factor in increasing resilience during this period of life. If students are provided with opportunities for emotional growth and have positive role models to emulate, positive factors will result (Bonnie & Backes, 2019)

The next outer circle is called the mesosystem. The mesosystem has a less direct relationship with the individual but is based on how the microsystems relate to one another. This layer has secondary effects on the individual and may be an example of the experience and knowledge that college program instructors have in acknowledging and

providing emotional support to students. It can also encompass communication among different supports that reinforce a student's path, such as seeking help, making new friends, or consulting an instructor about a difficult lesson. The exosystem forms the next outer circle and highlights disparities in health that arise from socioeconomic factors, neighborhood resources, nutritional access, or health literacy. Local policies for safety, wellness resources in the community, health education topics in classrooms, and secondary school resources that help students where they are to encourage life skills, problem-solving, and health literacy. The presence of discrimination in the adolescent environment may also be influenced at this level. This area not only affects the amount of stress or positive growth that a student will experience, but factors like discrimination that have also been shown to negatively affect sleep qualities, which have a negative impact on psychological and physical health, academic outcomes, and can impact emotional development (NASEM, 2019). Access to healthcare, healthy activities, and welcoming environments are all part of this system. The exosystem is also the level of policies that determine the amount of mental health education that is offered in schools and communities, resources that are available, the media's portrayal of mental health, access to healthcare, insurance, and can extend as far as a state's assistance for students to enter programs in college designed to help with mental health. The macrosystem level includes government policies that affect access to, disbursement of, and allocation of funds to mental health services, as well as policies that aim to close gaps in health disparities and discrepancies that will ultimately affect individuals and groups.

**Application of the Social-Ecological Model to the Explanatory Model**

This model aligns well with the explanatory model by offering insight into the multiple levels of influence a first-year college student has in shaping personal identity and emotional resilience before arriving on a college campus. It helps to understand the additional factors on campus that can continue to plague an individual's development or support their flourishing. It endorses multilevel interventions including the importance of support, campus programs, instructor practices, community resources and policies, and systemic barriers that limit access of services for students.

**The Transtheoretical Change Model**

The third theory is the Transtheoretical Change Model (TTM), a behavioral change model. This model was originally developed to help individuals overcome addiction or problematic behaviors but is now used for adopting wellness routines and healthy lifestyles (Brookes, 2023). It is used as a reminder that individuals have different levels of insight into their own health, knowledge of the benefits of change, and readiness to implement solutions.

The six phases identified in this model are precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination. The authors define these stages as follows: precontemplation phase, in which individuals are not ready for change. They typically do not recognize that a problem exists or do not fully understand the implications for their health, success, or relationships. In the contemplation phase, individuals may begin to acknowledge that they lack the knowledge and skills but do not have the tools, confidence, or initiative to act. In the preparation phase, individuals are

willing to take the steps needed to make a change. The action phase is when the individual has a clear plan and is actively working to accomplish their goals. The maintenance phase is a period after an individual has adopted the changes for at least six months (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Prochaska also identified 10 processes of change indicative of cognitive and affective strategies that may help a person to advance through each stage. They include consciousness raising, dramatic relief, self-re-evaluation, environmental re-evaluation, self-liberation, social liberation, counterconditioning, stimulation control, contingency, and helping relationships (Prochaska, 2008). These processes can also be used to guide intervention and help individuals move through phases of readiness. The model includes acknowledgement of decisional balances that individuals must work through to make change, including understanding the pros and cons of implementing change. The last important piece was a description of core constructs to this model that include self-efficacy, which aligns well with the problem.

**Application of the Transtheoretical Change Model to the Explanatory Model**

This model helps to illustrate how difficult change can be, even when it is related to incorporating healthy behaviors. It serves as a guide for intervention, illustrating the stages students may be in when considering change and how ready they are to attend to learning or to commit to incorporating a changed behavior into their lifestyle. These concepts closely resemble the work occupational therapists do in assessing a person's ability to learn and designing activities and teaching to meet that level. Understanding where a student is in this cycle will help us determine the approach and actions that will lead to the most success. When using the transtheoretical model, participants are not

pressured to change their level t, they are supported and accepted at the stage they are at. This model supports taking a student-centered approach to change, understanding that every student will be at a different level of readiness.

**Overview of the Problem**

The prevalence of poor mental health in college students is staggering, and can be influenced by a lack of resilience, social support, coping skills, and self-efficacy. The explanatory model outlines the factors that lead to declining mental health in college students and consequences, such as a decreased ability to handle academic and life stressors. From this model, four questions were created to explore the relationship between factors as they specifically apply to college students. The questions further assess the relationships among the model's concepts to better understand the problem.

**Research Questions**

1. Is there evidence that increased psychological resilience leads to improved mental health outcomes?
2. Does social support contribute to increased psychological resilience among students?
3. Does a lack of coping skills lead to decreased psychological resilience among students?
4. Is there evidence that higher levels of resilience are associated with greater self-efficacy?

These questions were carefully constructed to identify the problem and to help identify potential solutions.

## Summary of the Evidence Base

A literature search was conducted using PubMed, APA PsycInfo database, the Boston University Library Database, and Google Scholar. The terms used for the search were college students, university students, resilience, coping skills, self-efficacy, social networks, social support, campus support, and academic success. Since the research focused specifically on students, born between 1997 and 2012, the inclusion criteria for publication dates were set to 2020 to capture a sample of students in their college years. Research from 2020 and beyond also captures the post-pandemic era, when students were starting to return to campus after disruptions to education, social development, and mental health. During this time, college campuses that had adapted learning to online platforms were considering other means of course delivery. Students in this age range share similar characteristics due to their contextual experiences and learning and communication preferences that help to guide college programming. Additional criteria for research are that studies were written in the English language, pertained to college students, were peer-reviewed, and included the specific details for each question. Studies that researched mental health stemming from a trauma or substance abuse source were also left out to maintain a general perspective of transitional mental health, without chemical or specific trauma sources.

## Psychological Resiliency Leads to Positive Mental Health

Articles related to the role of resilience in positive coping and mental health among college students overwhelmingly agree that higher levels of resilience lead to better mental health, but studies differ in how they define, measure, and explain that

relationship. Suhaimi et al. (2024) treats resilience as a general protective factor whereas Wu et al. (2020) describes resilience as the protective role of helping students bounce back and adapt to challenging life events and stressful experiences. This highlights the idea that resilience is a response to individual stressors rather than a personal trait. There was consensus among the findings that resilience helps students persevere, which positively supports some of the causal factors in the declining mental health of college students due to new adulting roles and academic pressures, as illustrated in the explanatory model.

The articles also identify the role of resilience in decreasing mental health symptoms (Arslan et al., 2023). Ansari & Iqbal (2025) found that higher resilience is linked to reduced anxiety, fewer depressive symptoms, and lower susceptibility to learning burnout, and that resilience plays a crucial role in mental health, enabling students to use coping strategies effectively as they navigate college to endure and thrive. Xu et al. (2024) showed that an increase in mental resilience was correlated with a decrease in the level of negative emotions. Li & Xie (2022) propose that individuals with high mental resilience are better able to adjust themselves and relieve mental pressure, while individuals with low mental resilience are more prone to anxiety and depression symptoms due to their poor ability to resist adversity. A low resilient mindset was associated with worse mental health (Arslan et al., 2023). Arslan et al. also introduced the concept of resilient profiles for individuals who have a resilient mindset, including a positive sense of belonging, trust in others, optimism, positive feelings, and self-efficacy (2023). Findings suggest that students with higher resilience scored significantly lower in

psychological distress indicators of somatization, anxiety, and depression compared to moderate and nonadaptive groups (Arslan et al, 2023).

There was consensus among the group on the positive role that psychological resilience plays in regulating and responding to negative emotions among college students but some differences in whether resilience is measured as a personal trait or a response. Most of the literature concluded that education promotes resilient behaviors, thereby improving overall mental health among college students. Individuals in resilient classes are more likely to trust others, receive more social support, feel belonging with their social environment, be open to new experiences, feel more competent, have higher self-worth, find meaning in life, and be optimistic with their lives and offset mental health difficulties such as depression, anxiety, and burnout (Healy et al, 2020). Understanding this overarching positive relationship between resilience and overall mental health provides the foundation for the explanatory model, and the next question will help to explore moderators within that equation. Together these findings suggest that psychological resilience is a critical protective factor for mental health among college-age students.

**Environmental and social factors contribute to psychological resilience.**

Social networks play a crucial role in the well-being and success of college students, offering emotional, academic, and professional guidance during their academic journey. Research indicates that a strong support system can help students manage stress, build resilience, and enhance self-efficacy, thereby improving mental health and academic performance but studies differed in which supports were the best for college

students. Dong et al. conclude that having social support tends to help students respond more actively and positively to stress, can reduce depression, and lead to improved resilience (2024). The research included all types of support, including campus support that may be composed of faculty, student organizations, counseling groups, peer mentors, academic advisors, and social supports that include family and friends. Despite the general consensus that family members played a pivotal role in offering emotional and financial support and facilitating students' resilience, there were a couple of studies that contradicted how family members contribute to students' resilience (Ang, 2021). Li‘s research focused on the resilience of disadvantaged students and demonstrated that teacher support, parental support, school belonging, and positive emotional experiences significantly influence the resilience of students (2024). Wang et al. (2025) highlights online social networking as a distinct resource for resilience for students for psychosocial well-being and found that it also helped increase resilience whereas Thannhauser et al. emphasizes the interplay between social-ecological systems and interpersonal support from family, friends, classmates, professors, and other university staff (2025). Ang et al., includes career services, wellness programs, and inclusive spaces where students can connect with others who share similar interests or challenges (2021). Resilience was also shown to mediate the relationship between social support and satisfaction with life and that both coping styles and perceived support are significant predictors (Yıldırım & Tanrıverdi, 2021). Yuan et al. found a significant positive correlation between social support and psychological resilience, suggesting that social support can facilitate an individual's ability to develop positive coping strategies and strengthen critical thinking

skills (2025). Gokmen took the opposite approach, asserting that socially excluded individuals have low resilience (2020).

It is important to consider social networking from both a contextual and interpersonal approach to fully identify its value for students. Environmental context plays a role in access to social networks on campus, including meeting spaces, accessibility, staff and faculty responsiveness, and the creation of a culture of inclusion. Hall explored a different aspect of social networking by highlighting how positive communication factors, environments people grow up in, their confidence in communicating, and the supportive communication perceived from friends and family as contributors to resilience (2021). Datta, focused on resilient levels for residential college students and those who commute and found that the data were comparable because of the available social networks in both circumstances (2024). Not only do the social networks provide support, but also the environment, campus inclusiveness, and a student's comfort in initiating correspondence with these supports can have a positive role in resilience. Due to the continued high numbers of mental health issues on campus, the question of whether there were adequate amounts of support became less important than whether there is the right type of support specific to the needs of college students.

These differences imply that interventions should be multimodal and include a variety of social supports. Creating a sense of belonging in classroom, providing campus support, and regularly advising students all support the premise that social support can increase levels of resilience, student achievement, and psychological well-being. By actively engaging with these resources, students can foster meaningful relationships and

develop coping strategies that support their overall growth and success, thereby increasing resilience. Based on the current evidence, it can be concluded that environmental and social factors play an important role in psychological resilience.

**Coping skills lead to psychological resilience.**

Literature supports the idea that coping skills lead to improved psychological resilience. Wu (2020) describes a reciprocal relationship where coping and resilience influence each other whereas Borato (2023) describes coping as a protective mechanism that builds resilience. When students use positive coping skills and experience success, they are more likely to continue using these skills to overcome challenges and build a sense of resilience from this benign cycle. Several authors make the important distinction between positive and negative coping styles when identifying the relationship to resilience (Wang et al, 2025) (Dong et al, 2024). Positive coping focuses on taking effective action and changing stressful situations, typically associated with problem-solving behaviors and regulation of positive emotions, which can help reduce the incidence of depression (Dong et al., 2024). Students who choose healthy, constructive coping skills help adapt to challenging situations and persevere. This positive cycle can then lead to improved resilience. Undergraduates with a higher level of resilience demonstrate flexible coping mechanisms and utilize a variety of coping techniques (Wu. 2020, p7). Arslan linked coping skills to students with high levels of positive emotion (2023). Those students are more likely to use positive coping strategies when faced with adversity, thereby building greater levels of resilience. Liu examines the positive effects of physical activity as a coping activity that can successfully increase resilience (2024)

and focuses on yoga as a mechanism for stress management and deeper resilience (2025). In these examples, both resilience and coping mechanisms can be mediators to positive mental health.

It is important to clarify that negative coping strategies like procrastination, avoidance, or substance use would not be associated with higher levels of resilience. Fullerton (2021) asserts that greater resilience attributes are beneficial for students' physical health by reducing the tendency to use avoidant coping strategies. These negative strategies may be associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression and lower levels of resilience. Specific coping strategies may have different effects on resilience. Dunn reminds us that students experience depleting factors such as stress, internal conflict, and time/energy demands that are dynamic and can affect a student's resilience and ability to cope in his model, termed the coping reservoir (2008). The above research examines the relationship between positive coping mechanisms and increased resilience, and how they can both be used to help students persevere and manage stressful situations. Based on the current evidence, coping strategies play an important role in psychological resilience.

**Higher levels of psychological resilience improve the self-efficacy of students to manage the demands of college.**

This question was divided into two parts to effectively establish the relationship between resilience and self-efficacy and to determine whether greater self-efficacy results in better management of college demands. Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual can accomplish difficult work or challenging tasks and achieve their goals (Qin, 2023),

and it is an important cognitive mediator of students' academic performance (Garcia & Velazquez, 2020). Students with self-efficacy are motivated to take on more complicated tasks, which increases engagement, motivation, and perseverance (Liu, 2024). Sufficient levels of self-efficacy give students beliefs of expectation value, which allow them to anticipate their actions and emotions in different academic situations (Garcia & Velazquez). Self-efficacy and resilience alone have been shown to be effective in helping students combat the effects of stress. Both of these personal characteristics allow students to persevere despite hardships. Ting has found that individuals with higher levels of regulatory self-efficacy can better express positive emotions and enhance their mental resilience in the face of stress (2022). Self-efficacy and resilience have also been effective mediators working together for positive mental health and adjustment and have a positive relationship to one another (Qin, 2023, Rosario, 2023) whereas Ting et al. (2022) describes more of a causal relationship of students with self-efficacy traits are able to demonstrate resilience. Students with high self-efficacy engage in coursework, are willing to take on challenges, are motivated to persevere, and achieve better academic success (Freire et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is considered a powerful motivational, cognitive, and affective determinant of student behavior, involvement, effort, persistence, self-regulation, and achievement. Academic self-efficacy is a key to academic success and an important factor affecting students' stress (Qin et al., 2023).

The literature review points to self-efficacy as a personal trait that leads to greater resilience, but research often presents both characteristics as having benefits for student mental health, college performance, and work, and as synergistic. Greater self-efficacy

can lead to greater resilience, and in turn, students who possess resilient characteristics may be empowered to have self-efficacy. Based on the current evidence, both resilience and self-efficacy are characteristics that positively influence mental health among college students and can have a reciprocal relationship.

**Summary**

The literature shows consistent correlations to the explanatory model linking higher resilience with lower psychological distress and better coping (Arslan et al., 2023; Ansari & Iqbal, 2025; Xu et al., 2024; Suhami et al., 2024) and links social support from family, peers, faculty, campus services, and online networks to greater resilience (Ang et al., 2021; Dong et al., 2024; Yuan et al., 2025; Thannhauser et al., 2025; Wi, 2021) as shown in the explanatory model. Findings commonly emphasize that students with higher resilience report better coping mechanisms and adaptability when encountering academic and socio-emotional stressors (Sameer et al., 2025) and that a high level of social support correlates with a high level of resilience (Yuan, 2025). Findings also demonstrate that resilience comes from a dynamic interplay between personal skills, attitudes, and the resources available within a student's community (Thannhauser, 2024). A multitude of supports, including teacher, parental, and peer support, foster a feeling of belonging which provides positive emotional experience for students, while fear of failure significantly negatively affects resilience (Li et al., 2024) (Ang et al., 2021). These findings support the current theoretical frameworks that support the notion that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to levels of resilience and self-efficacy in students. These findings help to direct programming for college campuses by illustrating

important factors in mental health. Despite attempts to use research exclusively focused on students at four-year institutions, a few studies did include samples that differ from the target population including older students in a first-year cohort, students at international campuses, and community college attendees.

The evidence justifies a multimodal campus program that combines online skill building, peer and faculty support, and education about coping skills and self-efficacy for students as they enter college. A pilot program for first year students would be appropriate to make initial adjustments in delivery and content. The focus and formatting of this program make it appropriate for all students to attend, but special considerations for students with traumatic backgrounds, serious underlying mental health diagnoses, and students with physical disabilities may be made. Accommodations may include coordination with college success centers, additional time to complete the program, and alternative formatting. While strengthening resilience is also a goal for these students, the intervention to achieve that goal might look different in its intensity and might require that individuals with clinical skills be available to deliver it on an ongoing basis.

## Chapter Three – Overview of Current Approaches and Methods

Despite rising rates of mental health challenges among college students, only half access traditional mental health services (Flaherty, 2023). Higher education institutions are under pressure to identify programming that equips students with tools to build coping skills, resilience, and self-efficacy. Historically, university counseling centers were the cornerstone of support for all college students. The effectiveness of these programs is difficult to determine but research does support the stigma around mental health, preference for online or instant access, and long waiting lines are a barrier to meeting with counselors who are located on campus. According to the 2022 Healthy Minds study, 65% of students sought help for emotional or mental health concerns, and over half reported that their academic performance was negatively affected by emotional stress (Mowreader, 2023). The capacity of professional services to provide one-on-one support is limited (Worsley, 2022; Abrams, 2022, & Flaherty, 2023). Even when mental health interventions are available, counseling centers often face high student-to-counselor ratios, one counselor for every 914 students, according to Mowreader (2023). Moreover, Gen Z students may find traditional counseling models unrelatable or ineffective. Module two highlighted the benefits of resilience training in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. However, not all campuses offer such programs, and those that do vary widely in format, length, and content. Some classes are embedded into first-year courses, while others are stand-alone offerings. This inconsistency makes it difficult to determine which approaches are most effective. The goal of this module is to identify evidence-based strategies for designing impactful resilience programs and to clarify which topics,

delivery methods, evaluation methods, and durations best support student mental wellness and academic performance. This synthesis examines evidence-based interventions, assessments, and design considerations to inform the development of resilience programs tailored for Gen Z college students.

To explore the current approaches and methods for integrating resilience and self-efficacy into first year college curriculum, a literature review was conducted to answer the following:

1. Is there evidence to determine what interventions are most effective to increase resiliency in college students?
2. Is there evidence to support resilience program design and delivery that best meets the needs of Gen Z college students?
3. Is there evidence to support the best type of assessments for resiliency programming on college campuses?
4. Is there evidence to support best interventions to increase student self-efficacy?

**Search Strategy**

To identify best practices in resilience and self-efficacy programming, the author completed a literature search using PubMed, APA PsycInfo database, the Boston University Library Database, and Google Scholar, and searched college websites to identify current programs to determine the best interventions to build resilience and self-efficacy, the most effective program delivery format, and to find the best type of assessments. Once programs were identified, the author conducted a thorough review and

attempted to contact program developers via Zoom, email, or telephone to obtain more information about specific programming. Some college programs were developed by clinical psychologists or PhD-level educators in higher education and underwent formal review, while others were grounded in evidence-based research. To identify relevant studies and interventions, the author commonly used search terms aligned with population; college students, university students, Gen Z, higher education, outcome; growth mindset, student well-being, mental health, and interventions; social networks, social support, campus support, academic success, resilience programs, intervention assessments, coping skills, learning preferences, and self-efficacy programs. Since the research focused specifically on Gen Z students, who were born between 1997 and 2012, a criterion for inclusion is that publication dates must be from the year 2019 to the present. College programs created prior to 2019 were reviewed to determine if delivery remained applicable to Gen Z and if material had been updated to reflect current college students' needs. Additional criteria for inclusion were that the studies were written in the English language, pertained to Gen Z college students, were peer-reviewed, and included the specific details for each question. The specific program materials shared with this author were developed by professionals in the field of psychology who worked directly with students in higher education. Information was also gathered through college manuals designed for student teaching and articles written on the specific topics of study. Studies that focused on the general population of college students in the U.S. or other countries were the focus of study, and studies that looked at specific groups of students, such as students with chemical dependence or specific trauma sources, were eliminated. Specific

program evaluation focused on timeliness, relevance, and authority to ensure that the author responsible for creating the program had expertise or credentials adequate for the design of the program.

## Effective Interventions to Increase Resiliency

The American Psychological Association defines resilience as the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. Research consistently supports a multilevel framework for resilience programming in higher education that integrates both internal skill development and external support (Ang et al., 2022). While specific interventions vary, effective programs tend to emphasize behavioral flexibility and the capacity to adjust to both internal and external demands. A shared emphasis across the literature includes executive functioning, positive effects, and social networking, though the mechanisms for cultivating these capacities differ. Some programs highlighted the benefits of cognitive flexibility, growth mindset, adaptive coping strategies, and critical thinking skills (Arria & O'Hara, 2023), while other programs included interventions to increase self-esteem, optimism, and social support (Akeman, 2020). Research consistently emphasized two broad pillars: social networks and strength-based internal regulation strategies.

### *External Support*

Programs consistently highlight the importance of fostering emotional safety, connection, and belonging through peer instruction, campus resources, and faculty-led

initiatives (Ang et al., 2022; Worsley et al., 2022). Empowering students to access social, emotional, and informational support enhances their capacity to navigate stress (Aupperle, 2024; Fullerton et al., 2021). If colleges aim to prepare students to navigate life's complexities with resilience and responsibility, they should frame challenges as opportunities for growth, offering support as scaffolding rather than as a shield (Mitz, 2025). The ability to form connections, attachments, and relationships is fundamental to building resilience, and resilience interventions comprising skills that enhance social competency are statistically significantly larger than those without (Ang et al., 2022; Fullerton et al., 2021). Specific programs such as Penn State Resilience in College Students (Positive Psychology Center, 2025), highlight communication strategies that help students build strong relationships and effective teams as one of the basic resiliency skills in their program.

### *Internal Skill Building*

Across institutions, strength based approaches that increase resiliency were utilized and included a wide range of interventions that fall under self-regulation through mindfulness, cognitive reframing, active coping strategies, and cognitive behavioral strategies (Ang et al, 2022; Cooper & Kadir, 2020; Worsley et al., 2022; Mowreader, 2023) also referred to as emotional based coping strategies (Cooper & Kadir, 2020). Self-regulation techniques were also frequently mentioned in the literature as a means of fostering resilience by enabling students to focus on the positive aspects of their experience and reducing their subjective sense of stress (Ang et al., 2022; Aupperle, 2024). Mindfulness interventions were found to be effective for improving depression

(Worsley et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024; Sha et al., 2024; Yusufov et al., 2019, Mowreader, 2023; Akerman et al., 2019) and enhanced psychological resilience (Zhang et al., 2024, Sha et al., Aupperle, 2024). Conversely, some studies found that improvements in depression and anxiety were not sustained over time, with mindfulness interventions, cognitive behavioral therapy, and coping strategies being more effective (Worsley et al., 2022). This supports the assumption that the tools learned in this program will be utilized and practiced to sustain positive behavior over time. Programs such as Penn State and the University of Tulsa integrate these strategies into structured interventions to promote self-awareness, problem-solving, and emotional regulation. These programs were shown to reduce students' psychological responses to acute stressors (Aupperle, 2023). Others, such as Lynn University and TMU Thrive teach students about resilience through visually interactive content (Cooper & Kadir, 2020; Aupperle, 2023). Other studies add specific topics related to self-regulation and mindfulness, including self-care skills, food and mood, physical activity and exercise, self-compassion, and empathy in relationships (Mowreader, 2023). Contemplative practices, including meditation, reflection, deep listening, and yoga, were less frequently mentioned but may be worth considering alongside more traditional classroom activities, as they can contribute to learner resilience by fostering skills to manage stress, build relationships, and cultivate focus (Goralnik & Marcus, 2020). These findings indicate that programs that combine internal regulation strategies with external social support are more effective in improving resilience.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Research in Resilience Interventions**

Across the literature, there is consistent evidence that interventions that improve executive functioning, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and mindfulness can meaningfully enhance resilience among college students. Evidence is particularly strong in demonstrating that these skills are most effective when embedded within supportive networks in combination with external environmental resources. Programs that integrate mindfulness with active coping and peer-based engagement show the most robust outcomes, suggesting that resilience-building is amplified when delivered in relational, community-oriented settings.

Despite these strengths, the evidence base has notable limitations. Methodological variability, ranging from inconsistent intervention designs to diverse outcome measures, makes it difficult to compare findings across studies to determine which components are most impactful. Additionally, many studies rely heavily on standardized assessments that do not fully capture the complexity of the college student experience or the contextual factors shaping resilience. This resilience limits the field's ability to draw conclusions about program efficacy. To address these gaps, the proposed program will incorporate a multimethod evaluation strategy that includes both quantitative indicators of skill development and qualitative insights into student engagement and perceived relevance. This approach strengthens the ability to assess student responsiveness, understand differential impacts, and refine programming based on real-time feedback.

Understanding the needs of Gen Z students and researching evidence-based delivery options are vital to developing a program that builds resilience and self-efficacy.

Gen Z students have characteristics in common that influence programming and teaching strategies.

**Motivational Strategies Through Course Design and Interface**

Gen Z students grew up in a digital era, have access to multiple data sources at once, and learn best by doing or observing (SeeMiller & Grace, 2017). Gen Z students are concerned with mental health and finding meaning in life, and they want to have a positive influence on society (McCuskey & Zhang, 2021; SeeMiller & Grace, 2017). Research shows that short, targeted interventions work best for Gen Z students, and that attendance is highest when a variety of in-person and online activities are provided. Gen Z students learn best when information is relevant but get diverted by distracting information that is unrelated to their situation (Goldberg, 2022; SeeMiller & Grace, 2017). Online programs that offer engaging interfaces that present information in a variety of contexts, such as interactive graphs, human body pop-up material, or embedded videos, make the material more engaging to students and are well attended by Gen Z students. Visual-based intervention provides a new and effective alternative to the text-based intervention (Cheng et al., 2021). The Thrive TMU program created a video game featuring avatars and characters that help students navigate stressors (D. Brecher, personal communication, August 28, 2025) and has been found to be well utilized. Gen Z students appreciate organized online information that is engaging, and they also enjoy collaborating with others in a face-to-face context. The individual nature of technology has helped Gen Z become comfortable and accustomed to learning independently, but they also enjoy collaborating once they have worked out a problem (SeeMiller & Grace,

2017).

**Program Design and Delivery**

Research on program design and delivery reveals a range of effective methods, though no single format or duration consistently outperforms others across all contexts. Skill-training programs that include supervised practice are significantly more effective than those without it (Worsley et al., 2022), a finding that directly supports the development of self-efficacy, as guided practice allows students to experience mastery and receive corrective feedback. Mindfulness-based interventions show positive outcomes for resilience when implemented for at least two weeks, with longer-term programs yielding greater reductions in anxiety (Worsley et al., 2022; Yusufov et al., 2019). Both short- and long-term interventions reduce anxiety and perceived stress compared to control groups, but relaxation training is notably more effective when delivered over a longer duration. Because reduced anxiety is associated with improved emotional regulation, these formats indirectly bolster resilience, enabling students to recover more effectively from academic and social stressors. Longer exposure allows students to internalize coping strategies, reinforcing both resilience and self-efficacy through repeated successful use of skills.

In terms of format, hybrid delivery models that blend in-person and online components appear particularly well-suited to strengthening resilience and self-efficacy because they balance structured skill practice with flexible, student directed engagement. They are generally preferred over fully virtual formats, which tend to suffer from poor attendance and limited impact on depression and anxiety (SeeMiller & Grace; Harrer et

al., 2019). In-person sessions provide opportunities for guided practice, peer connection, and immediate feedback, conditions known to enhance mastery experiences, a core driver of self-efficacy. Conversely, some students favor twice-weekly online meetings, which allow for more intentional self-care and practice between sessions which allow reflection time and space to integrate coping into daily routines which is critical to resilience development (Nardi et al., 2022). Interventions were more effective when delivered through a mixture of didactic and dialectic approaches (Ang et al., 2022). Programs embedded in a course, series of courses, or offered for credit were more equitable for students and could be offered to a wider range of incoming college students which further promotes resilience by reducing structural barriers to participation (Hirshberg et al., 2022; Cooper, personal communication). Courses offered outside of or in addition to typical academic requirements may inadvertently exclude students with work or caregiving responsibilities and risk competing with core academic responsibilities (Hirshbert et al., 2022). Examples of embedded models are Lynn University, which integrates soft skills into its Dialogues of Learning core curriculum, ensuring all students benefit without added scheduling burdens (P. Cooper, personal communication, September 2, 2025), and the University of Tulsa, which builds four sessions into orientation classes (Akeman et al., 2019). The University of Wisconsin's Student Flourishing Program offers a semester-long experience for first-year students that fosters sustained engagement. Research supports the inclusion of reflection time between meeting dates to help students integrate information into their daily lives and practice (Mejia-Downs, 2020). Ultimately, programs share similar goals but vary in delivery,

structure, and focus.

The literature highlights three common design principles that best support Gen Z learning of resilience strategies. Information is best received when taught through a hybrid delivery model to ensure in-person practice time, student networking, and practice. In-person sessions should be spaced to allow for reflection time to incorporate information into real life. Online material should be personal, interactive, and visually engaging through brief modules. Collectively, these design features create a learning environment that repeatedly exposes students to mastery, reflection, social modeling, and supportive feedback, the mechanism which resilience and self-efficacy are built.

**Strengths and Weaknesses in Program Design**

Literature consistently affirms that implementing any form of programming, regardless of duration or delivery method, is preferred over no intervention. Considerable discrepancies exist across studies regarding program length, structure, and modality. The variability presents a methodological limitation, as no definitive evidence supports one over another; drawing conclusions about format is challenging. Nonetheless, the research offers valuable insights into the preferences of Gen Z and provides general guidelines for effective delivery strategies.

**Methods of Assessing Resilience**

To ensure the effectiveness, equity, and contextual relevance of resilience programs for college students, assessment strategies must be carefully selected to gather meaningful, relevant data. The literature highlights the complexity of determining the

best assessment due to the variety of resilience definitions, contextual influences unique to college students, variation in assessment formats, and the lack of standardized approaches.

Quantitative research uses standardized measures to track results over time, but it does not identify a single standardized assessment best for assessing college student resilience. Since resilience can be defined and measured in different ways, caution is needed when choosing an assessment that may oversimplify resilience or narrow indicators of resilient behavior, which may limit overall findings (Quinlan et al., 2016; Fullerton et al., 2021). Fullerton agrees, stating that inconsistencies in the way resilience has been conceptualized have hindered a unified approach to its measurement (Fullerton et al., 2021). Conversely, Rudd et al. offer a different view, stating that researchers must decide how to reduce the components of academic resilience into a single variable or statistical model (2021). The differences in resilience definition and usage (trait, process, or outcome) make determining the best assessment difficult and may ultimately shape the findings they present (Rudd, 2021). Most standardized scales take a trait-like approach, focusing on characteristics within the individual, and may miss situational variability and contextual influence (Fullerton et al, 2021). Conceptualizing resilience as a trait limits our understanding of how people respond in different situations. The view that resilience is a process by which personal resources or protective factors interact in the context of some adversity has become increasingly favored (Fullerton et al., 2021).

Recent investigations into resilience assessments have identified three consistently used, psychometrically sound tools (Linden et al., 2022). These assessments

are the Academic Resilience Scale (ARS-30), Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). These tools vary in scope, depth, and applicability, especially for post-secondary populations. While many assessments exist, few are tailored to college students or have been widely validated due to cost and accessibility constraints. The ARS-30 is effective in exploring resilience as a process, through hypothetical academic scenarios, as opposed to outcome or specific traits, and identifies aspects of resilience based on students' specific adaptive cognitive-effective and behavioral responses to academic adversity (Simon, 2016, Linden et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024). The scenarios are beneficial for college students to identify behaviors under academic stress but are limited by their context-specificity and would not apply to resilient lives outside the university (Linden et al., 2022). Use of this tool would provide a deeper understanding of the influence of demographic and contextual factors on academic resilience, but it lacks the scope to assess resilience outside a college setting. The CD-RISC is most used in recent literature and assesses personal competence, tenacity, self-belief, tolerance of negative affect, positive acceptance of change, relationships and personal control (Connor and Davidson, 2003). Akerman et al. (2019) add that the CD-RISC assesses stable beliefs rather than specific skills and focuses more on trait resilience. It is well-suited for student use, due to the holistic nature of the questions, despite being created for other contexts (Linden et al., 2022). The Brief Resilience Scale is frequently used as a screening tool that focuses on an individual's ability to "to bounce back from stress," but it does not comprehensively assess the holistic concept of resilience and is often too brief to yield meaningful results. The BRS

may be applicable in assessing resilience initiatives among post-secondary populations at a basic level but may leave broader elements of resilience unmeasured (Linden et al., 2022).

Qualitative assessments focus on non-categorical, observational, or narrative data and provide more in-depth information about student perceptions and personal growth (Giancola, 2021; Akerman et al., 2019). They can be conducted through interviews, reflective journaling, and non-standardized testing to gain specific insights (Park et al., 2024). Qualitative investigations allow researchers to explore participant's subjective experiences, investigate participant's perceptions, identify patterns within an individual's lived experiences, and develop hypotheses to inform future work and theoretical development (Nardi et al., 2022).

A mixed-methods research approach appears to offer the most effective means of capturing both measurable outcomes and lived experiences of first-year college students enrolled in a resiliency program. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, this approach provides a comprehensive evaluation of the program's efficacy. Quantitative evidence can support changes over time while qualitative measures illuminate students' perceptions of barriers, support, and personal growth.

**Strengths and Weaknesses in Resilience Measures**

Current research on resilience measurements offers valuable insights but is notably sparse. A key strength lies in the growing interest in resilience programs across a multitude of contexts, providing studies for reference. The difficulty is that there are too many resilience measures, and they are often limited in scope. The proposed resilience

program will be utilized and measured with the college population but is designed to provide resilience skills well beyond the college atmosphere and into adulthood. Often, research mentions these resilience assessments but does not elaborate on the rationale for choosing each measure or it specifically markets a measure for efficacy. It appears that a mixed-method approach using standardized and qualitative measures is most effective for obtaining the best information about program efficacy. Perhaps designing a quantitative measure that would encompass the intended values would be most valuable.

## Topics that Improve Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy in college students is shaped by a dynamic interplay of personal, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Cultivating self-efficacy goes beyond encouragement; it involves fostering a growth mindset, providing meaningful learning experiences, and scaffolding support to help students develop the skills and strategies necessary to navigate academic and personal challenges (Timmo, 2023; Davis, 2023).

### *Personal Factors*

Bandura's social cognitive theory positions personal mastery as an important construct in the development of self-efficacy (Constantine et al., 2019). Central to this process is intrinsic motivation, which arises from the need for competence and self-determination (Goldberg, 2022). Effective interventions for self-efficacy consistently target confidence, persistence, growth mindset, self-regulation, adaptive learning behaviors, and intrinsic motivation. Research highlights that growth mindset and intrinsic motivation are critical for task engagement and persistence, both of which drive mastery

(Constantine et al., 2019; Goldberg, 2022; Buddington, 2025; Sooyeon & Park, 2024; Cheng et al., 2021). Instruction in growth mindset has been shown to improve academic engagement and goal-directed behaviors in first-year students (Buddington, 2025; Sooyeon & Park, 2024, Patterson, 2022; Cheng et al., 2021) and enhance mental health outcomes, including treatment-seeking motivation, emotional regulation, and reduced avoidance (Buddington, 2025; Cheng et al., 2021). Students with high self-efficacy view challenges as opportunities, setting and committing to goals, attribute failure to lack of effort or practice, and increase their effort to overcome setbacks. Emotional self-awareness, self-care, and coping strategies also shape self-efficacy (Davis, 2023; Garrrido, 2025). Ultimately, cultivating a growth mindset can reshape students' attitudes, motivations, and long-term outcomes (Cheng et al., 2021).

### *Interpersonal and Environmental Factors*

Bandura's foundational theory of self-efficacy identifies four key sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional and physiological states (Constantine et al., 2019). These constructs are particularly relevant in educational settings where interpersonal and environmental factors shape student's beliefs about their capabilities. Recent research highlights the importance of course design and learning environments that intentionally foster these sources of self-efficacy (Wei et al., 2022; Withy & Hargraves, 2019). Blended learning environments that incorporate group work, peer instruction, instructor support, and classroom connectedness offer students opportunities to observe others, engage in collaborative problem-solving, and receive timely feedback, each of which contributes to a supportive

learning environment with social connection. Performance expectancy and peer modeling further reinforce students' belief in their ability to succeed (Wei et al., 2022). Scaffolded tasks, mastery-oriented scenarios, and time for reflection and application promote mastery experiences, while personally relevant content enhances intrinsic motivation (Goldberg, 2022). Instructors and peer mentors play a pivotal role in this process by offering concise, immediate feedback and modeling coping strategies and self-awareness, which support emotional regulation and resilience (Davis, 2023; Wei et al., 2022; Withy & Hargraves, 2019). Learning environments that demonstrate empathy, inclusiveness, and psychological safety have shown positive results in students' behavior, self-esteem, motivation, and academic success (Goldberg, 2022).

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Self-efficacy**

Collectively, the literature agrees on the importance of intrinsic, interpersonal and environmental factors in cultivating self-efficacy. Course design and curriculum design that thoughtfully consider the student's lens, organized content, appropriate challenges, and opportunities for mastery can create transformative learning experiences (Wei et al., 2022;). While research on growth mindset interventions in college settings remains limited and potentially underutilized, existing studies suggest strong correlations with improved self-regulation, academic performance, and retention. Available research on growth mindset is often outdated or focused on non-collegiate populations. Although much of the research focuses on adolescents and adults, the developmental trajectory of college students suggests similar benefits. The current gap in applying the growth mindset specifically to resilience and self-efficacy in higher education presents a

compelling opportunity for innovation and inclusion in this program.

**Evaluative Summary**

Recent research has identified several key components for designing effective resilience programs tailored to college students. These include leveraging social networks and peer support systems, incorporating intentional time gaps between learning modules to facilitate reflection and integration, and utilizing hybrid instructional formats that combine online content with in-person experiential learning. Effective interventions consistently integrate coping strategies, resilience-building exercises, and mechanisms to enhance self-efficacy.

Evidence-based practices suggest that resilience programming should emphasize cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness, self-regulation, and adaptive coping skills. The research suggests that embedding such content within credit-bearing on-campus courses like freshman seminars promotes equitable access and sustained engagement. A bi-weekly in-person schedule may allow students to cultivate social connections, engage in reflective practice, and apply learned strategies between sessions (Mejia-Downs, 2020). Instructional methods that blend didactic teaching with dialectical engagement, like facilitated discussion and structured reflection, have demonstrated greater efficacy than lecture-only approaches, especially for Gen Z students (Ang et al., 2022).

To complement in-person learning, digital platforms should deliver concise, engaging content aligned with weekly themes. Online interfaces must be intentionally designed to foster intrinsic motivation, with clear expectations established at the outset.

Course materials should be modularized into small, engaging units that incorporate video content, interactive learning management systems (LMS), and immersive technologies such as virtual reality to optimize engagement among Gen Z learners. Self-efficacy is further reinforced through thoughtful course design, timely instructor feedback, peer modeling, and opportunities for mastery. Activities that promote independent problem-solving, personal accountability, and constructive feedback contribute to holistic student development, cultivating life skills that extend beyond academic achievement (Mintz, 2025).

The imperative for resilience programming is underscored by rising mental health concerns among college populations, persistent stigma surrounding help-seeking, and students' preferences for digital and socially connected learning environments. Programs that utilize coping strategies and self-efficacy not only support mental well-being but also align with the broader educational mission of preparing students for adulthood and civic life (Mintz, 2025). While wellness initiatives are essential, institutions must recognize that true empowerment stems from fostering resilience and self-efficacy, not merely offering accommodations. A growth-oriented framework equips students with psychological tools to navigate life's complexities with confidence and adaptability. Its inclusion represents a critical opportunity for innovation in program design, offering a pathway to enhance academic performance and personal development among college students. These findings will guide the creation of a one-credit resilience course designed for first-year college students.

# Chapter Four – Description of the Proposed Program

The author's proposed program is a proactive educational intervention designed to equip first-year college students with essential coping strategies, social networking skills, and self-regulatory tools to foster resilience, a growth mindset, and self-efficacy, thereby promoting positive college experiences and lifelong adaptability. Grounded in evidence-based practice, the course instruction will be delivered by occupational therapy students, completing their level I fieldwork, under the supervision of a faculty member from the OT department. Thrive 101 offers a peer-led model that integrates clinical knowledge with social modeling. The course will be offered in a hybrid format, combining one in-person session per week with complementary online materials that support experiential learning, reflective practice, and skill application.

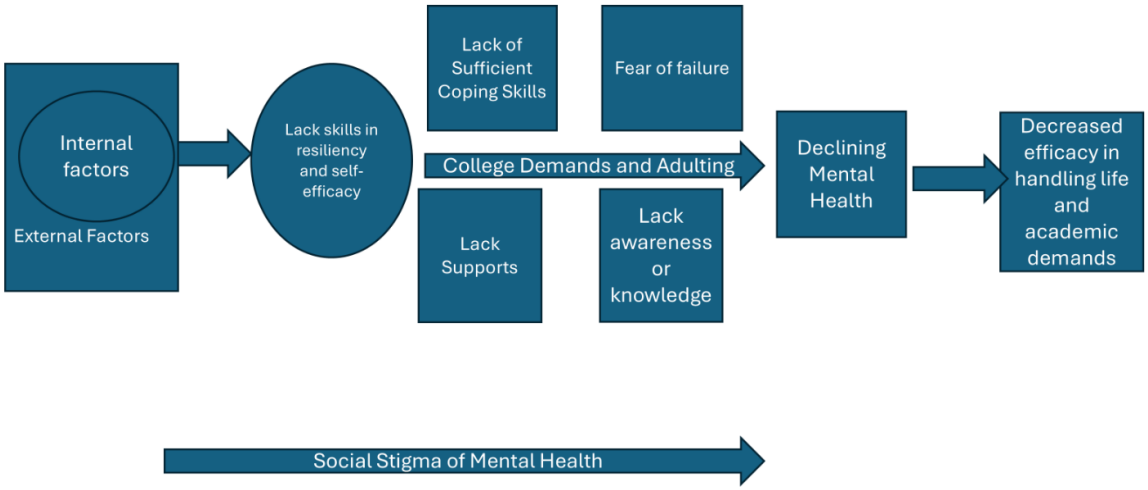
## Explanation of the Issue

Rates of depression and anxiety among college students continue to rise, highlighting the urgent need for proactive mental health support. While many colleges have introduced mental health programs in recent years, these vary widely in duration and approach. Emerging adulthood is a period marked by rapid change, and often students struggle to adapt to new academic and personal demands, leaving them especially vulnerable to stress. Recent studies reflect this growing concern with 65% of students reported seeking help for emotional or mental health issues, and over half said stress negatively impacted their academic performance (Mowreader, 2023). Another study found that three out of four students experienced stress that impaired their ability to learn

and concentrate (Flaherty, 2023). These findings reflect a broader trend in higher education: students are struggling to meet the demands of college and experience stress that impacts academic success.

To truly prepare students for adulthood, colleges must reframe challenges as opportunities for growth, offering support that fosters resilience rather than shielding students from difficulty (Mitz, 2025). Research supports a multilevel approach to resilience programming, combining internal skills building with external support systems (Ang et al., 2022). Effective programs highlight emotional safety, peer connection, and a sense of belonging, delivered through peer instruction, campus resources, and faculty-led initiatives (Ang et al., 2022; Worsley et al., 2022). Strength-based strategies such as mindfulness, cognitive reframing, active coping strategies, and cognitive behavioral strategies have been shown to enhance self-regulation and reduce perceived stress (Ang et al, 2022; Cooper & Kadir, 2020; Akeman et al., 2020; Worsley et al., 2022; Mowreader, 2023; Cooper & Kadir, 2020). These tools help students focus on the positive aspects of their experience to build the emotional resilience needed to thrive. Recalling the explanatory model (Figure 1) that explains the multiple factors that impact student's mental health.

**Figure 1:** Explanatory Model of Causal Pathway of Low Resilience in GenZ College Students




## Theoretical Framework

The design of Thrive 101 is grounded in three complementary theoretical models: Social Cognitive Theory, the Social Ecological Model, and the Transtheoretical Change Model. Together, these frameworks emphasize the dynamic interplay among personal attributes, environmental contexts, and behavioral readiness, key factors that influence students' mental health and academic success. These frameworks shape specific components of the program's structure and delivery by guiding how the course is organized, how occupational therapy students facilitate learning, and how first year students build resilience and self-efficacy through repeated practice and reflection.

Social Cognitive Theory informs the program's skill building activities, peer modeling, and guided practice. In the on-campus sessions, OT students demonstrate coping strategies, organizational tools, and wellness routines to give participants opportunities to observe, imitate, and practice these behaviors with supportive feedback.

The online modules reinforce mastery experiences by allowing students to revisit content at their own pace, strengthening their sense of personal autonomy and confidence in managing life stressors.

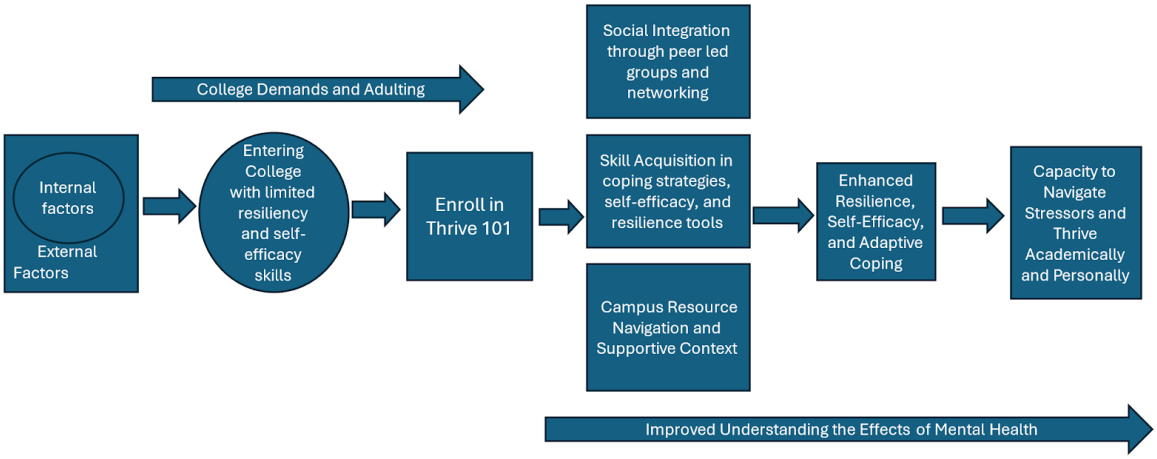
The Social-Ecological Model broadens the lens to encompass multiple layers of influence, from the individual to the institutional, reinforcing the need for integrated support systems across campus (Guy-Evans, 2024). This model shapes the program's emphasis on multi-layer support and campus integration. Thrive 101 acknowledges that students' resilience is influenced not only by individual skills but also by their social networks, campus culture, and access to resources. This model informs portions of the program like connecting students with campus support, embedding the course within academic structures, and using OT students as peer mentors who help bridge individual needs with institutional support.

The Transtheoretical Change Model provides a roadmap for behavioral readiness, helping tailor interventions to students' stages of change and promoting sustainable growth over time (Brookes, 2023). It is used to meet students where they are from just beginning to adoption of new healthy routines and behaviors. This model informs the pacing of the hybrid curriculum, the use of reflective prompts, and the scaffolding of weekly challenges that help students progress from awareness to action to maintenance. It also aligns with occupational therapy's emphasis on assessing readiness, adapting tasks, and supporting incremental behavior change.

Utilizing these theories, the anticipated outcomes of the information and practice sessions that Thrive 101 will deliver will lead to improved mental health and the ability

to manage stressors.

**Figure 2:** Revised Explanatory Model to Reflect Student Participation in Thrive 101




## Stakeholders

### *Micro Level*

At the micro level, Thrive 101 directly benefits first-year students and the occupational therapy students and faculty who deliver the course. The program creates a reciprocal learning environment where both groups strengthen resilience-related knowledge and applied skills. For first-year students, the program will provide education and experiential learning in a supportive environment, enhancing their understanding and application of resilience, self-efficacy, and coping strategies as they transition to college. The secondary benefit is that students will have these highly desirable attributes to bring to the workforce for a successful future. The OT student facilitators bring a unique blend of empathy, clinical insight, and human-centered thinking to campus resilience. Thrive 101 offers an opportunity to deepen their understanding of these concepts as they

translate evidence-based strategies into meaningful learning experiences and strengthen their interpersonal skills through group facilitation. A secondary benefit is that students will have experienced real-life experiences to bring to clinical practice.

### *Meso Level*

Meso-level stakeholders include faculty who are involved with first-year students, student affairs professionals, academic advisors, health science faculty, program directors, mental health counselors, and disability accommodation specialists. Their collaboration ensures effective implementation and sustainability of Thrive 101. The key benefits to faculty and student support staff are improved engagement with students who are emotionally regulated, proactive, and academically prepared. Counseling and crisis response services will have reduced strain since students will be aware of campus support, they may be more likely to seek help and address problems earlier. The class will provide a smoother transition into college and will take the burden off the campus mental health offices. This program will also highlight the benefits of occupational therapy and improve its visibility on campus. Ultimately, the institution will benefit from improved retention, academic performance, and holistic student development. The campus will gain a scalable, evidence informed model that strengthens retention and student success.

### *Macro level*

Macro-level stakeholders include external stakeholders outside the college, such as future employers, advisory board members, and other institutions interested in the

research findings. Thrive 101 will generate evidence-based information to support other institutions in starting a program. For employers, the program cultivates foundational skills that support emotional regulation, interpersonal skills and stress management. These qualities can reduce burnout and enhance workplace engagement. Advisory board members and external entities may view Thrive 101 as a model for on-campus mental health support and intervention for college students.

## Practice Scenario

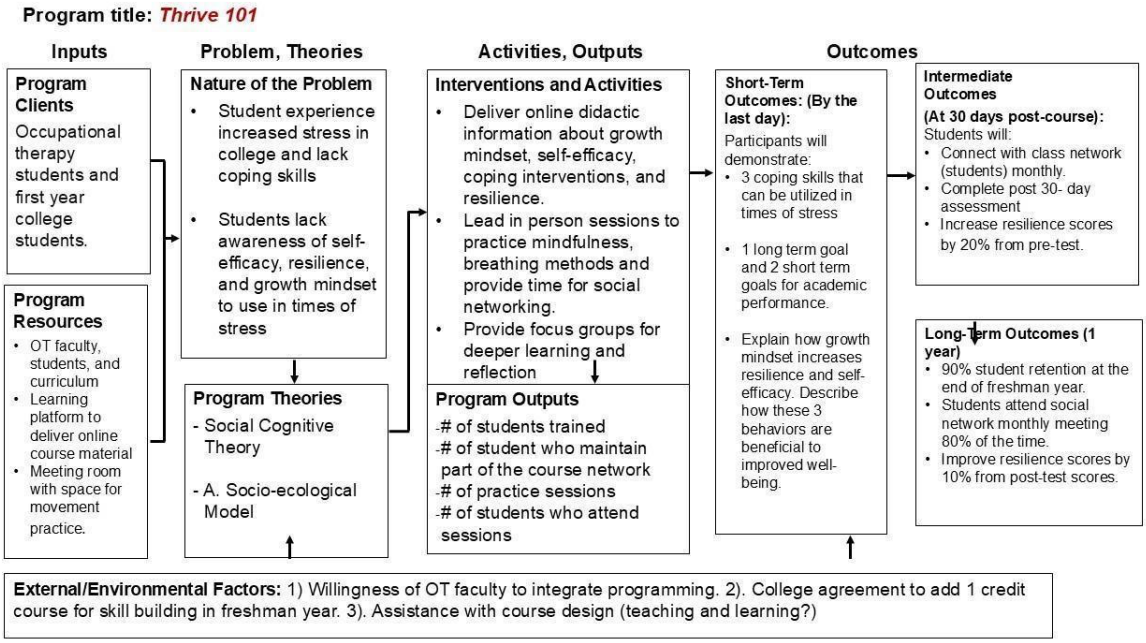
Neiley is an 18-year-old, first-year biology major who transitioned from a small rural town to a large university in an unfamiliar city. She moved into a dorm with a roommate who disregards her need for personal space, and Neiley is struggling to adjust. Despite being a high-achieving high school student, she is overwhelmed by the fast-paced academic demands of college and is struggling to find meaningful social connections. She struggles with time management to get her schoolwork done, has not been sleeping or doing her regular exercises, and the feelings of isolation and anxiety are beginning to take hold. Neiley begins to question her ability to succeed in college and is considering withdrawing from her program. She reaches out to her appointed advisor, who informs her of a one-credit course offered to first-year students, and that her struggles can be common among students entering college.

### *How the resilience program will help*

Academic advisors are often the first to identify students who are struggling academically and Thrive 101 will offer support for students with emerging concerns to

prevent students from reaching a crisis point. From an institutional standpoint, Thrive 101 targets factors that may lead to student withdrawal due to low sense of belonging, poor self-efficacy, difficulty navigating expectations and stress challenges. Thrive 101 is a proactive, rather than reactive approach that can strengthen institutional retention efforts. Thrive 101 will offer students a structured, supportive environment where they can connect with other first-year students who may be experiencing similar stressors. Students will be introduced to practical coping strategies for managing stress and receiving guidance in building weekly routines that balance academic responsibilities with self-care from occupational therapy students. They will engage in activities that foster a growth mindset, helping her reframe academic setbacks as opportunities and increase self-efficacy by creating achievable goals that lead to mastery experiences. Ultimately, the program will empower them to navigate college life with greater resilience, confidence, and connection.

**Figure 3:** Logic Model




The logic model provides a visual framework that illustrates how the components of Thrive 101 work together to achieve its intended outcomes. It clarifies the logical connections between the program's inputs, activities, outputs, and anticipated short- and long-term outcomes. By mapping these relationships, the logic model demonstrates how evidence-based interventions such as mindfulness, coping strategies, and social connection strengthen students' resilience and self-efficacy. It serves as both a planning and an evaluation tool, ensuring that each program component aligns with the course's theoretical foundations and desired impacts. Thrive 101 will integrate these evidence-based strategies into a structured, one-credit college class tailored to the learning preferences of Generation Z, who have grown up in a fully digital world. While Gen Z learners are adept at independent, tech-enabled learning, they also value collaboration after initial problem-solving (SeeMiller & Grace, 2017). Thrive 101 will be offered in a

hybrid format to meet the needs of students with online education that is reinforced with on-campus meeting times. The goal of this program is to empower students with practical knowledge and to assess their ability to manage stress effectively and thrive in college.

**Main Aims/Objectives:**

1. Improved student retention with 85% of health science students returning for sophomore year.

2. Students will improve resilience indicated by a 15% improvement in scores on pre- and post-test using the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale.

3. Students will decrease utilization of emergency on-campus mental health support by 30%.

**Program Participants and Resources**

Thrive 101 is designed for first-year college students and will be offered as a one-credit class during the spring term. Students will be introduced to the course content, hybrid format, and research objectives during the fall term by academic advisors or core faculty and sixty students will be chosen for the intervention group in the first-time pilot program. All students will have the opportunity to participate in the research component to provide a comparison group and will provide informed consent during that time.

Program instruction will be led by occupational therapy students completing their level I fieldwork under the supervision and guidance of an occupational therapy faculty member. These students will have completed foundational coursework in general

psychology, neuroscience, and psychosocial occupational therapy, equipping them to deliver this course. As part of fieldwork preparation, they will also receive training in research and data collection and will work to organize the in-person program logistics. The online course will be standardized and used consistently across cohorts to ensure equity for all students.

Thrive 101 will be delivered in a hybrid format tailored to the learning preferences of learners, emphasizing flexibility, interaction, and multimodal engagement. The online modules will be accessed through the college's learning management system and made available to students at the start of the term. The course will include a weekly in-person class session held on campus in the occupational therapy lab and the adjacent outdoor space, weather permitting. These sessions will focus on experiential learning, including mindfulness practice, coping strategies, and growth mindset exercises, while fostering peer connections through collaborative group work. Each class will begin with large-group practice, then transition to smaller focus groups for deeper discussion and reflection. Students will be expected to have access to a computer and note-taking devices. Handouts will be provided during in-person sessions, and printing will be completed through the occupational therapy department. Programming dissemination will occur through multiple channels and at different periods. Occupational therapy students will present findings at state-level conferences, and a proposal will be submitted for inclusion in the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) annual conference following the first cohort's completion. College faculty and stakeholders will receive regular updates via email, and the health science program directors will be informed of

progress, challenges, and outcomes during monthly meetings. The research goals will be to inform program updates and to share findings with other institutions for consideration of implementation. The college's long-term goal is to expand Thrive 101 to all first-year students outside health science programs. After successful implementation, the occupational therapy faculty will share findings with the academic leadership council, citing its demonstrated benefits to student mental health, engagement, and teaching sustained practice habits.

**Interventions and Activities**

Thrive 101 is a six-week course that will consist of short, asynchronous weekly modules paired with a two and a half hour in-person session per week to total fifteen contact hours for a one credit course. Online content will include video lessons, webinars, and readings to introduce learners to coping skills, mindfulness, goal setting, time management, a growth mindset, social networking, and cognitive-behavioral tools. The in-person sessions will emphasize experiential practice, group collaboration, and focus group work. Weekly homework will involve practicing learned strategies and completing brief journaling assignments. Handouts will be provided to support in-class activities.

The Thrive 101 curriculum guides students through six themes that build student’s resilience and self-efficacy, beginning with self-awareness and stress management, then fostering a growth mindset, mindfulness, and adaptive coping skills. The program emphasizes social connection and campus support while including executive cognitive skills for organization, prioritization, and weekly planning to help students thrive in academic performance.

**Table 4.1**

*Sample Curriculum*

| Week | Theme | Virtual Module | In-Person Activities |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Foundations of Self-Awareness, Resilience and Self-Efficacy | Understanding stress, self-awareness, neuroplasticity, and the science of resilience. Introduce the resilience wheel. Complete online pre-intervention questionnaire | Focus group introductions, icebreakers, exploring college stressors, healthy and unhealthy methods of reacting. Explore the three polyvagal responses. Resilience and Neuroplasticity: video and focus group discussions. Examples of neuroplasticity in both physical and mental health. Revisit the resilience wheel. **Focus Group prompt**: Discuss the resilience wheel and rate areas and define areas for growth. Handout: Resilience Wheel |
| 2 | Growth Mindset | Growth Mindset vs Fixed Mindset, self-talk that supports resilience. Brief explanation of neuroplasticity changes in the brain that occur with growth mindset and other resilience activities. | Students will work in focus groups to create examples of how effort leads to outcome and challenge vs avoidance. Group work will consist of reframing activities of negative self-talk with growth mindset statements. **Focus group prompt**: Reflect on a time that you grew from a demanding situation. Handout: Reframing Prompts |
| 3 | Mindfulness | Explore mindfulness and meditation. Formal practice vs Informal Practice. Breathing exercises and scripted imagery will be explored. | Practice mindful breathing, body scan, mindful activities. Explore self-compassion as a resilience tool. Practice gratitude. **Focus group prompt**: Choose one activity that you are fully present and name two things for which you are grateful. Handout: Reflection sheet for writing down grateful prompt and activity. |
| 4 | Coping Skills and | Identify maladaptive vs adaptive coping. | Practice grounding exercises, deep breathing, mindfulness, exercise, or relaxation techniques. Practice |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Emotional Regulation | Benefits of having coping tools.<br>Common examples of coping skills | emotion labeling and regulation strategies.<br>Create a personalized coping toolkit. **Focus group prompt**: Discuss coping strategies that work for you. Handout: Coping Toolkit |
| 5 | Social Networks and college support | The benefits of social connection and networks in creating resilience and sense of belonging. | Explore campus support, establish peer buddy.<br>Ice breaker activity with peer buddy. Role in creating a positive environment for yourself and others on campus. **Focus group prompt**: Discuss social support on campus and activities that you can do to help cope with pressures at school. Handout: Campus map, meeting times for peer networking |
| 6 | Goal Setting, organization, and executive functions | The importance of goal setting to increase mastery and organization, role of executive functions in creating peace. Understand intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation.<br>Complete post-assessment online | Practice SMART goal writing.<br>Create a weekly schedule, learn prioritization and planning strategies, incorporating areas from the resilience wheel.<br>**Focus group prompt**: What is one main goal you are creating for yourself? What are barriers to achieving that goal and how can you overcome them? Handout: Smart goal sheet |

Each class will include 30 first-year students, supported by 8 occupational therapy students, 1 full-time faculty member, and a teaching assistant or adjunct professor. The first half of each session will be conducted as a large group, followed by breakout focus groups of 6 to 8 students. Occupational therapy students will rotate teaching responsibilities in pairs, ensuring each student leads one session and assists in another. Focus groups will be led by two occupational therapy students to allow time for

observation, data collection, and support. Faculty members will circulate to supervise, mentor, and instruct as needed. Prior to implementation, the program will utilize a train-the-trainer model to ensure consistency of delivery among adjunct staff and students. The training will be set up to cover aspects of the course and to fully describe the activities that are the pillars of the course to ensure service competency.

**Program Outputs and Outcomes**

The initial sample of students for this study will include two classrooms of thirty first-year students, which will enroll in the resiliency program during the spring term. A total of 60 students will be enrolled in the Quasi-experimental control study, with half of the sample (n=60) attending one of two cohorts in the spring and the control (n=60) only completing the assessment measures. The classroom sample of students are assumed to reflect the general population with no significant intellectual or demographic characteristics differences and represent the general population of first-year college students at a college or university. Inclusion criteria include: (a) first year college students, (b) non-clinical population, and (c) English as the primary language.

Each week, students will receive one educational handout aligned with the weekly module themes and will maintain their own journal for exercises and reflection. Supplementary materials will be available online for download or printing, while in class time they will focus on experiential activities and discussion. This structured, skills-based intervention is designed to promote self-regulation, coping strategies, and emotional resilience, protective factors shown to reduce psychological distress and improve academic functioning. By equipping students with these tools early in their college

experience, the program aims to increase overall resilience, support college retention, and reduce reliance on on-campus emergency mental health services. These outcomes will be evaluated through pre- and post-intervention measures, offering insight into the program's effectiveness in fostering long-term student well-being and academic success.

**Measurable Change Time Frame**

- Short Term Outcomes: 6 weeks (end of program). By the conclusion of Thrive 101, students are expected to demonstrate increased knowledge and awareness of resilience and stress response, growth mindset, coping skills, self-efficacy, and the importance of social networks. These areas are expected to improve through each module but more specifically by the end of the course. Both qualitative and quantitative tools will be used to measure improved resilience and perception of stress which will illustrate the culmination of these areas.
- Intermediate Outcomes: (30 days post completion of class). It is anticipated that students will continue to engage with resilience practices introduced during the course, applying strategies such as mindfulness, cognitive reframing, and structured goal setting to their daily routines. Further growth will be reflected in increased self-efficacy, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced coping strategies when faced with academic or social stressors. Standardized scores in resilience and perceived stress measures will also capture quantitative improvement in these areas.

- Long-term Outcomes: (1 year post completion of program). Students are expected to demonstrate sustained improvements in physical, cognitive, and emotional functioning. Reductions in chronic health symptoms such as anxiety and depression will be noted with a decrease in campus mental health visits. Increased retention rates and academic persistence, and reduced course withdrawal would also be strong indicators of sustained improvement.

## Anticipated Barriers and Challenges

### *Personnel*

Implementing Thrive 101 may pose challenges related to staffing since the program will depend on occupational therapy faculty and students for Level I fieldwork delivery, which may increase faculty workload and supervision needs. To address these barriers, programs can be educated on how Thrive 101 aligns with ACOTE standards and supports teaching, assessment, and mental health integration. Emphasizing its relevance to program outcomes and its value in strengthening faculty expertise and student preparedness can enhance adoption and sustainability.

### *Student Leaders*

Occupational therapy students may not feel confident teaching or fully grasp the material presented. To mitigate this challenge, faculty could mentor students in areas of deficit and scaffold learning experiences to build self-efficacy. Peer-pairing strategies could also promote student accountability by having one student model teaching for the other, with the roles then reversed. This approach would utilize collaborative learning and

peer modeling to build competency.

### *Institutional*

Introducing a one-credit course into the curriculum may raise concerns about credit load and resource allocation. These issues can be addressed by connecting the course's relevance to college students' mental health, retention, and academic success. Thrive 101 directly supports campus-wide wellness initiatives and contributes to college student well-being, which may make the institution more attractive to prospective students. Furthermore, the course would have minimal space and resource needs with digital platforms for hybrid delivery already in place through the college's learning management system, and the space would be limited to the occupational therapy lab. These factors support cost-effectiveness and the implementation of Thrive 101. The last potential problem is student attendance and performance.

### *Student Engagement*

Students will be motivated to attend if the class promotes both internal and external motivators. The environment must foster community and create a sense of belonging. Students will be paired with peer buddies who will increase accountability of attendance. The class material must be relevant and applicable to the students' needs. The class can promote weekly practice topics to alleviate stress or improve performance in class, thereby motivating students. The class will also have a grade attached to attendance and participation which will help increase external motivating factors.

## Summary and Conclusion

Thrive 101 is a one-credit hybrid resilience course designed for first-year college students enrolled in health science programs. It integrates virtual education with once-weekly in-person experiential sessions to foster emotional regulation, self-efficacy, resilience, and social connection. Thrive 101 directly addresses the escalating rates of anxiety, depression, and academic stress among college students by offering a structured, evidence-informed intervention rooted in developmental theory and occupational therapy practice. Guided by the Social Cognitive theory, Transtheoretical Change, and Social-Ecological models, Thrive 101 is facilitated by occupational therapy students during Level I fieldwork. To ensure these design elements translate into measurable impact, the next chapter will present an evaluation plan outlining how Thrive 101 will be assessed.

# Chapter Five – Program Evaluation Research Plan

Thrive 101 is a one-credit educational course designed to equip first-year college students with essential social networking and coping skills to foster resiliency, a growth mindset, and self-efficacy for a positive college experience and beyond. Grounded in evidence, course instruction will be delivered by occupational therapy students completing their level I fieldwork. Thrive 101 will be offered in a hybrid format, combining one in-person session per week with complementary online materials that support experiential learning and skill application. Evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach to assess pre- and post-course measures of resilience and perceived stress, along with short interviews and observational assessments throughout the in-person sessions to determine the effectiveness of the material and guide revisions.

## Intended Users of Evaluation Findings

Program evaluation findings from Thrive 101 will offer meaningful insights for each stakeholder group that will improve the type of support they provide to first-year college students.

**Table 5.1**

| Stakeholder Group | Primary Evaluation Interests | Anticipated Use of Findings | Role |
|---|---|---|---|
| Occupational Therapy Students | Effectiveness of their teaching strategies, how engaged students are, and what instructional methods are most effective. | As a learning tool to strengthen teaching and facilitation skills, to refine curriculum, to support their professional growth to meet course objectives, and to evaluate their contributions to student outcomes. | Peer Educator |
| Occupational Therapy Faculty | Both Quantitative and Qualitative Assessments to gain in depth information to guide curriculum modifications. | Enhance efficacy and relevance through changes in curriculum design, delivery methods and instructional strategies | Decision Makers |
| Faculty | Summary of overall findings and areas of high impact or concerns. | Provide student support and feedback on issues that affect students most. | Informational |
| Advisors | Summary of overall findings and areas of high impact or concerns. | Provide appropriate guidance and student referrals | Informational |
| Student Affairs | Summary of overall findings and areas of high impact or concerns | Gain an understanding of students' needs to inform campus initiatives and resources for mental health, engagement, and retention. | Decision Makers |
| Campus Administrators and Advisory Board Members | Summary of Findings and Areas of Course Effectiveness | Justify funding and resource allocation for a larger magnitude course delivery. | Decision Makers |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Higher Education Institutions | Summary of Findings and Areas of Course Effectiveness and Improvements | Determination to adopt the program and use the template for similar programming. | Informational |

**Research Practice Scenario**

The following scenario is an illustrative example of the method in which students may be referred to the program. Twenty first-year college students enrolled in Thrive 101 at the recommendation of their academic advisors, following conversations about academic stress, sleep difficulties, the challenges of transitioning away from home, and feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Through the program, students engaged in online modules focused on resilience-building, mindfulness, a growth mindset, and healthy coping strategies. On campus, they received peer-led instruction in mindfulness techniques, collaborative problem solving, and stress management. Small group discussions provided a safe, supportive space for students to share campus-related struggles, fostering a sense of connection and belonging. Outcomes were generally positive with 88% of students reported plans to continue the health science program, crediting the course with helping them feel better prepared for academic demands and better equipped to manage stress. Students' resiliency scores improved by 20% and they expressed greater confidence in their ability to persevere through challenges without resorting to negative coping mechanisms. Students also shared that they would likely use mindfulness strategies in times of stress like while preparing for exams or presentations. Academic advisors observed notable shifts in student's self-efficacy, preparedness, and awareness of campus resources. This case highlights the potential of Thrive 101 to

support student adjustment and resilience and underscores the need to systemically evaluate its long-term impact.

## Evaluation Vision and Purpose

### *Short term Vision*

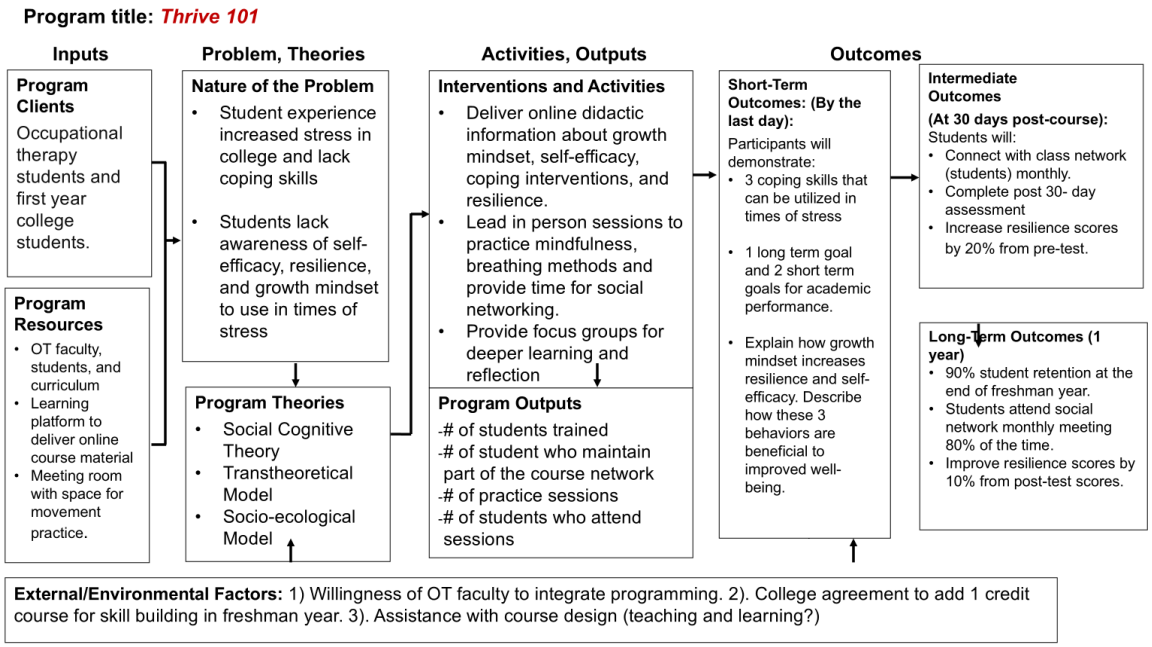
The short-term vision for evaluating the resilience program is to use mixed-methods data to produce rapid feedback that will improve course delivery and student support. Quantitative measures such as pre-, post-, and delayed-post-program surveys will track self-efficacy, coping styles, resilience, and perceived stress while qualitative short interviews, focus groups, and faculty observations will explain how and why changes occur. Evaluation findings will be used to refine content, format, and instructional strategies for first year students and OT student instructors, so each cohort has a positive experience.

### *Long Term Vision*

The long-term goal of Thrive 101 evaluation is to strengthen the broader evidence base for resilience-building programs in higher education. Longitudinal follow up across academic years to assess sustained effects on academic persistence, mental well-being, and adaptive functioning. Qualitative narratives will deepen understanding of cultural, generational, and contextual factors influencing resilience and guide inclusive curriculum revisions. The vision is for Thrive 101 to be expanded to include all first-year cohorts and findings be disseminated across institutions to inform curriculum design, influence policy toward more proactive, prevention-focused mental health initiatives. The overarching

purpose of this evaluation is to generate actionable data that strengthens mental health prevention models and evidence practice in higher education and occupational therapy education.

## Simplified Logic Model




### Engagement of Stakeholders

The Thrive 101 program will be a compilation of ideas from occupational therapy students and faculty who will collaborate with important campus stakeholders like health science faculty, student advisors, mental health counselors, and staff from student affairs to refine and prioritize the educational design. These stakeholders bring firsthand insight into the academic, emotional, and developmental needs of first-year students, enabling the program to align its content with both the demands of higher education and the competencies required for future professional success.

Structured brainstorming sessions will be used to identify themes, activities, and support strategies that reflect the lived experiences of students and the expertise of those who serve them. Student affairs, mental health counselors, and academic advisors offer an essential lens to student engagement, retention, and transitional challenges that will lay the foundation for the program's design.

Strategies to engage these stakeholders will be to highlight this course as a solution to student engagement, student belonging, promoting mental health, and improving academic persistence, which will increase student success and retention. Each group will be invited based on their collective goals for student success, professional expertise, and commitment to student well-being and equity. The meeting will end with a plan to reconvene at the midterm of the first spring class and again at the end of class to review evaluation results and determine course revisions. This will provide stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on other students' observations that may guide the course. Communication and follow-up will ensure buy-in, continued stakeholder support, and validation of their understanding. An infographic will be provided to all stakeholders to ensure understanding of the final program outline, and follow-up meetings will be held to discuss evaluation findings, revisions, and plans for next steps.

**Program Evaluation Research Question by Stakeholders**

***Formative***

- What types of activities will best support resilience, self-efficacy, and my ability to be successful in college? (student participants)
- What are the benefits and setbacks of peer delivery? (OT students and faculty)
- What early indicators suggest that the program helps students? (student affairs)
- What themes emerged from student short interviews and qualitative feedback? (student affairs)
- What support do facilitators need to deliver the content effectively (administration)?
- Is the time frame of course delivery sufficient to gain the skills that thrive 101 sets out to achieve? (administration)
- How are students selected to participate in Thrive 101, and are we reaching those who need it most? (mental health counselors)

***Summative***

- Which components of the program were the most impactful? (OT students and faculty)
- How did students describe the impact of Thrive 101 on their sense of belonging on campus? (student affairs)

- How can we integrate Thrive 101 into orientation sessions? Will we be able to refer students who are struggling with this program? (Academic Advisors)
- How will Thrive 101 improve student engagement in my classes? (Faculty)
- What percentage of improved student retention would you expect? (administration)
- What data are we collecting to determine if this class should be made available to all incoming students? What is the return on investment for Thrive 101 in terms of retention or success? (administration)
- Will Thrive 101 reduce the students' need for further mental health support on campus? (mental health counselors)
- Does participation in Thrive 101 increase resilience and self-efficacy? (researchers)
- What are the participant's lived experiences of adapting to college through the course? (researchers)

## Research Design

### *Evaluation Approach*

The evaluation approach most beneficial for this program is the Empowerment Evaluation Approach, which is collaborative, participatory, and grounded in mixed-methods research. This approach aligns with the program's values of inclusion, equity, and student-centered learning, considering the occupational therapy students and faculty

will be the primary stakeholders. Empowerment evaluation enables stakeholders to co-create, assess, and refine the program in real time, using data to inform decisions and drive continuous improvement. “Empowerment evaluation is a method that enables evaluators to give voice to the people” (Giancola, 2021, p95). This evaluation approach is student centered and enhances learning for both groups for OT student leadership and students enrolled in the program. It promotes self-efficacy among occupational therapy students by allowing them to actively shape the program and take ownership of their growth.

### *Design Type*

The program is a quasi-experimental design that will use both formative and summative research designs in a mixed-method approach to inform decisions and refinement throughout the program and a comprehensive evaluation of outcomes for data collection. The evaluation will compare students pre and post class to measure changes in resilience and perceived stress. Quality Improvement Design will support iterative learning and real-time program improvements based on student, faculty, and stakeholder feedback. The use of quantitative and qualitative data will both measure the impact of the program while integrating student subjective responses to create a rigorous yet responsive approach to program development that measures impact and allows for sustainable, student-led change.

## Data Sources and Timepoints

To capture both immediate and sustained effects, the evaluation will integrate cross-sectional and longitudinal components, allowing for analysis of short-term gains in resilience and self-efficacy as well as the long-term maintenance of these skills beyond graduation. Repeated measures will be collected at baseline, post-intervention, and at follow-up intervals to assess change over time. A mixed-methods approach will combine quantitative data, such as standardized scale scores, with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups to provide a richer understanding of program impact and participant experience.

### *Qualitative Components*

The evaluation will incorporate qualitative methods to capture the depth and context behind observed quantitative outcomes. Data will be collected through field observations, focus groups, and brief semi-structured interviews to explore participants' perceptions of program relevance, engagement, and personal growth during on-campus meeting times. These methods complement quantitative measures by providing insight into how and why changes occur. Integration will occur during interpretation, where qualitative themes will be compared with quantitative results to identify convergent, divergent, and explanatory patterns. This mixed-methods design ensures that numerical trends are grounded in authentic student experiences, strengthening the validity and utility of findings.

Three qualitative methods will be used to assess research questions, explore student perceptions, and gain insight into which materials were helpful, relatable, or in need of improvement. To ensure feasibility, qualitative data collection will be conducted by

occupational therapy students under faculty supervision, while qualitative analysis will be supported by a combination of faculty, graduate assistants, and occupational therapy students enrolled in next year's research or evaluation courses. As the success of the program grows, and it includes all first-year students, faculty and graduate students from complementary programs like psychology may participate. This structure distributes workload, provides authentic learning opportunities, and maintains analytic rigor.

To further reduce the burden of qualitative review for students, structured digital tools can standardize and simplify information to create uniform templates with checkboxes, short answer fields and branching logic (Giancola, 2021). These tools convert open-ended qualitative tasks into compact, structured entries, minimizing transcription demands and producing cleaner, more comparable datasets. All student submissions feed into a centralized database, where themes can be easily reviewed, filtered, and coded.

- Field Observation: Conducted during each experiential learning session to illuminate connections between social context, participant experience, and student personal meaning. Observation will identify preparation using online materials, integration into practice, and the effectiveness of the hybrid format. Each session will include thirty first-year students with a 1:5 ratio of occupational therapy students to participants. Students will use checklist formats that are organized into categories to help streamline the data.
- Focus Groups: In-person sessions will begin with group activity such as mindfulness, breathing exercises, coping strategies, or movement, followed by smaller focus groups of 10 to 12 students. Discussions will address weekly

material, relevance to daily life, and strategies for stress management, resilience, and self-efficacy. The recommended number of students in focus groups is 8 to 15 to allow for meaningful discussion. Focus group questions will include two to three prompts addressing perceptions about the weekly content, overall time constraints, format, and areas where additional information may be beneficial. A shared template will be used to keep the structure uniform between cohorts.

- Semi-structured interviews: Conducted after midterm as 8-to-10-minute sessions, potentially using Zoom to gather specific feedback. Interviews will capture participant's experiences, barriers, contextual factors, recommendations, and unexpected outcomes. See Appendix 1 for sample questions. These questions will be conducted by occupational therapy students next year during their research coursework.

***Quantitative Components***

Quantitative data will be collected online through pre, post, and follow-up assessments using two validated self-report measures: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). The CD-RISC assesses psychological resilience, reflecting the social-cognitive theory constructs of self-efficacy and adaptive coping, while the PSS measures perceived stress as an indicator of emotional regulation. Both tools have strong psychometric properties and are widely used in higher education and mental health research.

In addition to these standardized scales, student retention data will be tracked annually to explore possible relationships between students who participate in Thrive 101 and ongoing academic engagement for students who choose not to participate. Although not a formal outcome of the program, retention serves as a valuable contextual indicator of long-term adjustment. Since retention is influenced by multiple contextual and personal factors, the data cannot be attributed solely to the participation in Thrive 101, but it provides an additional means of comparison between the two groups of students, All students will participate in these quantitative measures. Findings will be triangulated with qualitative themes from focus groups and interviews to explain observed patterns and provide deeper insight into the mechanisms of change. Anticipated changes from pretest to post-test will be an improvement in resilience scores measured by the Connor Davidson Resilience Measure and decreased scores on the Perceived Stress Scale.

This evaluation design will address all four program evaluation standards, including utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy, by centering the stakeholder engagement throughout the evaluation process.

- Utility: Findings will inform program improvements and student support.
- Feasibility: Methods are embedded in program activities through observation, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews.
- Propriety: Ethical and equitable practices are upheld.
- Accuracy: Reliable measures and triangulated data strengthen validity.

## Methods Section

Quantitative data will be collected through Survey Monkey and sent to students through secure online messaging. Surveys will be administered at three key time points: the first week of class (baseline), the final week of the course (post-intervention), and 30 days after course completion (follow-up). These points are designed to capture both immediate and sustained changes in student resilience, stress management, perceived stress, and preparedness. Survey responses will be automatically backed up to Survey Monkey and synced with institution-approved cloud storage. Raw data will be exported to Microsoft Excel and stored in encrypted, password-protected folders on institutional servers accessible only by authorized team members. Data will be retained for five years following study completion, in accordance with institutional policies, and then securely deleted. Audio and video recordings from midterm semi-structured interviews, peer-led sessions, and focus groups conducted via Zoom will be recorded on secure devices, transcribed for thematic analysis, and stored in encrypted electronic folders to analyze verbal and non-verbal body language. Qualitative transcripts will be coded using a standardized codebook by two independent coders and inter-rater reliability will be assessed using Cohen's kappa.

## IRB Approval and Human Subjects Protection

Because this evaluation involves human participants, it will adhere to all institutional and federal ethical standards for research. Prior to data collection, the study will undergo review and approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the protection of participants' rights and welfare. The IRB submission will include a detailed protocol

outlining the study purpose, participant recruitment and selection procedures, data collection methods, data use and storage procedures, and plans for maintaining confidentiality. Supporting materials will include informed consent forms, recruitment communications, and all data collection instruments.

Several potential challenges have been identified, and proactive strategies will be implemented to minimize their impact. To address scheduling conflicts, participation opportunities and class sessions will be communicated well in advance of student enrollment. Technology limitations will be mitigated through early testing of online platforms, ensuring IT support is available, and clear communication about campus technology resources. To reduce response bias during focus groups, participants will also have the option to provide anonymous written or electronic feedback, allowing more candid input and strengthening data credibility. Overall, these strategies are designed to maintain equitable participation, data integrity, and adherence to ethical research principles throughout the evaluation process.

**Informed Consent**

All participants will provide informed consent prior to participating in the study. During program orientation, students will receive a verbal and written explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their rights as participants. Consent materials will clearly state that participation is voluntary and that students may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or impact on their course standing. Data will be collected through surveys, focus groups, and interviews that aggregate findings for the report. Signed consent forms will be

securely stored in a locked file or encrypted digital folder accessible only to the principal investigator and faculty supervisor.

**Confidentiality and Data Protection**

Confidentiality is an extension of privacy and if data is not properly protected, neither are people (Giancola, 2021). Student confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study and data will be protected through security measures. Zoom recording options during interviews (video or sound depending on student preference) and during class times will be utilized to capture both nonverbal and stated opinions or comments. Zoom security features like encryption, waiting rooms, passcodes, and meeting locks will be used, and data will be organized by weekly intakes rather than individual records. Users may also use additional features that would offer enhanced security like passwords and access controls. First-year college students will be informed of these access controls, and occupational therapy students and faculty will attend required training.

**Data Analysis**

Quantitative data from the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests to assess changes in resilience and stress from pre- to post-intervention. Independent sample t-tests will compare outcomes between fall and spring cohorts. Qualitative data, including class observations, semi-structured midterm interviews, and focus groups, will be analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. Third-year

students will be paired to code transcripts to identify themes related to resilience, self-efficacy, belongingness, social networks, and coping strategies.

To enhance trustworthiness, member checking will be conducted with a subset of participants, and discrepancies in coding will be resolved through consensus. Themes will be triangulated with quantitative findings to provide a richer understanding of program impact and inform iterative improvements. Findings from both data types will be integrated to explore alignment and contrast.

## Anticipated Strengths and Limitations

### *Strengths*

The strength of the evaluation format is that it combines objective quantitative scores with subjective qualitative responses to capture both measurable change and personal experiences. Using multiple data sources will increase triangulation, which will enhance reliability and validity in the findings. The quantitative questionnaires are widely used and have strong psychometric properties. The assessments are student-centered and will provide both formative and summative information that will guide program improvements and allow student participants to have a voice. This mixed-methods approach enables the program to be responsive while also creating a strong evidence base.

### *Limitations*

The limitations of this evaluation format include potential bias and inconsistency in self-reported data. Self-perceived questionnaires may have skewed responses based on a

student's emotional state, personal context, or cultural bias in disclosing feelings of stress. Careful attention during data collection will be to notice bias that may arise in questionnaires based on corresponding reflections with qualitative research and make changes to add more questions with positively and negatively worded items and ensure that students know the questions are anonymous. Students may underreport stress or overstate resilience due to social desirability or misunderstanding of questions. Attention will be given to ensure that questions reduce the obvious correct answers. Qualitative assessments may be inconsistent due to students' comfort with expressing opinions or emotions in group settings. There may also be variability in how the class is taught based on students' comfort level in a leadership position while teaching, life experiences, and understanding of material, which could influence assessment data. Students with limited experience in the topics may be precluded from offering an opinion or depth of material. A mitigation strategy would be to pair students with more in-depth comfort or experience to provide students with less experience and an opportunity to learn through modeling.

External factors may include time constraints which may affect data quality if students rush through the assessments. The assessments will be completed online and offer no time constraints so that students will have ample time to complete. Cultural bias may arise from how students perceive stress and the cultural norm of discussing it, and opinions may not be captured by standardized assessments. Students may prefer other methods of reporting over questionnaires and objective data collection. A mitigation strategy will be to offer a variety of assessments throughout the course to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

# Chapter 6: Dissemination Plan

Thrive 101 is a one-credit, hybrid course designed to strengthen first-year college students' resilience, coping skills, social connectedness, and self-efficacy as they transition into higher education. Grounded in evidence-based practices and delivered by occupational therapy (OT) students completing Level I fieldwork, the course integrates experiential learning, reflective practice, and wellness-based routines to promote academic persistence and overall well-being. Through a combination of in-person sessions and online modules, Thrive 101 equips students with practical strategies to manage stress, build supportive networks, and develop habits that sustain success throughout college and into the workforce.

## Target audiences

### *Stakeholders*

The primary audience for dissemination includes individuals directly involved in the development, delivery, and refinement of the course. These groups include OT faculty and program leadership, OT students completing level I fieldwork, and campus stakeholders such as mental health counselors, student affairs staff, academic advisors, and faculty whose courses or roles intersect first year student success. These stakeholders contribute expertise in student wellness, pedagogy, intervention design, and play a critical role in college wide initiatives and student success. Dissemination to this group will emphasize how Thrive 101 complements existing student support services by equipping first year students with skills that reduce crisis points and foster a sense of belonging. The OT student's delivery provides a strength-based model, occupation centered peer

approach that aligns with wellness initiatives and reinforces campus wide efforts to support early engagement and reduce student overwhelm. Initial meetings will focus on brainstorming and ongoing meetings will look at student data to determine updates to the program.

### *Administration*

Curriculum committees, administration, and advisory board members represent an additional primary audience due to their influence on program adoption, resource allocation, and long-term sustainability. Key messages for this group will highlight the program's cost-efficiency, scalability, and evidence-informed design. Dissemination will focus on presenting outcome data, resource needs, and implementation logistics to support informed decision-making regarding broader institutional adoption.

### *Occupational Therapy Practitioners in Academia*

The secondary audience for dissemination includes occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) and educators who may consider adopting Thrive 101 as a level I fieldwork experience or as a resilience building intervention for first-year students in their own institutions. Dissemination of this group will emphasize the benefits of the program for OT students, including strengthened clinical reasoning, teaching skills, group facilitation, and professional identity formation. Additional messaging will highlight how the course increases the visibility of occupational therapy on campus and contributes to public understanding of the profession's role in supporting individual well-being.

## Methods of Dissemination

Campus based dissemination will be shared through monthly meetings with on-

campus stakeholders from program inception through the first two years of implementation. These meetings will support collaborative planning, review of early findings, and program refinement as needed. Additional dissemination methods will include infographics, end-of-semester evaluation reports summarizing quantitative outcomes and qualitative insights, and midterm and end-of-semester review meetings to discuss evaluation data and proposed revisions. Formal presentations will be delivered at faculty meetings, student affairs councils, and retention committees to build institutional support, share evaluation findings and program impact. The author will serve as the primary disseminator during the initial two years. Successful dissemination will be reflected in active stakeholder engagement, collaborative problem solving, contributions to course activities, and discussions about expanding the course to reach all first-year students. These conversations will also support alignment with institutional priorities related to retention, well-being and student success. Monthly dissemination efforts will decrease to quarterly meetings over the second year.

**Goals of dissemination**

- Long term goal: Institutional adoptions of Thrive 101 as a required first-year level 1 fieldwork experience to improve retention and student well-being.
- Short term goal: Consistent endorsement and active engagement of campus stakeholders through monthly attendance and participation.
- Short term goal: Submission and acceptance of at least two conference proposals (American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Education Summit,

Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA) annual conference, AOTA annual conference).

- Short term goal: Student poster presentations with preliminary data and infographic at the state association level.

At the conclusion of the first-year, findings will be shared with the broader OT education community through a presentation at the AOTA education summit to highlight program outcomes and implementation strategies. The students will also present a poster at the Wisconsin occupational therapy association annual meeting to share the impact of this program on level I fieldwork experiences and the overall mental health of first year students. An infographic will be shared to highlight the course overview, sample activities, and evaluation highlights. An overview of the OT student requirements and timelines of planning, implementation, and evaluation will also be highlighted to show the areas for experiences that the program offers for OT students. This author will lead dissemination at the education summit and evidence of dissemination will be demonstrated through engagement with other academic programs, interest in program replication, and potential invitations for further presentations. At the state association conference, OT students, adjunct instructors and this author will collectively share insights about the dual benefits of the course by enhancing student fieldwork experience and contributing to the supportive, wellness-oriented campus culture for first year students. Positive dissemination outcomes will include meaningful dialogue with practitioners and students, interest in program adoption, and strengthened professional networks that support future collaboration and scaling.

## Budget

There are no budget considerations for the on-campus dissemination activities, as this will fall into the usual campus activities associated with full time academic work. The travel expenses for attending the AOTA Education Summit and state conference for student members are summarized below. The estimated cost for the author and primary adjunct faculty member to attend all three conferences will be approximately $2,065 if fully funded. Student costs will include attendance at the one-day state conference at $30.00 per student with membership.

**Table 6.1**

*Dissemination Costs*

| | Author | Adjunct Faculty | OT Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Education Summit | $250 | $250 | N/A |
| Wisconsin OT AOTA Conference | $525 | $525 | $30 x 15= $450 |
| Travel | $650 | $650 | Self-funded |
| Hotel | $600 | $600 | Self-funded |
| Total | $2025 | $2025 | $450 |

## Conclusion

The dissemination plan for Thrive 101 focuses on sharing program outcomes, strengthening stakeholder engagement, and supporting future adoption of the course. Primary dissemination targets OT faculty, OT students, campus stakeholders, and leaders who contribute to course refinement and future decision making. Secondary

dissemination extends to the occupational therapy education community interested in using Thrive 101 as a level I fieldwork model. Dissemination will occur through multiple channels and evaluation findings will be shared through meetings, written reports, and infographics. The initial cost of dissemination will be low with the additional advantage of attendance at the state association conference and institution representation at the education summit.

# Chapter Seven – Funding Plan

## Introduction

Thrive 101 is a proposed one-credit resilience building course designed for first year students. The course responds to the growing prevalence of mental health challenges among college students and the unique stressors associated with the transition into higher education. Thrive 101 provides an early, structured foundation for developing resilience, self-efficacy, and coping strategies to help support students for the rigors of college and adulting at this stage of life. The course will be delivered through a peer instruction model facilitated by occupational therapy students completing their Level I mental health fieldwork. Instruction will integrate evidence-based teaching strategies with experiential learning, peer connection, and practical skill development through both online and in-person modalities. The overarching goals of Thrive 101 are to reduce mental health stigma, enhance academic persistence, support professional identity formation, and promote long-term wellbeing. The budget for thrive reflects the resources required to develop, implement, and sustain the curriculum.

## Available local resources

A portion of Thrive 101 curriculum and course design will be developed within the curriculum of psychosocial occupational therapy coursework under the direction of the assigned faculty. The initial course framework will be created by this author, based on the evidence synthesized in this doctoral paper. All tools and materials developed for the course will be made freely available to academic programs interested in adopting the model, as no external costs incurred through the development of this work.

The course will be managed and run for six weeks during level I fieldwork time slots, with students and faculty assigned to facilitate the once per week on-campus meeting times. Current faculty and students will contribute to both the creation and implementation of the program. There will be several areas for in-kind donations to this program including university stakeholders who will provide mentorship and guidance throughout the development process, physical space within the occupational therapy department for in-person sessions, institutional resources, computers, campus wi-fi, and the university's learning management system that will support online instructional components. The institutions' technology support staff will assist with course platform management and the university's teaching and learning department will support online course design. In addition, counseling services and Student Affairs will be available for consultation as needed. Marketing materials can be developed within the department and distributed electronically or through printed flyers.

**Needed Resources and Budget**

Faculty are essential for curriculum development, weekly supervision and attendance of on-campus courses, assessment and grading, and administrative coordination. Implementation will require additional adjunct occupational therapy faculty to assist with course development, delivery, student supervision, and assessment. Despite the already created blueprint for the course, curriculum development will require a minimum of thirty additional hours, plus additional time for individualized lesson planning at $50.00 per hour, which will be waived as the author's in-kind donation. One adjunct will be sufficient for this first-year administration and will be paid $1500 per

college credit x 2 cohorts. The second year will require even more adjunct support with plans to offer the course to all incoming first year students. Ongoing adjunct faculty each year will be budgeted according to overall first year student enrollment numbers that generally are around 250 students which equate to 8 or 9 cohorts per year. For external institutions seeking consultation beyond the initial sharing of program materials, a fee of $100 per hour will apply. General supplies will be funded through the occupational therapy program. Yoga mats, required for specific experiential activities, will cost approximately $20.00 each. Printed materials will incur a cost to the faculty through the occupational therapy program. Dissemination expenses include travel to the AOTA conference and presentation materials that will be covered in more depth in chapter 6.

**Table 7.1**

*Expenses*

| Budget Item | Year One | Year Two |
|---|---|---|
| Faculty Curriculum Development | $50.00 x 40 hrs. = $2000 | $50.00 x 15 hours |
| Adjunct Faculty | 1 adjunct x 2 credits= $2800 | 4 adjuncts x 2 credits = $11,200 |
| Supplies: Yoga Mats | $20.00 x 30 = $600 | $20.00 x 200 = $4,000 |
| Written Materials (packets) | $12.00 x 60 = $720 | $12.00 x 250 = $ 3,000 |
| Misc Classroom Supplies | $10.00 x 60 = $600 | $ 10.00 x 250 = $2500 |
| Pre and Post Assessments | TBA | TBA |
| Dissemination Costs | $0 | $4500 |

**Potential Funding Sources**

The initial implementation site of this program will be a small to moderate private school in southern Wisconsin. As a member of the Jed Foundation network, the university already participates in initiatives supporting student mental health and may use these resources to support Thrive 101. Revenue generated from the one credit course will contribute to sustaining the program in its second year. With 60 students taking this one credit course over the first year, the institution will receive $1065.00 which equates to a total of $63,900 college revenue, a portion which will go back to the occupational therapy program to be used toward the second year of implementation. The following table provides a list of additional potential resources for funding.

**Table 7.2** Funding Resources

| Level of Funding | Name of Institution | Description | Funding |
|---|---|---|---|
| Federal | Department of Health and Human Services (SAMHSA) | Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant supports the creation of comprehensive mental health approaches on campus. | Up to $102,000 per year per award for up to three years |
| State | State Education Agency Grants (Wisconsin) | Supports mental health frameworks in educational settings in Wisconsin. | |
| Private | American College Health Foundation (ACHF) | Stephan D. Weiss Student Mental Health Award funds innovative, research-based programs aiming to enhance student mental health, improve retention, and student behavioral health needs. | $5,000 along with a commitment from the institution of an additional $5000 of actual funds or in-kind support. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Private | American College Health Foundation (ACHF) | College Well-Being Award supports innovative, sustainable campus infrastructure and programming that enhances student health and well-being. | Offers two $3,500 awards to one or more institutions of higher. |
| Local | Madison Rotatory Club | Excellence in Education Grants or community grants focusing on initiatives that promote equity, enhance student support and provide resources for mental wellness. | Allocated $145,000 in 2025 |

Thrive 101 is a highly feasible and strategically valuable initiative that leverages existing institutional strengths, in kind resources, and a peer instruction model to deliver cost effective, evidence-based resilience curriculum for first-year students. By integrating course development into existing occupational therapy coursework and utilizing faculty, students, campus spaces, and technology infrastructure, the program minimizes startup expenses while maximizing educational impact. The course offers clear financial benefit to the institution through revenue while advancing the university's mission to support student mental health, retention, and overall well-being. Thrive 101 demonstrates a commitment to students during a critical period of transition, facilitated by occupational therapy students who will gain meaningful fieldwork experience. Program sustainability is reinforced through multiple avenues for funding through state, private, and federal grants. These factors position Thrive 101 as a scalable, mission-aligned, and financially sound program that strengthens student success and institutional capacity.

# CHAPTER EIGHT – Conclusion

Thrive 101 is a comprehensive, evidence-informed educational program designed to cultivate resilience among first year students during one of the most developmentally vulnerable and academically demanding periods of their lives. The course functions as a proactive intervention designed to equip students with essential tools for managing stress, building healthy routines, and understanding their own capacities for adaptation and growth. The program emerged in response to a growing pattern in higher education where capable, motivated students were becoming overwhelmed by the rigorous demands of coursework, financial burdens, and the transition to adulthood. By focusing on resilience, self-efficacy, and coping strategies, Thrive 101 supports students flourishing during a pivotal life phase and helps them gain skills that carry into their professional futures.

## Innovation in Design and Delivery

Thrive 101 represents a significant innovation in higher education by moving away from traditional, reactive crisis-intervention models toward a proactive, prevention-oriented hybrid framework. Its innovative nature is further characterized by its identification of the needs of current Gen Z college students, who consistently report valuing digital flexibility, peer-based support, and psychologically safe learning environments over conventional counseling or didactic formats. The course integrates short, visually engaging online modules with in-person experiential sessions, creating a multimodal structure that aligns with digital-native learning preferences while maintaining opportunities for connection and practice. A defining innovation of Thrive 101 is its peer-facilitated delivery model, led by occupational therapy (OT) students

completing their Level I fieldwork. This approach integrates clinical knowledge with social modeling, creating a relatable and supportive environment for first-year students. Application of the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF-4) to a broader college population, frames academic success through the lens of occupational balance in self-care, sleep, work, and leisure. Thrive introduces students to a holistic understanding of performance and well-being by reframing resilience, not as an innate trait, but as a set of modifiable habits, routines, and environmental supports. The model also expands the visibility of OT on campus, positioning OT students as leaders in wellness promotion and population-level intervention.

**Significance for Stakeholders**

The program is a critical response to the fact that over 60% of college students report moderate levels of stress that affect their mental wellness. Thrive 101 is designed to provide a place of belonging and tools to help students persevere. It targets resilience, self-efficacy, and coping, allowing students to reframe setbacks as opportunities for growth and maintain their academic trajectory. The program also introduces students to campus resources and helps reduce the stigma surrounding seeking support. For Occupational Therapy students, Thrive 101 offers OT students a unique reciprocal learning environment. By delivering the course, they deepen their understanding of mental health concepts, strengthen their group facilitation and interpersonal skills, and gain real-life experience that prepares them for clinical practice. It helps to reinforce their professional identity as practitioners who support holistic well-being and advocate for OT in non-traditional settings. Academic advisors, counseling centers, and faculty benefit

from a reduced strain on crisis-response services. Advisors gain a structured referral path for students showing early signs of struggle, such as sleep difficulties or loneliness, before those issues escalate into a crisis. Faculty experience improved engagement from students who are more emotionally regulated and proactive in their learning. At the institutional level, Thrive 101 addresses student mental wellness and resilience, which could increase retention levels and student performance strengthening the institution's financial stability and reputation. It fosters a campus culture of inclusivity and support, aligning with the broader educational mission of preparing students for civic life and the workforce.

**Contribution to the OT Profession**

The involvement of OT students in Thrive 101 represents a significant contribution to the profession's evolving role in population health and prevention. By facilitating the program, OT students engage directly in the societal imperative to address the growing mental health crisis and support the next generation of adaptable, resilient leaders. The course demonstrates that occupational therapy is uniquely equipped to restore occupational balance, promote health management, and address mental wellness in higher education settings. Thrive 101 moves beyond accommodation or short-term relief by equipping students with the psychological, behavioral, and routine building tools necessary for long term success. It ensures that students do more than survive college but truly thrive. The program also offers a scalable, mission-aligned model for level I fieldwork that strengthens OT students' professional identity. Through this experience, students learn to advocate for the role of OT in non-traditional settings, an area of

growing need as the profession continues to broaden its impact on community and population well-being.

# APPENDIX A – Program Document

## Thrive 101: Strengthening Student Well-being Through a Unified Campus Approach

## Executive Summary

### Purpose of the Program

Thrive 101 is a proactive, evidence-informed program designed to meet the evolving mental health needs of first-year students. This program is being proposed by the occupational therapy department as a solution to reinforce the essential work already happening across campus. Designed as a one-credit, six-week hybrid course that will be delivered during the spring semester, when overwhelm and disconnection often peak, designed to equip students with foundational resilience, coping strategies, and help-seeking behaviors before challenges escalate into crisis.

Rather than functioning as a standalone initiative, Thrive 101 is intentionally built as an extension of the essential work already happening across campus. Our goal is to create a collaborative, integrated model that amplifies the reach and impact of our existing student support services. By normalizing early engagement with mental health and academic resources and embedding skill-building directly into students' academic experiences, this program strengthens our collective capacity to support student well-being and reduce preventable points of crisis.

### Introduction: The Crisis of Student Mental Health

Colleges nationwide are continuing to experience unprecedented levels of student psychological distress. The prevalence of psychological distress among college students

is at an all-time high and continues to rise. Recent data indicates that over 60% of college students report at least one mental health diagnosis, a staggering 50% increase since 2013 (Flannery, 2023). For many students, the transition to higher education brings a heavy academic load, high achievement expectations, and new adult roles that can lead to worsening mental health symptoms, academic failure, and program dropout. The consequences extend far beyond emotional distress and can fundamentally disrupt a student's life trajectory. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) found that 64% of students who dropped out of college cited mental health as the primary reason drastically reducing retention. These challenges disrupt academic performance, daily routines, and overall well-being creating what occupational therapy describes as occupational imbalance, in sleep, self-care, work, and leisure.

Compounding the problem, many current "Gen Z" students often enter college with insufficient levels of psychological resilience, coping skills, and self-efficacy, factors that are closely linked with anxiety, stress, and overall well-being in this generation. Without these tools, they are less equipped to navigate the complex demands of an unfamiliar campus environment increasing the risk of academic decline, withdrawal, and long-term negative outcomes. While Gen Z students are said to be more likely to access mental health services than other generations, they prefer hybrid learning formats with the autonomy of learning through a digital platform, short visually engaging content that is relevant, and meaningful interactions. Thrive 101 is designed to meet these preferences while addressing the gaps in resilience, coping skills, and self-efficacy that often undermine academic persistence.

## Introducing Thrive 101: A Proactive Intervention

Thrive 101 is a proactive, evidence-informed, educational program designed to equip first-year students with the foundational skills needed to manage stress while shifting the campus approach from reactive crisis management to early, skill-based intervention. The program treats resilience, not as fixed traits, but as a set of learnable habits empowering students to navigate stress before it becomes unmanageable. The program specifically addresses Gen Z's preferences for digital flexibility, peer-based support, and psychologically safe learning environments (SeeMiller & Grace, 2017). By fostering self-awareness and practical coping strategies early in the academic career, Thrive 101 aims to prepare students to prosper during this pivotal life phase. It is a one-credit, six-week hybrid course. The program integrates virtual education with twice-weekly in-person experiential sessions to foster emotional regulation and social connection.

## Key Program Components

Research led to the creation of these key program components by identifying the needs of current Gen Z college students and the problems that they face.

### *Online Modules*

The online component has concise, visually engaging lessons that fit Gen Z learning preferences (SeeMiller & Grace, 2017).

### *In-person experiential sessions*

The one time per week campus sessions instruct students in mindfulness, goal setting, growth mindset, social connection, campus resources, and guided practice. Studies show

that Gen Z students learn best through doing or observing rather than traditional lectures (SeeMiller & Grace, 2017) (Cheng et al, 2021).

***Peer-facilitated delivery***

The course is led by Occupational Therapy (OT) students who are trained facilitators offering relatable social modeling and strengthening in their own professional identity. Research indicates that social networks are crucial for resilience (Wang et al., 2025) (Yuan et al., 2025) (Ang et al., 2021). Students with strong support systems including peers, faculty, and online networks respond more positively to stress. Thrive 101 utilizes focus groups and "peer buddies" to intentionally build these networks.

***Theoretical Grounding*:**

The program is built on three well-established frameworks that encapsulate the importance of the environment, social influences, and the individual student:

- **Social Cognitive Theory.** Emphasizes learning through peer modeling and guided practice.
- **Social-Ecological Model.** Recognizes that resilience is influenced by layers of support, from individual skills to campus culture.
- **Transtheoretical Change Model.** Tailors' interventions to a student's readiness to adopt new healthy behaviors.

***Supports and Strengthens Campus Services***

Thrive 101 is designed to function as a united front with student support staff, not an additional silo. The program enhances your work in several key ways:

- **Early Identification**. Academic advisors, student affairs, and mental health counseling staff gain a structured pathway for referring students who show early signs of struggle before issues escalate.
- **Reduced Strain on Crisis-Response Services**. Students learn proactive ways to manage stress in the classroom by reducing the need for crisis support and identify campus support.
- **Stronger Student Engagement**. Students who feel regulated, connected, and confident are more likely to attend class, participate, and persist academically directly supporting retention and academic success. Thrive 101 introduces common concepts like resilience, self-efficacy, coping strategies that staff across departments can reinforce, creating a cohesive campus wide culture of care.

### *Assessment Based Adaption*

Thrive 101 will utilize both quantitative and qualitative assessment measures to improve the efficacy of the program and expect student and institution wide positive outcomes. For first-year students the anticipated outcomes are improved resilience, decreased perceived stress, stronger sense of belonging, and enhanced self-efficacy. Institutional outcomes will be reduced strain on crisis-response services, improved academic performance, improved student retention, and a more connected supported campus culture.

## Recommendations

To maximize the impact of Thrive 101, your insight is essential to ensure that the course meets the real needs of our students. The pilot year will enroll sixty first-year

students. Academic advisors will play a key role in identifying students who may benefit from early intervention. Students showing early signs of struggle, loneliness, sleep difficulties, depression, or anxiety will benefit greatly. Feedback from student support staff will guide refinement and expansion. The long-term goal is to scale Thrive 101 so that all first-year students can benefit from this foundational experience.

**Conclusion**

Thrive 101 represents a meaningful shift in how our campus approaches student mental health by moving away from reactive crisis management toward proactive, skill-based education. By integrating seamlessly with existing services and reinforcing the work of student support staff, the program helps students not only survive their first year but truly thrive. Together we can build a coordinated, sustainable, and student-centered ecosystem of care that prepares students for academic success and the challenges of adult life.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

# Thrive 101: Cultivating Resilience, Self-Efficacy, and Coping Strategies for College Students Success

Cindy Ripp, M.Ed., OTR/L

Thrive 101 is a one credit, structured educational intervention that supports first-year college students in developing foundational resilience, coping strategies, and self-efficacy skills. The program is delivered by occupational therapy (OT) students completing their Level I fieldwork, using a peer supported, occupation centered approach.

Thrive 101 responds to rising rates of stress, burnout, academic overwhelm, and mental health related occupational disruption among college students by building connections, practicing skills, and establishing routines. Current statistics (Healthy Minds 2025):

- Depression 37%
- Anxiety 32%
- Loneliness 52%


*Figure 1:Getty Images. Goodboy Picture Company*

The program is designed for first year undergraduate students transitioning into the demands of college life. It is especially relevant for students navigating new academic expectations, social environments, and independent living routines. The model is scalable and adaptable for use across diverse higher education settings to increase academic and lifelong success.

| | |
|---|---|
| Thrive 101 is supported through existing university infrastructure and embedded within OT Level I fieldwork requirements. Faculty oversight, course integration, and the use of existing classroom and digital learning platforms make the program cost efficient and sustainable without requiring external funding. | Academic advisors will help determine students for the first academic trial of 60 students with the goal of expanding Thrive 101 to all first-year students in future years. Students will access the course through the college's online platform and attend a once-per-week on-campus meeting. |

## Significance and relevance for OT practice:

This project demonstrates the distinct value of occupational therapy in promoting health, wellbeing, and occupational balance within nontraditional settings such as higher education. By addressing the occupations of selfcare, sleep, academic participation, social engagement, and stress management, Thrive 101 aligns directly with the American Occupational Therapy's Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF4).

*Figure 2:Getty Images Credit: FatCamera*

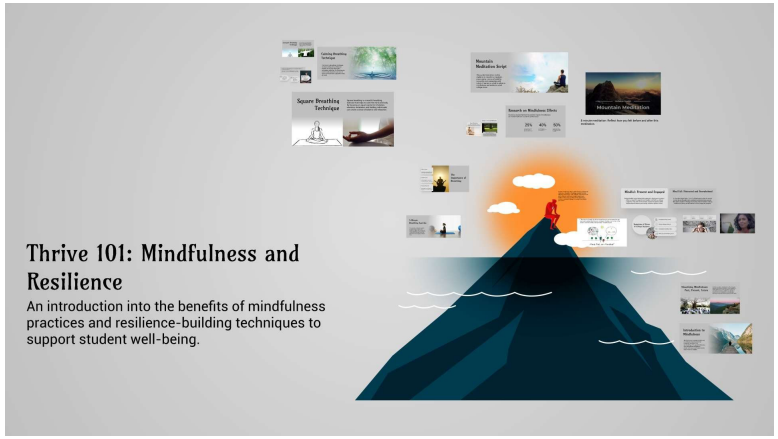
## How it supports, facilitates, or ensures the provision of OT services

- Expands OT's role in prevention and population health by addressing early indicators of occupational imbalance.
- Provides OT students with authentic, supervised opportunities to apply therapeutic use of self, group facilitation, and educational intervention skills.
- Demonstrates how OT principles can be used to enhance resilience, self-efficacy, and adaptive coping, all of which support long term participation in meaningful occupations.
- Strengthens the visibility of OT within interdisciplinary campus wellness initiatives and positions OT as a leader in student success and wellbeing.

References

Contact: [redacted]

## APPENDIX B – Program Sample

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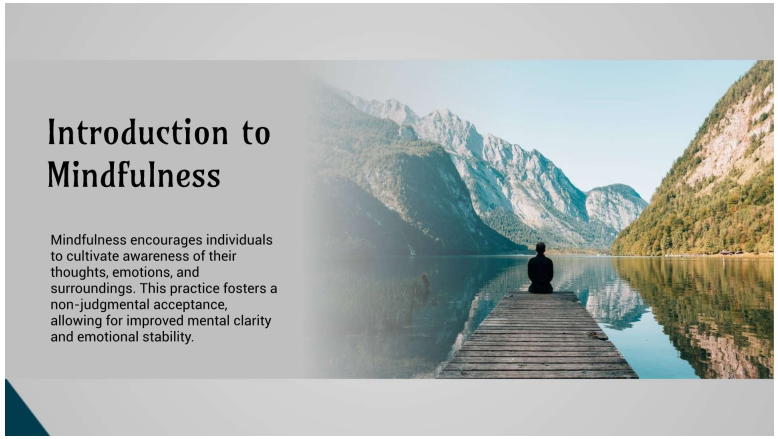


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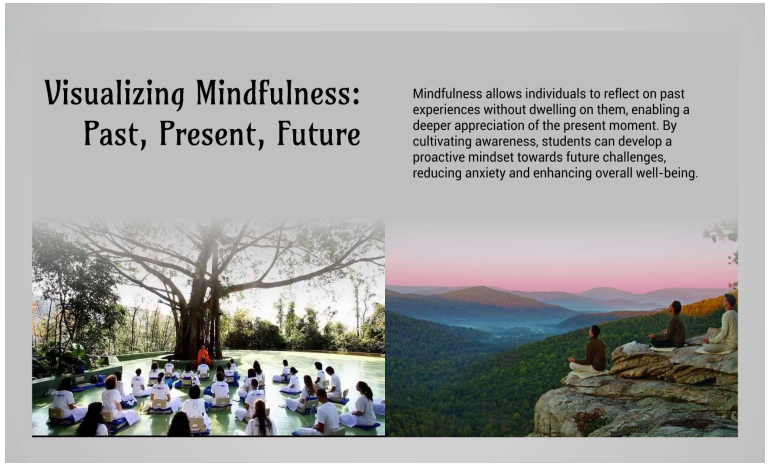


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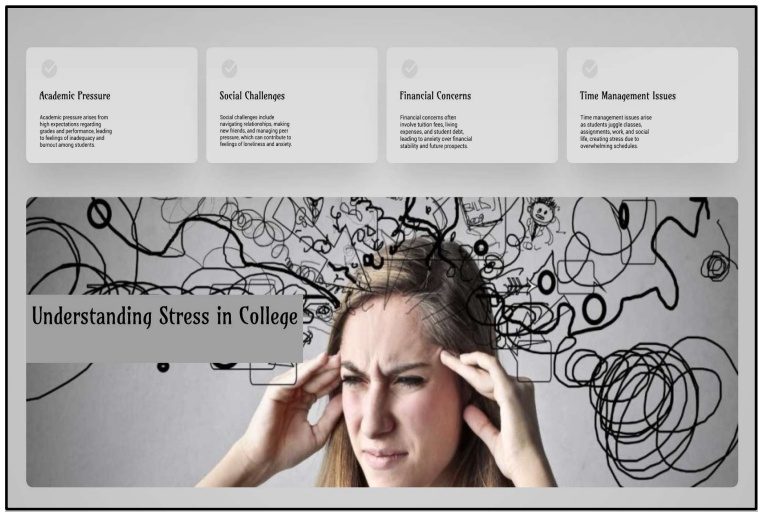


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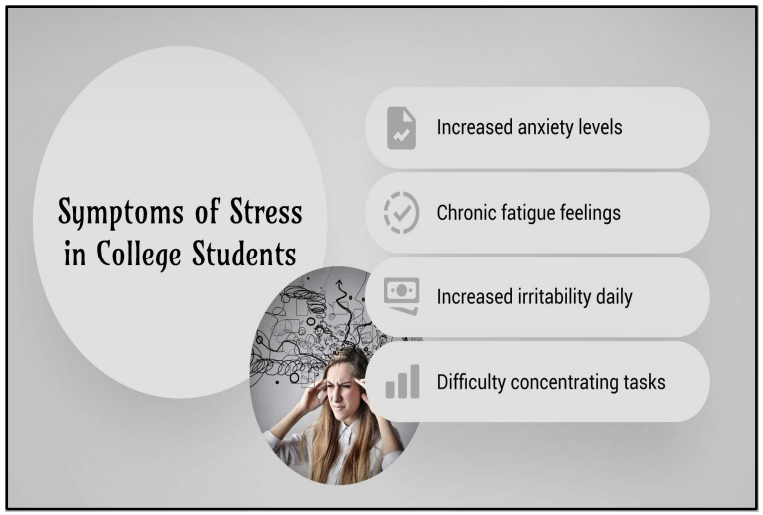
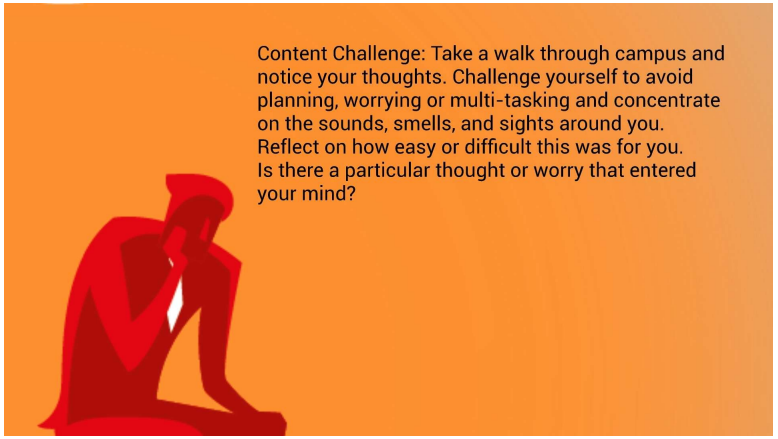



6



- "The secret of health for the mind and body is not to mourn for the past, worry about the future or anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly". Buddha Quote


7




8

## Research on Mindfulness Effects

Numerous studies highlight the positive impact of mindfulness on mental health and academic performance.

| 25% | 40% | 50% |
|---|---|---|
| improvement in focus and concentration during academic tasks. | enhanced emotional regulation leading to better coping mechanisms. | increase in overall well-being and life satisfaction among students practicing mindfulness. |

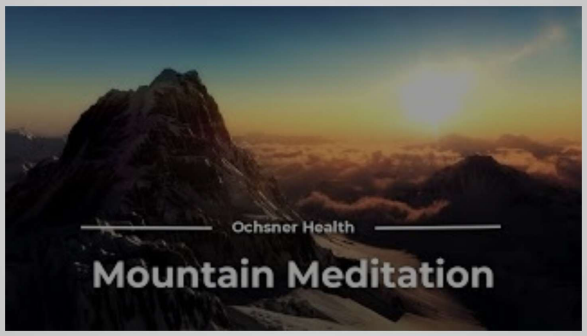
9

## Research on Mindfulness Effects

Numerous studies highlight the positive impact of mindfulness on mental health and academic performance.

| 30% | 25% | 40% | 50% |
|---|---|---|---|
| reduction in stress levels observed in regular mindfulness practitioners. | improvement in focus and concentration during academic tasks. | enhanced emotional regulation leading to better coping mechanisms. | increase in overall well-being and life satisfaction among students practicing mindfulness. |

10



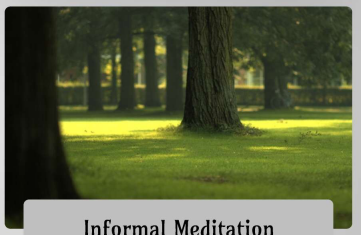

8 minute meditation: Reflect how you felt before and after this

11

## Formal vs Informal Meditation

### Formal Meditation

Formal meditation involves dedicated practices such as guided sessions, techniques like body scan or loving-kindness meditation, and often occurs in a quiet, distraction-free environment. These sessions aim to deepen concentration and awareness through specific methods.



### Informal Meditation

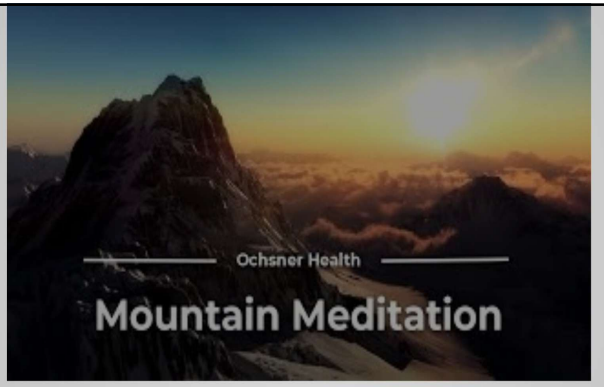
Informal meditation is about integrating mindfulness into daily life. This can occur during routine activities like eating, walking, or even showering. It focuses on being present and aware in the moment, allowing for mindfulness to flow naturally throughout the day.

12

## Mountain Meditation Script

This guided meditation invites students to visualize a mountain, encouraging a sense of stability, tranquility, and connection with nature. It serves as a tool to enhance mindfulness and resilience amid college stress.

13




8 minute meditation: Reflect how you felt before and after this meditation.

14

### Reduces Stress

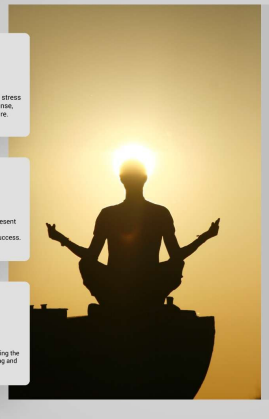
Breathing exercises are effective in decreasing stress levels by activating the body's relaxation response, leading to reduced heart rate and blood pressure.

### Enhances Focus

Mindful breathing helps direct attention to the present moment, which can enhance concentration and cognitive performance, essential for academic success.

### Promotes Relaxation

Breath control techniques are known to promote relaxation by slowing down the heart rate and calming the mind, creating a peaceful state conducive to learning and well-being.



## The Importance of Breathing

15

## Reduces Stress

Breathing exercises are effective in decreasing stress levels by activating the body's relaxation response, leading to reduced heart rate and blood pressure.

16

## 5-Minute Breathing Exercise

This exercise is designed to guide students in practicing mindful breathing, helping them to relax and center themselves. It can be used as a quick tool to manage stress and enhance focus during busy college days.

17

## Square Breathing Technique

Square breathing is a mindful breathing exercise that helps to calm the mind and body. By focusing on equal counts for inhalation, retention, exhalation, and holding, individuals can create a sense of balance and relaxation.

18

## Enhances Focus

Mindful breathing helps direct attention to the present moment, which can enhance concentration and cognitive performance, essential for academic success.

19

## Promotes Relaxation

Breath control techniques are known to promote relaxation by slowing down the heart rate and calming the mind, creating a peaceful state conducive to learning and well-being.

20

## Calming Breathing Technique

The Calming Breathing Technique involves taking slow, deliberate breaths to engage the body's relaxation response. By focusing on each breath, students can reduce stress and cultivate a peaceful state of mind.

21

## Energetic Breathing Technique

The Energetic Breathing Technique involves quick, deep breaths that stimulate the body and mind, increasing alertness and reducing fatigue. This practice can be beneficial during moments of low energy or when needing a mental boost.

22

Research findings of practicing mindfulness 10 minutes per day and week's challenge to practice a 10 minute meditation daily and choose 3 informal mindfulness practices to perform during daily tasks like showering

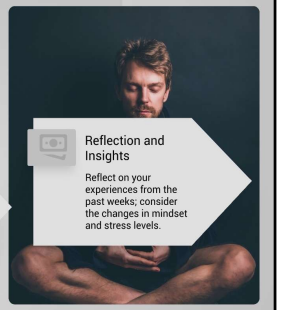
Engaging in consistent mindfulness practices can lead to significant improvements in well-being and resilience.

**Daily Meditation**

Commit to a 10-minute meditation each day, focusing on breathing and awareness.

**Introducing Informal Mindfulness**

Select 3 informal practices to integrate into your daily routine, such as mindful eating or walking.



**Reflection and Insights**

Reflect on your experiences from the past weeks; consider the changes in mindset and stress levels.

23

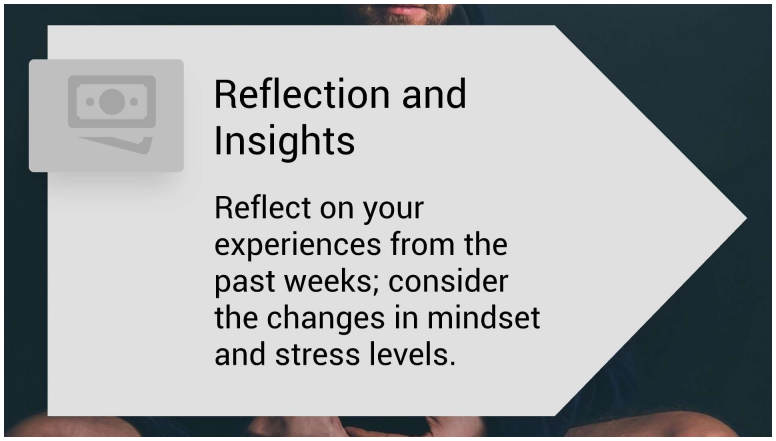
## Daily Meditation

Commit to a 10-minute meditation each day, focusing on breathing and awareness.

24


Introducing Informal Mindfulness
Select 3 informal practices to integrate into your daily routine, such as mindful eating or walking.

25


Reflection and Insights
Reflect on your experiences from the past weeks; consider the changes in mindset and stress levels.

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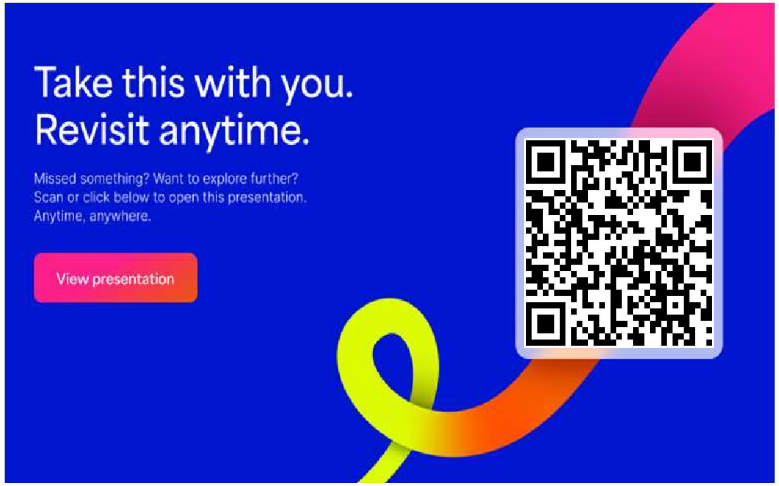
Thrive 101: Mindfulness and Resilience
An introduction into the benefits of mindfulness practices and resilience-building techniques to support student well-being.

27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