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Russell Sage College: The Journey Toward Thriving

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Abstract

In partnership with Russell Sage College (RSC), the following service-learning project outlines our situation analysis, literature review and application plan to implement strategies and resources to enable RSC's strategic initiative toward becoming a college known for well-being through an initiative called *Thrive@Russell Sage*. Leveraging research in Positive Psychology, and best practices from other colleges and universities, our team developed a Thrive "playbook" designed to support RSC's ability to 1) communicate and engage the RSC community 2) expand Thrive through the curriculum beginning with RSC 101, an introductory freshmen course and 3) enhance and expand Thrive through appreciative inquiry. We suggest measuring *Thrive@Russell Sage* impact through an annual well-being survey of students and faculty and use survey data as input to evolve their strategic plan.

Keywords

college, well-being, positive psychology, positive university model, service learning

Disciplines

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Russell Sage College: The Journey Toward Thriving

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University of Pennsylvania

A Service Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Advisor: Virginia Millar

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Russell Sage College: The Journey Toward Thriving
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Situational Analysis

Introduction to Russell Sage College and the Thrive Initiative

In 1916, Russell Sage College (RSC) was established by Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage in Troy, New York (Russell Sage College Fast Facts, 2020). Originally proposed as an all-women's institution, Margaret Sage, a women's rights advocate, had intentions to create opportunities for women by offering avenues for independence through education in the liberal arts and training for professional careers. Initially functioning within the charter of the Emma Willard School, RSC went on to grant its first baccalaureate degree in 1918 and, two years later, welcomed its first graduates (Russell Sage College, n.d.). The school was awarded its own charter in 1927 and operated as a women's school until World War II, when it established an "emergency men's division." This would ultimately lead to the expanded mission of educating men with the opening of a second campus, the Sage Junior College of Albany (New York), in Albany, NY in 1949 (Russell Sage College, n.d.). This division would earn the right to grant degrees in 1957. Over the course of time, RSC expanded from a small, liberal arts college for women, to include Sage Graduate School, Sage College of Albany, and Russell Sage College. In 2020, a charter united the entities under one name, Russell Sage College. Today, Russell Sage College is home to nearly 2500 students with 31% of that population coming from underrepresented communities (Russell Sage College, n.d.)

The "Thrive@Russell Sage" took flight in the spring of 2020 to address the wellness of members of the RSC community at-large. In addition to well-being, the focus of Thrive@Russell Sage also includes maximizing the health, happiness, and life success not only for students but for all stakeholders (faculty, staff, alumni) connected to the institution (Thrive@Russell Sage, 2020). The initiative has identified five goals through which it seeks to achieve its stated mission. Those goals are: thriving across the curriculum, producing program

branded events and courses, individual wellness, welcoming a diverse community, and sustainability (Thrive@Russell Sage, 2020). Through these goals, RSC plans to become a leader in well-being for other campuses across the country while producing outcomes which include providing access to skills that promote lifelong health, wellness, and work-life balance (Thrive@Russell Sage, 2020.). A little over one year into their strategic plan, RSC is ready to operationalize this initiative and have sought to partner with MAPP students to facilitate these goals across their school community.

To best understand RSC's objectives for our project and conduct our situation analysis, we held an initial all team discussion with our liaisons Dr. Kathleen Kelly, Dean School of Health Sciences and Dr. Ellen Cole, Professor of Psychology and MAPP graduate. Dr. Kelly and Dr. Cole are part of a group that leads Thrive@Russell Sage with a team of eleven faculty leaders and students. Our team developed an initial set of questions around RSC's development and objectives of Thrive inclusive of future outcomes and goals for students, faculty, and administration. Our questions specifically focused on understanding the history of RSC, how the Thrive committee views, understands, and interprets well-being across multiple stakeholders, and sought to narrow the scope towards being able to deliver on outcomes where Positive Psychology can most impact the Thrive initiative. Dr. Kelly and Dr. Cole articulated that one of the "north star" outcomes was for Thrive to become a significant reason why students and faculty want to be part of RSC. Our situation analysis is organized to enable a broader understanding of RSC's current situation and how we can focus our work to maximize efforts on a few key initiatives. Our situation analysis is organized into the following sections: 1) background on RSC and the Thrive initiative, 2) an analysis of the state of well-being in US colleges, and 3) focus area for Thrive service-learning project, and 4) our initial literature review proposal.

State of Well-Being in US Colleges

In our initial situation analysis, we will initially focus on understanding broader student well-being. Russell Sage College wishes to expand the Thrive initiative to include faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni which will create a strong and broad ecosystem. But RSC believes that the most importantly populace are the students, and rightfully so as they represent the largest population on campus as well as the most important recipient of what RSC has to offer in preparing young adults for the world. The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) estimates that currently approximately twenty million students will enter college for the first time each year. The excitement of newfound independence coupled with learning to navigate academic, social, and physical environment change presents significant challenges for these young students. The Healthy Minds Study, prepared annually at the University of Michigan with data collected from 54 colleges and over 50,000 students (Lipson et al., 2019), reports that 36% of students from 2018-2019 suffered from depression and 31% reported anxiety. Additionally, nearly 14% experienced suicidal ideation in the last year and 30% of students report having engaged some form of mental health treatment in the past year. This is one of several reports which shares similar data and that makes it clear our students are far from thriving.

With a seeming epidemic of depression and anxiety on campus, the treatment of students individually is not a viable option and schools must adapt their approach to be more proactive and reach more students. Several universities have begun to offer for-credit, Positive Psychology courses (NYU, University of Pennsylvania, George Mason University, Yale University). Other colleges have taken a leadership role with a more holistic approach. Notably, George Mason University created the Center for the Advancement of Well-being and has undertaken a ten-year challenge to become a model university focused on helping students, faculty and staff build a life

of vitality, purpose, resilience, and engagement (Center for Advancement of Well-being, 2021). George Mason University has a well-developed student curriculum using the science of Positive Psychology, residence life communities focused on physical and emotional well-being, and convenes an annual conference on leading practices in well-being that influence students and faculty as well as external stakeholders. Closer examination of these colleges and more will provide insight and roadmaps to what could apply to RSC students, culture, and environment.

Focus Areas for the Thrive Initiative

As we gather more information about RSC and the various stakeholder groups and current state of thriving at the college, we can clarify our goals as a support-team. We see our role as supporting the intention of infusing well-being, defined broadly, throughout the culture of RSC. We believe that the answers reside within the RSC community and we would like to help provide insights and processes that can bring those answers forth. At least four characteristics of RSC need to be understood to have a grasp of the institution:

Institutional Characteristics: Stakeholder Groups, the Schools, Campuses, History

Russell Sage College has five primary stakeholder groups: faculty, administration, staff, students, and alumni. It consists of four schools: arts and sciences, education, health sciences, and management. In addition, RSC has graduate programs within the schools of education, health sciences, and management. It has campuses in Troy and Albany and a rich history starting in 1916 as a women's college dedicated to offering young women independence. As noted above, most recently RSC's history includes a charter change beginning in fall of 2020 bringing all the different schools together under one name: Russell Sage College. To gather more information about we would like to put forth two types of questions to RSC team: first questions that clarify the various aspects and stakeholder groups of the institution, and, second, questions

issued to a small set of representatives of the stakeholder groups in an effort to learn more about each group directly.

Literature Review

Proposed Plan for Literature Review

Central to our recommendations for the Thrive@Russell Sage initiative are the students. We believe that they must be prioritized in any major recommendations or institutionally scaled interventions. Thus, the well-being of college students will remain central to our discovery. What are the biggest factors that stand in the way of their well-being? How can we pose solutions using established Positive Psychology models such as Seligman's (2011) PERMA or Prilleltensky's (2016) concept of *mattering*? A growing amount of research has considered college students and well-being including Duckworth's studies on West Point cadets (2018) as well as the impact of service learning on college student's well-being (Bowman et al., 2010). Penn's Resilience Program resilience in education (Gillham et al., 2013) also provides a model that could be of relevant use to RSC. It is of note that their current model, under its eight dimensions of well-being, includes community engagement. Even in this current digital environment, we theorize that service learning could be of great benefit to the RSC community.

It is evident that our sponsors, Dr. Kelly and Dr. Cole, are wholeheartedly committed to creating a flourishing environment at RSC, and we are appreciative of their partnership to create meaningful solutions to evolve the Thrive initiative successfully.

Our situation analysis revealed that Russell Sage College (RSC) invested significant energy into envisioning a college-wide well-being strategy called *Thrive@Russell Sage*. The Thrive strategic plan focuses on initiatives that will reach all stakeholder groups: students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni across the curriculum, programs, sustainability initiatives, and is embedded in RSC's diversity and inclusion plans. Thrive implementation has

slowed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and is also more necessary than ever as students hope to return to a full campus experience in fall 2021. Based on research from colleges with leading well-being programs such as George Mason University, University of Michigan, and the University of Washington, we have identified several best practices that have resulted in positive outcomes for students and faculty. Russell Sage College has the advantage of a small enrollment (1200 undergraduate students), intimate classes, and a beautiful campus with access to outdoor activities. Since RSC includes two campuses (Troy and Albany, New York), the Thrive initiative is an excellent way to strengthen the culture across both locations. We are currently exploring building upon three dimensions of Thrive@Russell Sage:

- Positive Psychology Education: course outline and curriculum development.
- Branded Thrive Programming: infusing well-being through RSC's culture through organizational leadership and regular events designed around well-being content to increase awareness and engagement in activities for students, faculty, and staff.
- Individual well-being: exploring education and initiatives in partnership with other campus organizations.

We will explore each of these development areas backed by literature and research that will support the connection to RSC's objectives.

Positive Psychology Education

Russell Sage College would like to immerse students in well-being education during their first year on campus. Research from Pennsylvania State University suggests that participation in Positive Psychology education early in a student's transition to college results in an improvement in adjustment, happiness, and overall well-being (Bridges et al., 2012). As we examined other college's course curriculum (Yale, NYU, University of Pennsylvania) and discussed the student experience with George Mason University, four primary areas for education and practice

emerged that can significantly benefit student well-being. RSC is also interested in a more advanced Positive Psychology course to be explored in the application plan. The elements for an introductory course are below.

Character Strengths Education

Research supports that understanding and practicing how to utilize our strengths leads to improved well-being and flourishing, especially during times of transition (Smith et al., 2020). The Values in Action (VIA) Institute for Character Strengths exists to increase knowledge of the 24 character strengths that impact how individuals think, feel, and behave. Student participation in the VIA survey will create a new level of self-awareness and everyday language that will allow for discussion on utilizing character strengths to succeed. Niemiec's (2019) research on character strengths suggests that they support greater engagement, stronger relationships, happiness, and achievement. Additionally, George Mason University estimates that more than 40,000 students have participated in their strengths-assessment tool (Gallup Strengths Finder) and report it is one of the most valuable tools for relationship building with other students and faculty (Forrest, L, personal communication).

Resilience

During times of transition, students are likely to encounter many challenges, and resilience is a skill that can help them adjust in healthy ways. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from difficulty or simply endure hardship (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Reivich & Shatte's 2002 book "The Resilience Factor" suggests that our capacity for resilience is not fixed and only partially hereditary; and those with more excellent resilience experience fewer health problems, lower stress, more positive emotions, and can more positively respond to difficulty. More recent research shows that the more people practice resilience skills, the more resilient they can become (Smith, Shatté, Perlman, Siers, & Lynch, 2018, p.1). The resilience curriculum would focus on

understanding protective factors such as self-awareness, self-efficacy, connection, and mental agility/ability to change perspectives. Boosting these skills are practical ways that can enable students to protect against anxiety and depression (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Positive Interventions

Positive Psychology interventions are intentional activities that improve our well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Additional research by Pawelski (2020) supports that definition and suggests that activities that increase positive emotions through changing our thoughts and behaviors are effective positive interventions. The first Positive Psychology interventions researched and established were The Three Good Things exercise, Using Your Signature Strengths in New Ways, and the Gratitude Visit (Peterson, 2006). College students are at a unique moment in life when they have increased freedom and the ability to decide how to spend their time, and Danzger's research (2018) supports that positive interventions focused on the following areas can lead to greater well-being:

- *Motivation and self-regulation*-Brown and Ryan (2015) propose that self-determined behavior leads to better interpersonal and performance outcomes.
- *Attention and habit*. Learning what it takes to establish good habits and break bad ones can profoundly influence overall happiness (Wood & Neal, 2016).
- *Mind and body*. Physical activity and mindfulness practices have shown significant positive effects on well-being (Faulkner, Jefferson & Mutrie, 2015; Baime, 2019).

PERMA

Seligman's (2004) model of happiness (PERMA) creates a framework to understand the various elements that cultivate individuals' well-being. PERMA examines how P: positive emotions like pleasure, enjoyment, and optimism help us, E: engagement focuses on how we feel when participating in things we enjoy and experience "flow" by doing so, R: relationships

explore how important close friends, family, and social connections are to our well-being, M: meaning and understanding why we do the things we do that give us fulfillment is a critical aspect of happiness, and A: accomplishment provides a sense of pride, impact, and achievement and pushes us to continue to strive for more. Additionally, the PERMA profiler assessment (Butler & Kern, 2016) can provide a framework for students to explore various aspects of their lives and prioritize changes in areas that may need more attention or bolster aspects that are already strong.

Branded Programming

Russell Sage College seeks to become an institution where well-being, wellness, and thriving across the community are synonymous with its name. As part of their Thrive initiative, they endeavor to create branded programming that provides community members opportunities to engage and flourish physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, occupationally, spiritually, financially, and environmentally (Russell Sage College, 2020). Below we discuss how to use various organizational tools and tactics to help infuse well-being across the entire college community. We begin with an overview and discussion of collaborative team-enhancing practices followed by principles of valuing and mattering that facilitate personal contribution and recognition.

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit

Imagine 500 people under one roof, representing all RSC stakeholders, organized in groups of eight at round tables, gathered with the collective purpose to create actionable designs and specific plans to infuse Thrive throughout the college community. Within 30 minutes of arriving, each table engages in profound, meaningful conversation about institutional and individual strengths that are directly relevant to the topic: "Make Thrive Come Alive" at RSC. Collective visions develop through brainstorming and grouping of like ideas displayed on 4' x 8'

foam core boards distributed around the perimeter. People "vote with their feet" by going to the initiative that excites them the most. New groups form around each initiative, and actionable designs and plans will soon develop. Within one week, each group has taken their first step, and the ubiquitous revitalization of the Thrive initiative has taken off with a flurry of excitement, infusing the entire community with new collective energy and purpose: Thrive has come alive! This scenario is the embodiment of the appreciative inquiry summit (Cooperrider, 2012; Cooperrider et al., 2008; & Ludema et al., 2003).

A Positive University

Now imagine a forward-thinking college where positive relationships, active engagement, a deep sense of meaning and accomplishment, and positive feelings for self and others abound through five key sectors: the classroom, social contexts, connection with the local community, faculty, and administration, and living environments. Oades et al. (2011) have developed a system to do just that. Designed for the unique characteristics of colleges and utilizing Positive Psychology (PP) and positive organizational scholarship (POS), this approach goes beyond positive education by infusing well-being throughout the institution using PERMA, as referenced before, a Positive Psychology theory of well-being developed by Dr. Martin Seligman (2011).

Appreciative Teams

Appreciative inquiry can support teams of all sizes. Crafting positive questions that investigate, uplift, and empower what is of value, is a crucial part of AI. Whitney et al. (2004) provides a framework for using inquiry to create "high-performance teams." Carefully crafted questions support vital areas, including trust and camaraderie, the alignment of strengths, energizing meetings, project visions and goals, and team identity and pride. Questions provide for specific outcome topics such as playful productivity, collaboration across teams, and quick

recovery from challenges. These then group under overarching content areas like procedural clarity, roles and responsibilities, and relationships that empower and support. Questions start by eliciting recollections of remarkable success around the topic. Next will be drilling down into the specific elements that created success and creative thinking about how those qualities might apply to current or future challenges. The book concludes with a practical guide on creating an effective process for an institution's context and circumstance to use the questions and strategies.

Positive Leadership

Diane Trif (2020) has developed a micro-class to infuse higher education leadership teams with the tools of Positive Psychology and positive organizational scholarship to support extensive collaborations within and amongst teams to help carry out institution-wide initiatives and transform college culture. The course provides instruction in Martin Seligman's PERMA (2011) and the use of character strengths (Niemiec, 2018), as well as POS's "high-quality connections" (HQCs) (Dutton, 2003; Stephens et al., 2011). It provides theory and tools for using character strengths and HQC's "task enabling" to ignite institutional change and references assessments for meaning at work, character strengths, and well-being.

High-Quality Connections (HQCs)

The HQC theory posits that work performed through social processes that include a myriad of daily connections, each of which can either build positive energy and vitality within individuals and organizations; or those same connections can deplete energy (Dutton, 2003; Stephens et al., 2011). Utilizing HQC's can benefit higher education by improving cooperation, interdepartmental coordination, individual attachment to the college, a sense of purpose, healthy communication, and the ability to change (Dutton, 2003). This theory posits three critical mechanisms through which HQCs can build energy and vitality: cognitive processes, emotional processes, and behaviors (Stephens et al., 2011). Jane Dutton (2003) describes three ways to

build HQCs: respectful engagement, task enabling, and building trust. She further shares the pitfalls of "corrosive connections," how to deal with them to avoid their energy-depleting effects and provides comprehensive advice on building organizational contexts that promote HQCs.

Positive Conversations

Jackie Stavros & Cheri Torres (2018) provide a framework for turning conversations into explorations that frame and help actualize the positive, aspirational opposite of a given problem, getting beyond going from -50 to 0 (problem-solving) by developing strategies to reach + 50 (aspiration achieving). They describe a flexible AI process to discover strengths and develop aspirations, designs, and specific plans to achieve aspirations.

Mattering

Mattering is considered an innate trait not merely to belong but also to belong with significance (Baumeister and Leary, 2018). Furthermore, mattering is considered a human need to add meaning, positive affect, and depth to the individual and collective human experience (Flett, 2018). Research has shown that when students feel as though they matter, they produce better academically, have higher levels of school and community engagement, and lower their risks of suicide (Prilleltensky, 2020). As RSC intends to create a culture of well-being synonymous with their school identity, they must consider programmatic efforts built on increasing the sense of mattering and belonging among their campus community members. The application plan of this portion of the strategic goals will explore cultivating and offering specific programmatic efforts and opportunities that shape organizational culture, aimed at the following objectives- service to others, self-identity, skill acquisition, and social connection.

Community Service

Prilleltensky (2020) identifies the two aspects of mattering as feeling valued and adding value, noting that one needs both to achieve a sense of mattering. Adding value includes acts that

are seen as chances to make a difference or contribute to others and add to something larger than oneself (Prilleltensky, 2020). Campus programming within the Thrive initiative must offer opportunities that allow community members to add value to others. An example could include infusing on-campus service-learning projects in classroom culture and campus organizations, more chances to volunteer with internal and external partners, as well as peer-to-peer services. Adding value has been linked to increased happiness, boosted self-esteem, increased self-efficacy, and reduced symptoms of depression, all of which are measures that are reflective of individuals' well-being (Prilleltensky, 2020).

Self-Identity Expression

The aspect of feeling value is a crucial component to mattering, and looks like being appreciated, respected, and recognized through the means of diversity, belonging inclusion, and fairness (Prilleltensky, 2020). Being denied the chance to feel like one matters deprives a person of their humanity, which has adverse impacts on individual and community well-being, altogether (Prilleltensky, 2020). Researchers have determined that one of the most significant predictors of adult well-being is feeling valued in the formative years (Kaplan & Flum, 2012). Members of the RSC community must have support of programming and organizational culture that promotes diversity and inclusion and recognizes all its shareholders' given and chosen identities. As members of a community feel valued as members of that community, they are more likely to give (add) to that community, increasing their chances of enhanced subjective well-being and wellness (Prilleltensky, 2020).

Skill-Acquisition

A sense of mattering also requires engaging and acquiring skills (Prilleltensky, 2020). Learning skills are part of a healthy environment and further promote self-expression, increases self-efficacy and self-determination (Prilleltensky, 2020). Part of the programming at RSC

should include efforts that increase skills amongst the community. Research has linked skill acquisition to autonomy and personal choice, both of which are present dimensions in cultures that promote mattering (Prilleltensky, 2020).

Social Bonds

Thrive branded programming should provide opportunities for developing and continuing social bonds. Research has shown social connections to link with lowering the experience of loneliness, which is negatively associated with subjective well-being (Mellor et al., 2008). Prilleltensky (2020) asserts that achieving a psychological sense of community results from one's feeling of mattering. The need to connect and belong to social groups and communities is an innate human need, expressed through the forming and maintaining quality interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 2018). It is human to socialize and connect, and research shows an experience of positive affect that comes from belonging to and operating within social groups and social contact (Baumeister & Leary, 2018). It was reported in 2001 that 53% of 1455 college students surveyed identified themselves as depressed since starting college, attributing it partly to feeling lonely (Dixon & Robinson, 2008). Research suggests that programming that focuses on building and widening social connections amongst community members will increase well-being.

Individual Well-being

If our approach is to be holistic, we must complement our big picture solutions noted in previous sections, focusing on the smallest possible unit: the individual student attending Russell Sage College. This approach aligns with Thrive's fourth goal of *individual wellness*.

Mental Health Services

Attending college is one of the most stressful and developmental periods in a young adult's life. Although some thrive in the collegiate environment, suicide is the second leading

cause of death for college students (Turner et al., 2013). The importance of quality and available mental health services cannot be understated, and RSC should ensure Thrive effectively communicates access to mental health services. RSC should also consider advertising free mobile apps such as *Woebot*, which research shows can effectively use technology to deliver cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) to young adults with symptoms of anxiety and depression (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017).

Physical Activity & Exercise

Another way to address depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges that college students may face is through movement (Ratey & Manning, 2014). In a study conducted on college-age students, self-esteem and positive affect increased due to physical exercise, which helps increase the quality of life in these young adults (Joseph et al., 2013). Thus, RSC should prioritize exercise as a focus in their Thrive initiative, especially encouraging students to find a form of exercise that is intrinsically motivating to them, allowing them to enjoy the activity and find pleasure during the activity and not just for the outcome. Mindful-based movement courses, which encourage attention to the present moment, such as Pilates and yoga, have also increased well-being and even sleep quality in college students (Caldwell et al., 2010).

Self-Application of Positive Psychology

In addition to skills learned in a Positive Psychology course mentioned in the first part of this review, students should learn frameworks to apply skills to themselves at the moment they need them. In courses such as Penn Resilience Program (PRP), students learn various methods to apply Positive Psychology interventions to themselves. For example, in a method called the "ABCs," students learn a form of *mindfulness*, recognizing the relationship between how A: Adversity can trigger inner B: Beliefs and lead to a specific C: Consequence (Reivich & Shatte,

2002). With practice, students can challenge current counterproductive belief systems and different resulting consequences that increase well-being.

The research, best practices from other universities, and literature reviewed provide a strong foundation to prepare for our application plan for RSC. Armed with this knowledge, we hope to assist RSC as they implement their Thrive initiative in a manner that will increase well-being across the entire community.

Application Plan

Our situational analysis revealed that RSC could benefit from an informed approach to a top-down Positive Psychology implementation. Through their previously established Thrive initiative, they aim to transform the culture and identity of their institution, ultimately becoming a model college for well-being across the country. Building on our previous research and analysis of Russell Sage College, we have devised a three-phase approach that could assist Russell Sage College in their roll-out and implementation of the Thrive initiative, enabling the community to engage in the process "from Survive to Thrive."

1. Phase I: Synchronization of Thrive communication and curriculum.
2. Phase II: Appreciative Inquiry summit and infusing PERMA throughout RSC culture.
3. Phase III: Training from an empirically validate skills-based Resilience Program.

Phase I

Thrive Communication

As students return to more normal campus life after COVID-19 and shift from surviving to thriving, it is the perfect time to officially launch Thrive@Russell Sage College through ongoing communication. We learned from George Mason University (Forrest, personal communication February 24, 2021) that an effective way to inform and engage students about well-being is through an ongoing communication vehicle that is produced by a central person

such as a “Thrive Coordinator” so that RSC can integrate messaging and events across all dimensions of the Thrive strategic plan. Examples of communication can be found linked in Appendix A. Russell Sage College may also choose to further brand and explain Thrive in their initial communication by defining it as **T**ogether, **H**ealth, **R**esilience, **I**dentify, **V**aluing and **E**mpowering their community.

The purpose of launching targeted Thrive communication is to begin education around well-being to engage and inform students about opportunities to participate in campus wide well-being initiatives. A best practice George Mason University suggested was the creation of a "what does well-being mean to you" campaign where students are featured in video or print sharing personal stories about how they think about their own well-being and what they do to improve it (Forrest, personal communication February 24, 2021).

Thrive Curriculum

Research from Pennsylvania State University suggests that participation in Positive Psychology education early in a student's transition to college results in an improvement in adjustment, happiness, and overall well-being (Bridges et al., 2012). Positive Psychology education can be adapted and added to the existing RSC 101 course, already required for all incoming freshmen. The concepts that align well with the current syllabus and modules in the course include the following:

1. Week one will provide character strengths education. Research supports that understanding and practicing how to utilize our strengths leads to improved well-being and flourishing, especially during transition times (Smith et al., 2020). Students would take the VIA assessment and discuss in small groups to increase self-awareness and build relationships. Students would explain their top character strengths to each other.

2. Week two will cover resilience. During times of transition, students are likely to encounter many challenges, and resilience is a skill that can help them adjust in healthy ways. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from difficulty or endure hardship (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Students would participate in modules about protective factors, optimism and thinking traps.
3. Weeks three through seven will explore different aspects of well-being using PERMA. Seligman's (2004) model of happiness (PERMA) creates a framework to understand the various elements that cultivate individuals' well-being. PERMA examines how P: positive emotions like pleasure, enjoyment, and optimism help us. E: engagement focuses on how we feel when participating in things we enjoy and experience "flow" by doing so. R: relationships explore how important close friends, family, and social connections are to our well-being. M: meaning and understanding why we do the things we do that give us fulfillment is a critical aspect of happiness. A: accomplishment provides a sense of pride, impact, and achievement and pushes us to continue to strive for more. Additionally, the PERMA profiler (Butler, J. & Kern, M. L., 2015) assessment can be used for self-assessment to provide a framework for students to explore various aspects of their well-being and collaboratively develop plans for enhancement.

The curriculum will begin to be scoped and developed for a three-credit Positive Psychology course by the Thrive Coordinator and existing RSC 101 instructors. It will be accessible to all students who wish to further their knowledge of the science of well-being. This course would expand on the research and practice of positive interventions and Positive Psychology. Course syllabus examples are listed in Appendix A.

Phase II

A Cultural Infusion of PERMA in Russell Sage College

As Russel Sage College endeavors to become a positive institution where its Thrive initiative resonates and promotes flourishing across all components of its community, we recommend that one of the first steps in this continual process be an in-depth focus on ensuring leadership understands the model of PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishments; all of which work together to increase well-being and enable thriving (Seligman, 2011). The forming of a positive institution requires an intentional focus on organizational culture and infusing the foundations of this positive culture into those responsible for shaping it. Redefining the culture requires that its leaders do not simply believe in Thrive and the components of Positive Psychology from which it is birthed, but that, in all things, they embody Thrive. This means that with every level of leadership, culture shapers are not simply promoting others' well-being but participating in the actions that enhance their own well-being. Without a straightforward adoption of PERMA in their own personal and professional practices, any attempt at sustaining a defined positive culture could be short-lived, if reached at all.

To begin this process of institutionalizing PERMA and creating a "positive college," we propose a week-long intensive for the leaders of all departments of the college. This retreat's objective is to create genuine buy-in from all leading stakeholders by immersing them in the teachings of Positive Psychology for personal integration. To achieve this objective, the first task should be to define "positive college" and PERMA for all stakeholders. Active creation of this positive institution is more than promotion; it is participation. Participation, however, will risk the integrity and delivery of what is being created without the context of the definition. The next task to help reach the objective would be to describe what this new culture looks and feels like across the college community. At this point, the re-introduction/reinvigoration of Thrive would be in order ("from survive to Thrive"). Becoming a positive institution demands a consistency of culture to be present across all aspects of the organization, and that culture first begins with the

people who have their hands on its direction. During this time of reinvigoration, leaders should build on what they have learned about PERMA, using that knowledge to assess what a thriving culture and campus looks like in its alignment with PERMA at the individual and institutional levels.

We believe that only after there is active buy-in from the top down, which includes demonstrable knowledge, healthy curiosity, and personal/professional integration, should the organization begin to invite the remaining stakeholders from the community to the table for horizontal collaborations. The AI summit and PERMA across five college contexts, below, will both benefit immensely from the successful execution of this first step.

Appreciative Inquiry Summit

As mentioned in the literature review, "Make Thrive Come Alive" could be the theme for an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process and summit: a gathering of hundreds representing all stakeholders to collectively discover RSC's institutional strengths born out of its remarkable history and resilient present; envision the best possible future for RSC around the Thrive initiative; develop specific, actionable designs to move toward that vision; and create realistic short, mid, and long-term plans to instigate those designs (Cooperrider, 2012; Cooperrider et al., 2008; & Ludema et al., 2003). This is a process that has been successful at other higher education institutions. In 2018, George Mason University executed a successful AI summit: "*Building an Inclusive University for the World Where You Matter and Thrive!*" (George Mason University AI Working group, 2018). In April 2018, nearly four-hundred individuals representing a wide variety of university stakeholders came together for a day. They infused zest, enthusiasm, and university-wide buy-in for their remarkable initiative that remains vibrant and successful to this day. The post-summit report cited above is invaluable reading for a college considering this process.

To make such an event and the important post-summit follow-through successful requires a lot of planning and pre-work, which furthers positive college culture from day one. It will require hiring expert(s) in Appreciative Inquiry, forming a design team, holding an Appreciative Inquiry training, and regular meetings for months to set the groundwork for a successful summit and post-summit. It will involve interviewing representatives of every stakeholder group (see stakeholder map, Appendix B) to help inform and focus the summit's work and create positive anticipation for, and awareness of the upcoming event. Publicity, budgeting, event planning, designing metrics to gauge future success all will need to be done prior to the summit, as will the design of the summit, and the post-summit work plan (see Appendix C for more detail). This may seem daunting, but the positive impact of this appreciative process starts the moment you begin. Whether one-on-one or in a large group from the very first conversation forward, every related conversation builds positive college culture that expands outward like the ripples from a stone being thrown into a pond.

PERMA Across Five College Contexts Using Appreciative Team Building

Following is a suggested process for utilizing the approach described in Oades et al. *Towards a Positive University* (2011) to infuse well-being throughout the college. PERMA model of well-being developed by Martin Seligman (2011) will be used for this process. As previously mentioned, this model consists of five components: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Utilizing the stakeholder map created by the Appreciative Inquiry process, develop stakeholder teams of four to eight individuals relevant to each of the five college contexts described in the article: classroom, social environment, local community, faculty/administration, residential. For example, the classroom team could include students, faculty, and alumni; the residence team could include students, administration/staff, and family. Each team then develops an appreciative interview process using *Appreciative*

teambuilding: Positive questions to bring out the best of your team, Whitney, et al. (2004) as a guide. One-on-one interviews are thereby designed and utilized to engage dozens of relevant stakeholders in developing strategies for infusing each of the five well-being areas of PERMA within their college context. Each team themes and analyzes the data from their interviews and develops a recommendations document. The five documents are gathered into one report which is disseminated throughout the college community. All individuals on each of the five teams will need to read Oades, et al. (2011) and have access to a copy of Whitney, et al. (2004).

Phase III

Training in Applied Positive Psychology

Our proposed application plan's final phase is to equip Russell Sage College with subject matter experts in applied Positive Psychology. Russell Sage should consider using key faculty members to receive this training to certify them to host workshops and teach students applied Positive Psychology skills. For example, the Penn Resilience Program (Penn Resilience Program and PERMA Workshops | Positive Psychology Center, n.d.) is an empirically validated program that teaches how to apply Positive Psychology skills to increase resilience. This program's skills increase the following competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, character strengths, connection to others, and optimism (Penn Resilience Program and PERMATM Workshops | Positive Psychology Center, n.d.).

To avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest, the authors of this paper affirm that they are neither involved with Penn's Resilience Program nor are they sponsoring or officially recommending it; instead, they use Penn's Resilience Program as an example of a type of solution for implementation.

Measurement and Evaluation of Thrive

As the Thrive strategies come to life, it will be important to track and measure specific progress, success and adapt as necessary. Many colleges and universities have implemented annual well-being surveys that provide significant data on how students are experiencing college life. We suggest that RSC implement an annual spring survey, beginning in 2022, that focuses on student well-being, assess if students understand Thrive resources and gather additional feedback on multiple aspects of campus life that contribute to well-being. Examples to review include Columbia University's 2018 report, University of Wisconsin (Madison) 2018/2019 Healthy Minds Survey and University of Pennsylvania's 2017 PULSE survey. As part of Thrive communication, measurement, and evaluation we recommend that RSC publishes the survey findings annually and adapts the Thrive strategic plan based on student feedback.

(for Application Materials: see Appendix D)

Summary

We believe that our approach provides holistic adoptions which all serve to assist Russell Sage College in its journey towards becoming an institutional leader of resilience and wellness for students. We believe success can be achieved through focused efforts on communication and curriculum, an appreciative inquiry summit with critical stakeholders, integrating the PERMA model through RSC culture, and empirically using skills-based applied Positive Psychology training. This phased approach lays the groundwork for how RSC could further begin its journey towards attaining success through the Thrive initiative.

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University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center (course syllabi)

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/course-syllabi-teachers>

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Appendix A: Resources and Materials

George Mason University Center for Advancement of Well-being weekly newsletter

<https://well-being.gmu.edu/articles/15684>

University of Wisconsin Madison Center for Healthy Minds newsletter and events listing

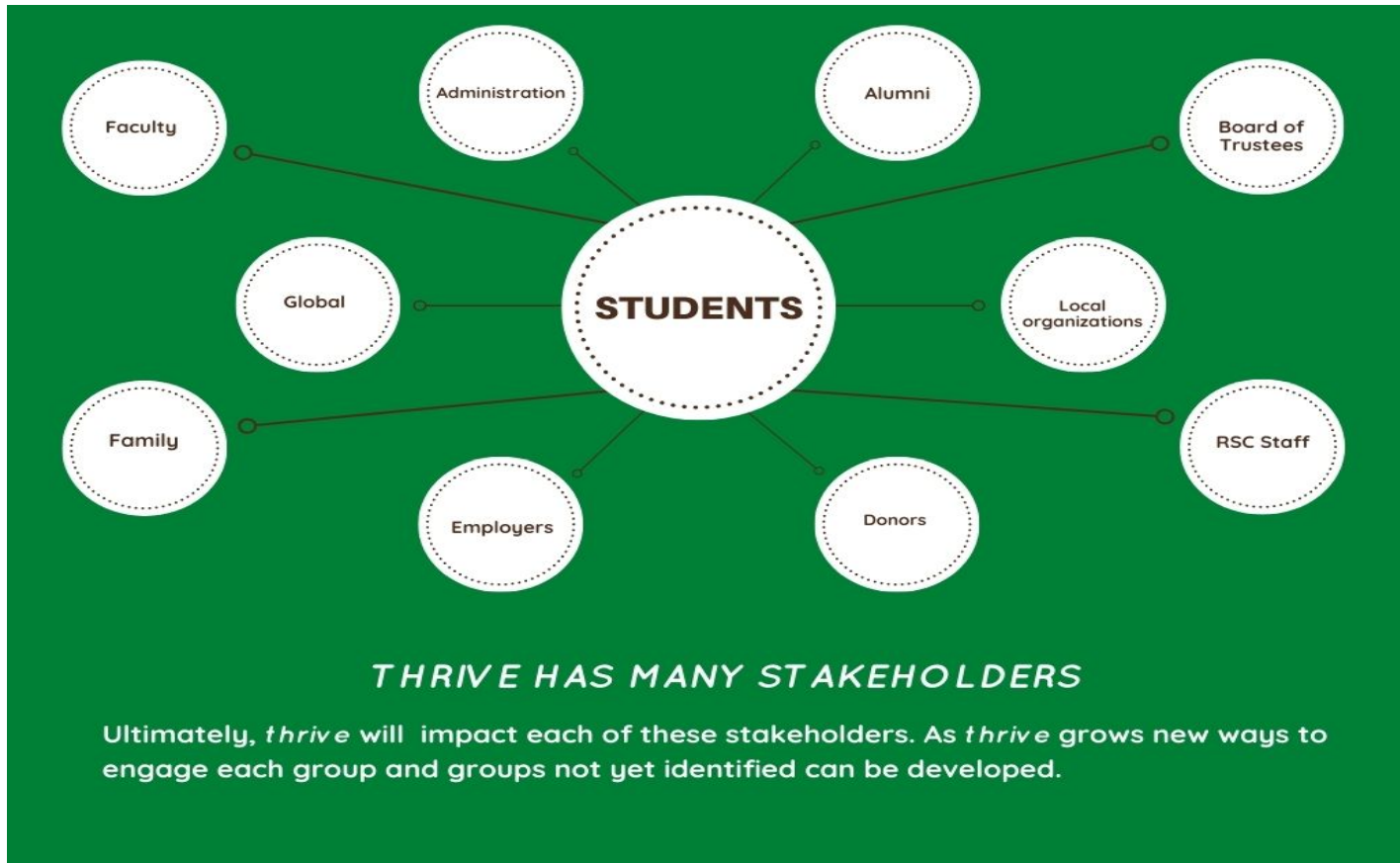
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<https://centerhealthyminds.org/news/events>

University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center (multiple three-credit course syllabi)

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/course-syllabi-teachers>

Appendix B: Russell Sage College Stakeholder Map



Appendix C: Appreciative Inquiry Summit Process

- a. Choose RSC AI Summit cochairs
- b. Bring in AI experts (can initially be one but likely will expand to 2 or 3)
- c. Create an RSC stakeholder map, representing all stakeholder groups.
- d. Create core team of 8 to 12 representing a cross-section of stakeholders
- e. AI experts train the core team
- f. Create a design team of perhaps 12-24 individuals including the core team and others more fully representing all stakeholder groups.
- g. Choose three or four chief summit facilitators including the hired expert(s) and at least one RSC leader.
- h. Design team training by AI experts
- i. Design Team meets regularly (perhaps every other week for months):
 - i. Pre-Summit work
 1. Create subcommittees as necessary to execute the below
 2. Determine Initial theme, such as: “make Thrive come alive at RSC”
 3. Reality check: what is realistic?
 4. Budgeting
 5. Timeline / schedule: meeting times for the design team and execution of the steps outlined below
 6. Development of pre-summit interview data collection protocols.
 7. Execution of pre-summit interviews and data collection. (Interviews of representatives from each stakeholder group.)
 8. Theme and summarize the interview data
 9. Utilize the summarized data to help determine the theme, over-arching values, and direction of the summit, and to inform the summit process and handbooks.
 10. Summit championing, publicity
 11. Summit logistics and event planning: space, coordination, materials, food, technology, set up, breakdown, registration, etc.
 12. Development of metrics/process to measure success.
 - ii. Design the summit (with guidance from chief facilitators/ AI expert(s))
 1. Utilize the summarized data from pre-summit interviews to inform the following:
 2. Determine the theme for the Summit
 3. Design the four-D the process/protocol that will guide the summit (develop a series of appreciative questions that facilitate):
 - a. Discovery: uncovering core institutional strengths
 - b. Dream: given these strengths, imagine the best possible future for RSC that fulfills the theme of the summit.

- c. Mid-session break / lunch: summit facilitators group ideas from the dream sessions into 5 to 20 themes and represent them on 4' x 8' foam core boards placed vertically encircling the space.
 - i. Participants “vote with their feet,” they choose one of the initiatives forming teams for each initiative
 - d. Design: each initiative team brainstorms ideas to fulfill the dream/initiative, groups like ideas, chooses one, and rapidly designs a rough prototype of that idea
 - e. Deploy: develop specific post-summit next steps: quick “wins,” medium and long-term goals. Set dates, times, places for initial follow up meetings.
 - 4. Create summit facilitator handbook
 - 5. Create summit participant handbook
 - 6. Determine the need for and invite a team of assistant summit facilitators (10-20) (Ideally professionals with some training or experience in appreciative inquiry). Provide them with:
 - a. The facilitator handbook
 - b. Brief training the day before the Summit.
- iii. Post-Summit work plan (must be planned thoroughly prior to the summit to ensure seamless and effective follow-through and infusion of summit outcomes throughout the entire community for months and years to come.)
 - 1. Assignments- who will do what regarding the below...
 - 2. Communication systems and team
 - 3. Celebrations, rituals, energetic and fun events designed to infuse the community. (To be more fully planned post-summit: perhaps this is one of the initiatives developed during the summit that has an entire team behind it.)
 - 4. Timeline for the process for each initiative group
 - 5. Check-ins, cross initiative support (bi-monthly zoom check-in's? follow-up mini-summit in six months? Another full summit in 12 or 24 months?)
 - 6. Creation and dispersion of summit report
 - 7. Anticipate stumbling blocks / strategies to overcome them
 - 8. What haven't we thought of yet?
- j. Host the Summit!
- k. Post-Summit: as planned prior to the summit and carried out by the design team and leaders of each initiative developed at the Summit.

Appendix D: Application Materials

thrive @ Russell Sage

MAPP 714: Applying Positive Interventions in Institutions
Team Violet Presentation
April 2021



By: Dawaine Cosey, Paige DeLacey, Duncan Ferguson, Jozlyn McCaw

RS RUSSELL SAGE COLLEGE
ALBANY & TROY

]

THRIVE@Russell Sage College

Playbook April 2021



Russell Sage College Background

- Founded 1916 in Troy, New York
- Initially an all women's college
- Opened an "emergency" men's division during WWII
- This prompted the expansion to Sage Junior College in Albany, New York
- A charter united all RSC entities under one name Russell Sage College in 2020
- Today Russell Sage College enrolls 2500 undergraduate students across campuses
- 31% of students are from under-represented backgrounds



What is the current state?

Strengths

- Faculty and administration have high commitment to well-being as part of their mission and strategic plan
- RSC 101 curriculum is already focused on aspects of well-being
- Small student enrollment makes it easier to engage and impact
- Campus is beautifully connected to nature and being outdoors
- THRIVE initiative is broad and focused on health, well-being, success and happiness

Opportunities

- Covid-19 has significantly disrupted plans to launch THRIVE@ RSC
- Leveraging positive psychology research and interventions in curriculum
- Engaging faculty, administration and staff more fully in THRIVE next steps
- Curriculum development and skill building
- Increased, targeted and resourced communication to make THRIVE come alive!

Literature Review

- note that we spoke with GMU and investigated other universities well-being programs
- positive university model
- positive psychology education at colleges and universities (popular programs like Yale, NYU, U Penn)

Education and curriculum college's course curriculum (Yale, NYU, University of Pennsylvania)

Character Strengths education. (Smith et al., 2020). Niemiec's (2019)

Resilience. (Reivich & Shatte, 2003; Smith, Tooley, Christopher, & Kay, 2010; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

PERMA. Seligman's (2004) model of happiness (PERMA)

The appreciative inquiry (AI) summit. (Cooperrider, 2012; Cooperrider et al., 2008; & Ludema et al., 2003).

Positive University Oades et al. (2011)

Skill-Acquisition. A sense of mattering also requires engaging and acquiring skills (Prilleltensky, 2020).



Russell Sage College

THRIVE Playbook

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How do we bring THRIVE to life?

Russell Sage College is committed to creating an environment where everyone thrives.

Positive Psychology is the study of the science of well-being and creates a natural link to tools and practices within Russell Sage College THRIVE initiative.

This playbook will provide a recommended approach to communication, infusing the curriculum with positive psychology core concepts and suggestions for enhancing the culture by engaging students, faculty and staff.



Overview: Implementation Recommendations

A phased approach to THRIVE will create an inclusive environment that allows students and faculty to understand and personalize what THRIVE means to them.

Phase	One	Two	Three
Purpose	Communicate, engage and excite faculty and students about THRIVE @RSC	Enhance THRIVE culture throughout the entire college community	Broaden courses offered with positive psychology and Thrive concepts
Audience	Faculty and Administration RSC 101 students All students	All RSC stakeholders	Students who wish to further their knowledge and skills in positive psychology and well-being
Actions and suggested implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) THRIVE campaign and weekly newsletter launch2) Adapt RSC 101 to include positive psychology education concepts	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Well-being across five college contexts2) Appreciative Inquiry Summit	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Three credit positive psychology course developed + offered2) Expand skill building opportunities

Phase One



THRIVE is.....

Together

The entire community @ RSC

Health

Emotional, Physical, Spiritual

Resilience

Learning to bounce back from setbacks

Identify

Nurturing the “I”

Valuing

Adding value and being valued

Empowering

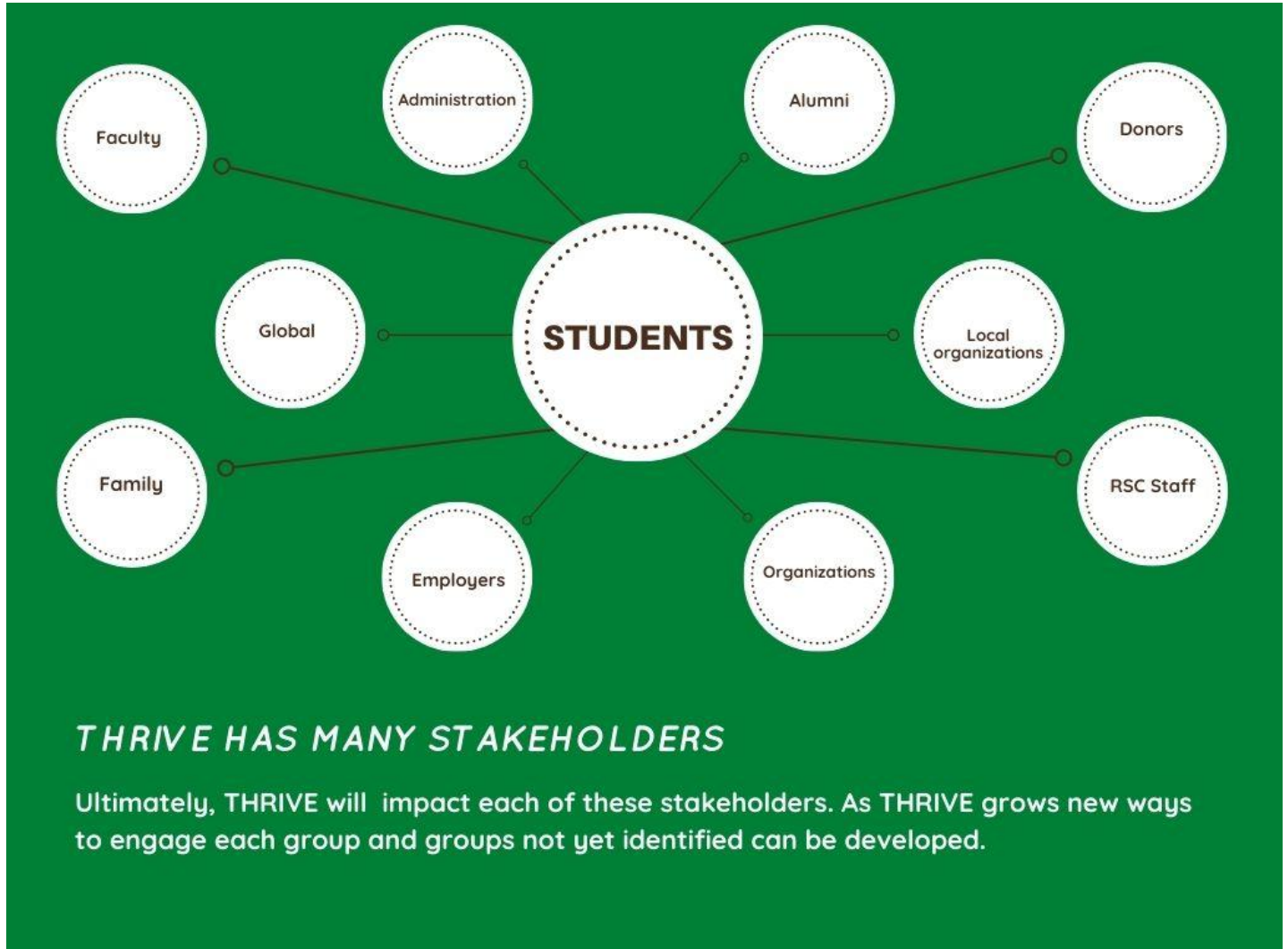
Tools and resources to encourage



THRIVE Stakeholders (possible graphic??)

**THRIVE Coordinator

(working on professional looking digital version) will be finished by either the application plan OR final project the 24th



THRIVE Communication

THRIVE will launch communication materials to educate and engage stakeholders around well-being and opportunities to participate in sponsored activities. Marketing materials will be used to expose and excite the community about the initiative.

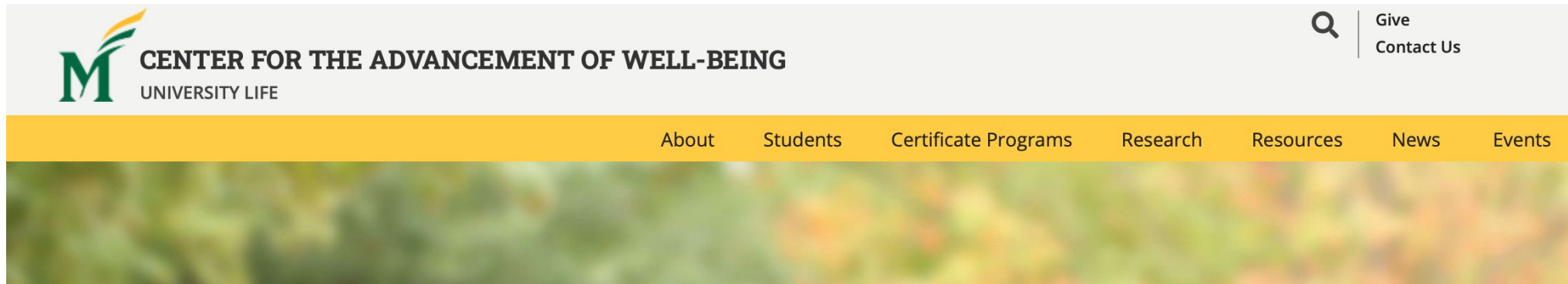
Education: communication includes information that explains the THRIVE initiative, presents facts about the benefits of well-being practices, and connects to resources (George Mason University, 2021).

Engagement: communication will present opportunities to community to participate in activities (University of Wisconsin, 2021).

Expose/Excite: increased THRIVE visibility and viability throughout campus community, to include a carefully designed “how do we THRIVE” campaign featuring members of the community telling their own personal stories (George Mason University, 2021).

THRIVE Communication: digital best practices

Education and engagement can be presented through a newsletter and platform that is easily accessible to the multiple members of the community. A landing page would serve as a THRIVE hub for information. The website would house and archive the newsletter, updated resources, shared research, and sponsored events.



George Mason University Center for Advancement of Well-being weekly newsletter
<https://wellbeing.gmu.edu/articles/15684>

THRIVE Communication (t shirt photo here)

Utilize communication materials to increase the visibility of THRIVE amongst the community.

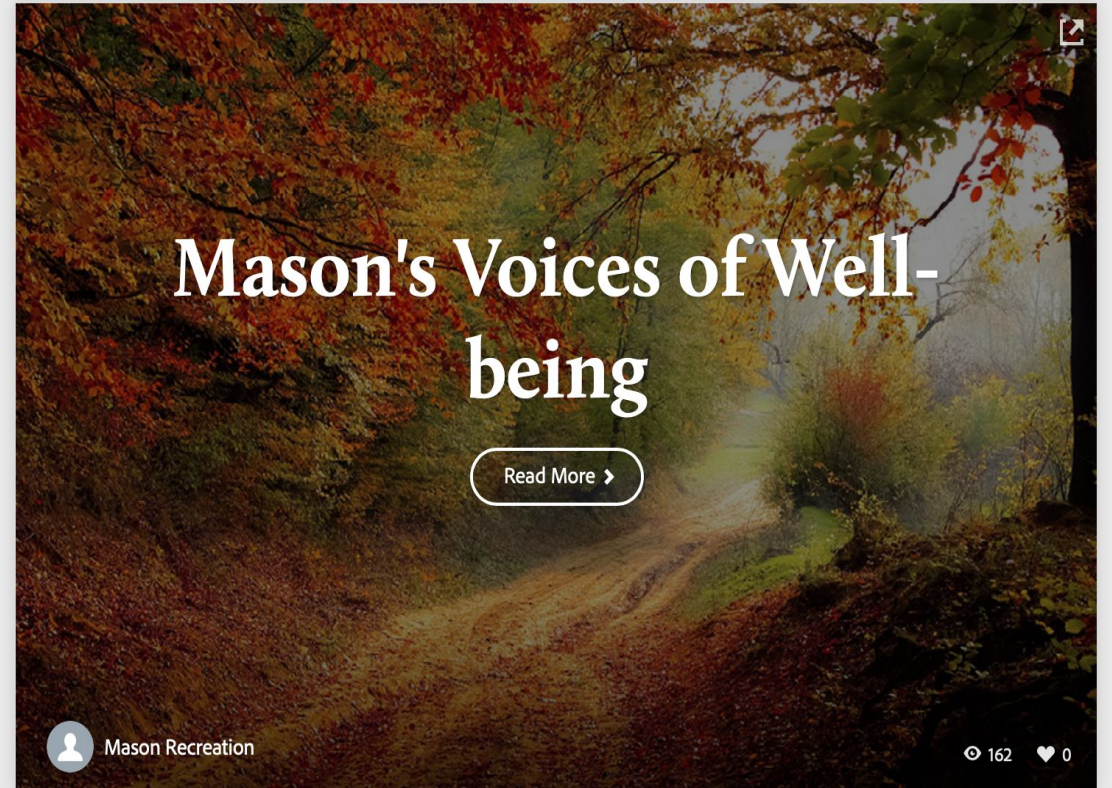
Create communication materials and swag for the campus that brand THRIVE in order to promote the cultural shift and create interest and excitement.

Campaign: How do you THRIVE?

VOICE TO MY WELL-BEING SERIES | HIKING & MORE!

Posted: December 1, 2020 at 3:03 pm, Last Updated: December 1, 2020 at 3:11 pm

Read more about how Chris Sato, Mason Recreation Professional staff member, enhances his well-being!



THRIVE Communication

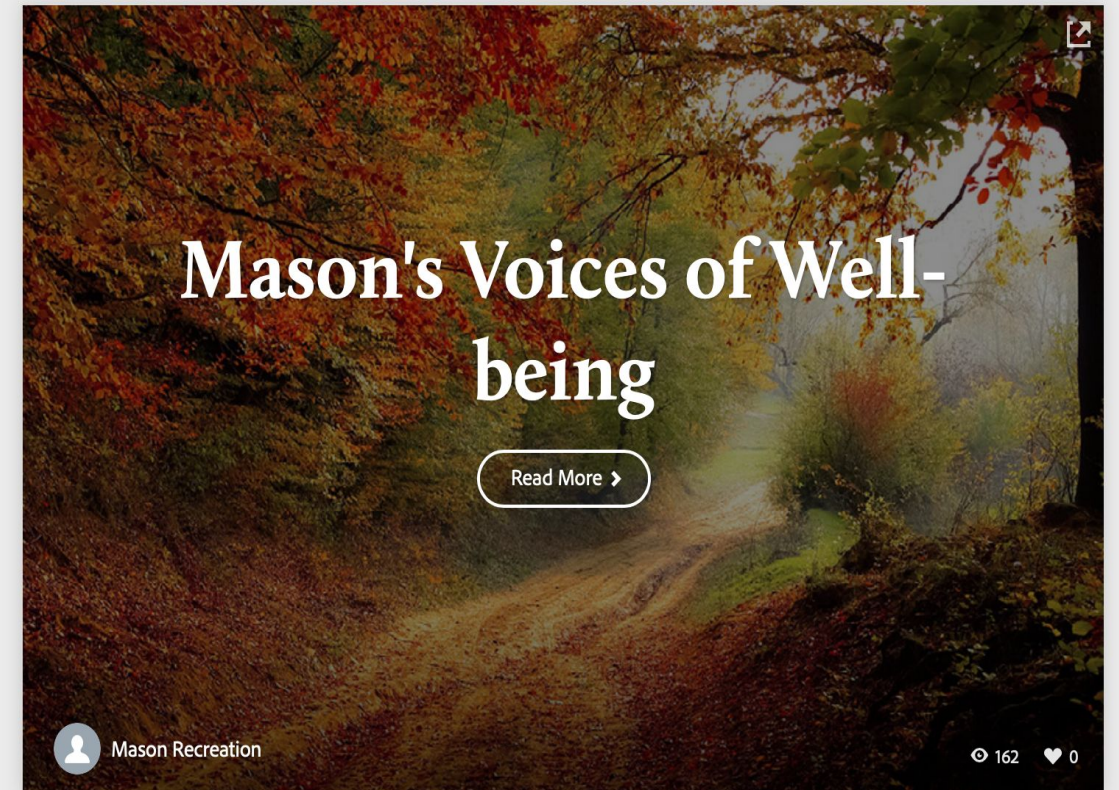
Exposure/Excitement communication should aim to increase the visibility of THRIVE amongst the intended community.

Personalized communication with stakeholder testimonies through an intentional campaign will further integrate and centralize THRIVE across the campus culture and community.

VOICE TO MY WELL-BEING SERIES | HIKING & MORE!

Posted: December 1, 2020 at 3:03 pm, Last Updated: December 1, 2020 at 3:11 pm

Read more about how Chris Sato, Mason Recreation Professional staff member, enhances his well-being!



Positive College Model

How might we create positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and sense of accomplishment (for all stakeholders) across five college contexts?

	Classroom	Social	Local Community	Faculty / Admin	Residence Life
Positive Emotion	Humor, related literature, music	Encourage generosity	Having a positive human impact	PP info sessions	Strengths-spotting of fellow students
Engagement	Mindfulness, quiet rooms	Broad framework, Students can fill-in		Engaging meeting practices	PP information nights
Relationships	Group assignments, strengths spotting	Kindness strategy / values	Civic participation	Reward team endeavors	Cross-cultural events
Meaning	Curric. w student strengths, values		Virtuous organization	Job crafting	Life-long links to the college
Accomplishment			Disseminate Knowledge	Coaching, PP based appraisal	Coaching, evidence based

(all ideas above from: Oades et al., 2011) (PERMA: Seligman, 2011)

Positive College Model

Imagine: Five Thrive inspired and dedicated teams

- Engaging the entire community
- Each team infusing PERMA into one of the five college contexts using:
- Appreciative interviews:
 - What is working now?
 - What specifically makes it work?
 - How can we build on what's working to infuse PERMA in our specific context?
- Theming the data from the interviews
- Developing specific strategies based on the interview data
- Infusing those strategies throughout the college community

(Whitney et al., 2004; Seligman, 2011)

THRIVE Curriculum

Introducing positive psychology concepts that support student well-being can be readily incorporated into RSC 101 which currently incorporates several of the specific topics below.

Positive psychology education and activities that could be included are:

- PERMA well-being model
- Understanding and using your character strengths
- Optimism
- Resilience
- Phase 3: a three credit positive psychology course could be developed for all students wishing to deepen their understanding and practice of positive psychology research, interventions and application

THRIVE Curriculum: PERMA

Definition: Well-being model developed by Martin Seligman (2012) that focuses on five components that contribute to well-being. **P**ositive emotions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning, **A**ccomplishment.

Why is this important for college students?

Understanding and working on different aspects of PERMA not only increases aspects of well-being, but also decreases psychological distress.

What are the benefits?

- Awareness of all aspects that contribute to thriving
- Positive emotions contribute to daily happiness
- Engaging in activities that you enjoy teaches you to use your strengths
- Developing positive relationships contributes significantly to college success
- Understanding your sense of purpose and setting goals contributes to well-being

THRIVE Curriculum: PERMA

Activities

Take the **PERMA Profiler** questionnaire from the University of Pennsylvania that assesses each of Seligman's (2012) components of well-being. Students can write a **Gratitude Letter** which is one of the most effective exercises used in the PERMA model. Cultivating gratitude can significantly improve all aspects of PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment).

Learn more about PERMA

1. (YouTube Video): Martin Seligman on PERMA theory of well-being
2. (Book) Flourish (A Visionary Understanding of Happiness and Well-being): Seligman, 2012. A deep dive into the PERMA model and practical strategies to help you flourish and thrive
3. Review: How to write a gratitude letter: positivepsychology.com toolkit

THRIVE Curriculum: Character Strengths

Definition: Our natural and unique abilities for thinking, feeling and behaving in ways that benefit ourselves and others as defined by 24 unique character strengths we each possess

Why is this important for college students?

Knowing yourself and understanding your strength profile enables you to draw on the positive aspects of our personality. Using your strengths allows you to have better relationships, have a more positive impact on others and enhance your well-being (Niemic, 2013).

What are the benefits?

- Increased self-knowledge at a critical point in your life
- Exercising your signature strengths is a strong contributor to well-being
- Developing your strengths can improve mental health
- Shared language for understanding others
- Research shows increased well-being in schools when students and faculty utilize character strengths

THRIVE Curriculum: Character Strengths

Activities

Take the VIA Character Personality Assessment, a scientific instrument used to measure our strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Hold discussions where students discuss their strength profiles and elaborate on their top five strengths for five minutes each. This exercise has the added benefit of increased positive emotions and strengthening relationships.

Learn more about character strengths:

1. (Website) The VIA Institute on Character
2. (Website) The Positivity Project
3. (Book) Character Strengths Interventions: A Field Guide for Practitioners by Ryan Niemiec

THRIVE Curriculum: Optimism

Definition. The belief or expectation that good things will happen in the future

Why is this important for college students?

When students experience inevitable challenges they can build skills to challenge negative thought patterns and create more positive attitudes, behaviors and adapt

Benefits.

- Improved physical, mental and emotional well-being
- Improved relationships and higher self confidence
- Improved academic performance
- Better career success
- Tools to manage difficult transitions

THRIVE Curriculum: Optimism

Activities

Focus on strategies to improve your optimism through review of Albert Ellis' ABC Technique in Seligman's Learned Optimism book. Understand the thinking patterns that need to change by developing a more positive explanatory style (this is a temporary setback) vs. negative explanatory style (this is my fault and it will always be this way).

Learn more about optimism:

1. (Assessment): The **Attributional Style Questionnaire** (ASQ) is one self-report measure often used to measure explanatory styles and optimism.
2. (Book) **Learned Optimism: How to Change your Mind and your Life** (Seligman, 2006) (deep dive into strategies to understand and cultivate an optimistic approach using practical assessments and tools)

THRIVE Curriculum: Resilience

Definition: The ability to grow in the face of challenges

Why is this important for college students?

College students experience significant transition that is both exciting and challenging. Persevering through setbacks and bouncing back is a critical skill to understand and build upon.

What are the benefits?

- Improved learning and academic achievement
- Reduced risk taking behaviors such as substance abuse
- Healthy development in friendships, and mental health
- Increased involvement in the community and positive activities
- Lower mortality and increased physical health and immune functioning

THRIVE Curriculum: Resilience

Activities

Learn about thinking traps, or unproductive ways of processing information that may decrease your resilience. Common traps include: mind reading, it's my fault, it's their fault, catastrophizing and helplessness. Practice using strategies such as evidence, planning, reframing and control to shift your thoughts and actions to be more productive.

Learn more about the science of resilience:

1. (TED Talk): How failure cultivates resilience (clinical psychologist Raphael Rose on failure as a key to resilience)
2. (Book) The Resilience Factor: 7 Keys to Finding Your Inner Strength and Overcoming Life's Hurdles (a deep dive into the science of resilience with resilience experts, Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte)
3. (Book) U Thrive: How to succeed in College and Life (NYU professors who teach the science of well-being guide students on how to thrive with practical positive psychology strategies)

Phase Two



Appreciative Inquiry in Action

Imagine:

- 300 people under one roof
- In groups of 10 at round tables



Appreciative Inquiry in Action

- Gathered with the **collective purpose** to
 - **“Make THRIVE come ALIVE”** at RSC

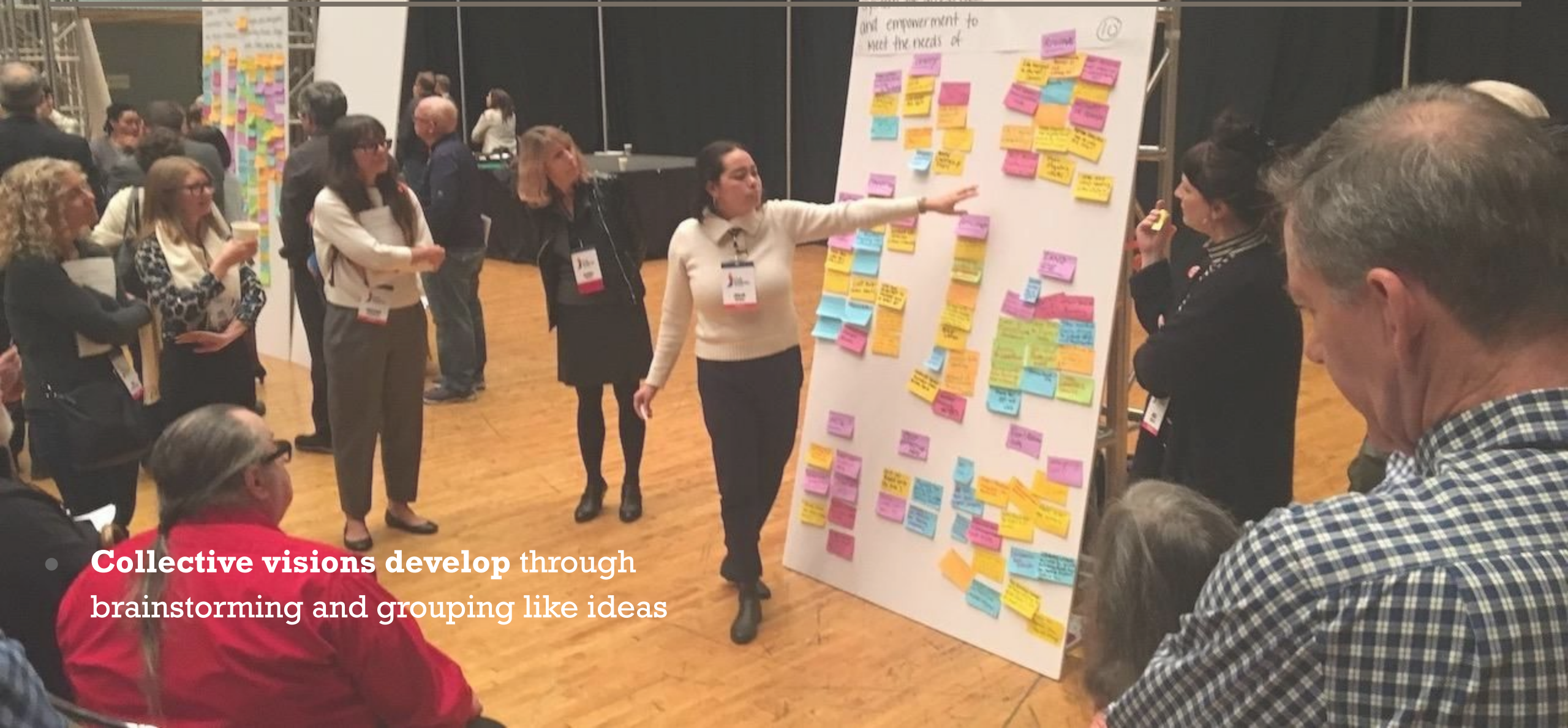


Appreciative Inquiry in Action

Within 30 minutes each table is actively engaged in discovering relevant RSC strengths



Appreciative Inquiry in Action



How might we
Modernize and expand
our transportation
system for access ease
and empowerment to
meet the needs of
all our residents, and
attract people across
the globe to our city?

- **Collective visions develop** through brainstorming and grouping like ideas

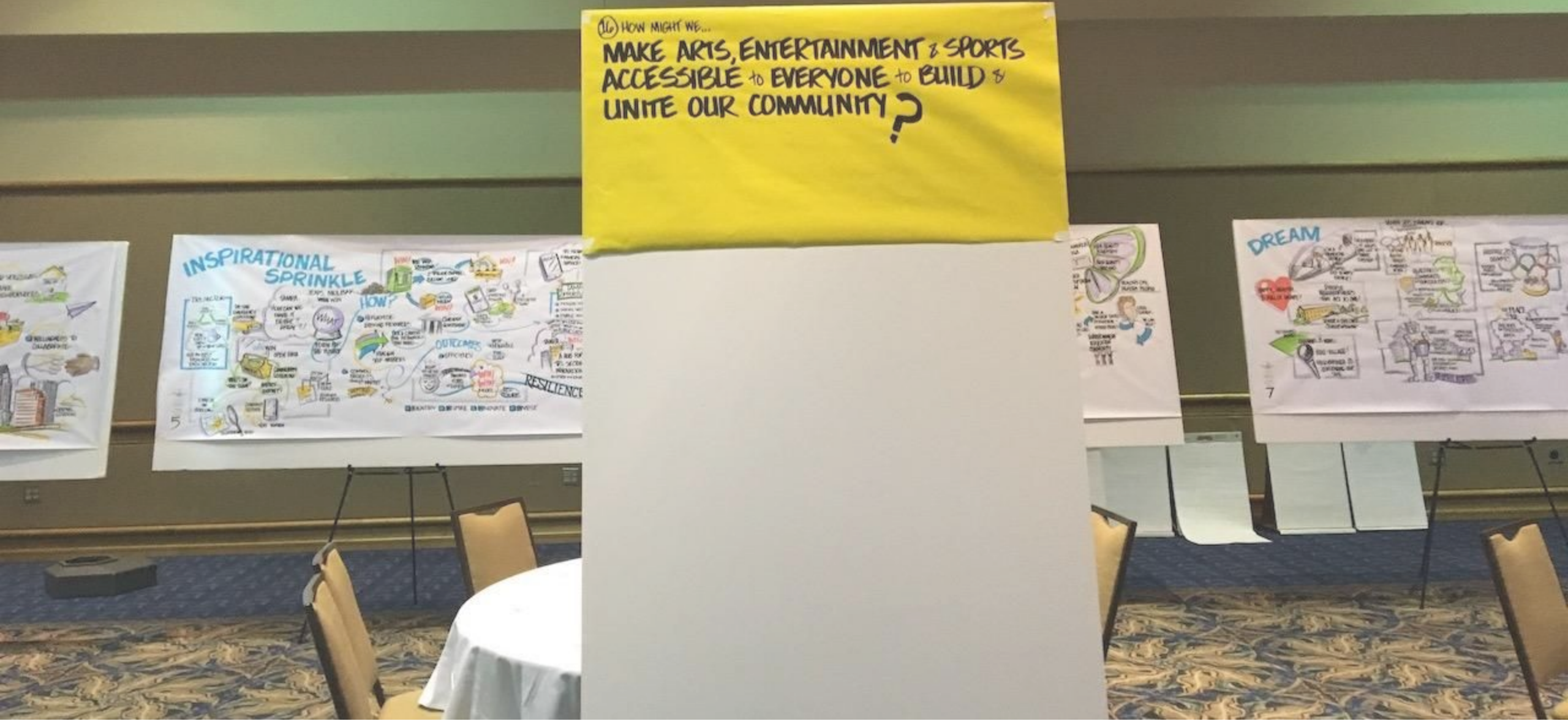
Appreciative Inquiry in Action

- 10 to 20 initiative ideas are displayed around the room



10 to 20 initiative ideas are displayed around the room

Appreciative Inquiry in Action



Appreciative Inquiry in Action



HOW CAN WE...
BROADEN THIS KIND OF SUMMIT ENGAGEMENT & LEVERAGE LARGE GROUPS METHODS THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY AFTER TODAY?
EG. SUMMITS ACROSS NEIGHBORHOODS; YOUTH SUMMITS;
EVER WIDENING CIRCLE OF INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

14

People get up and “vote with their feet” to join a group they are most inspired by

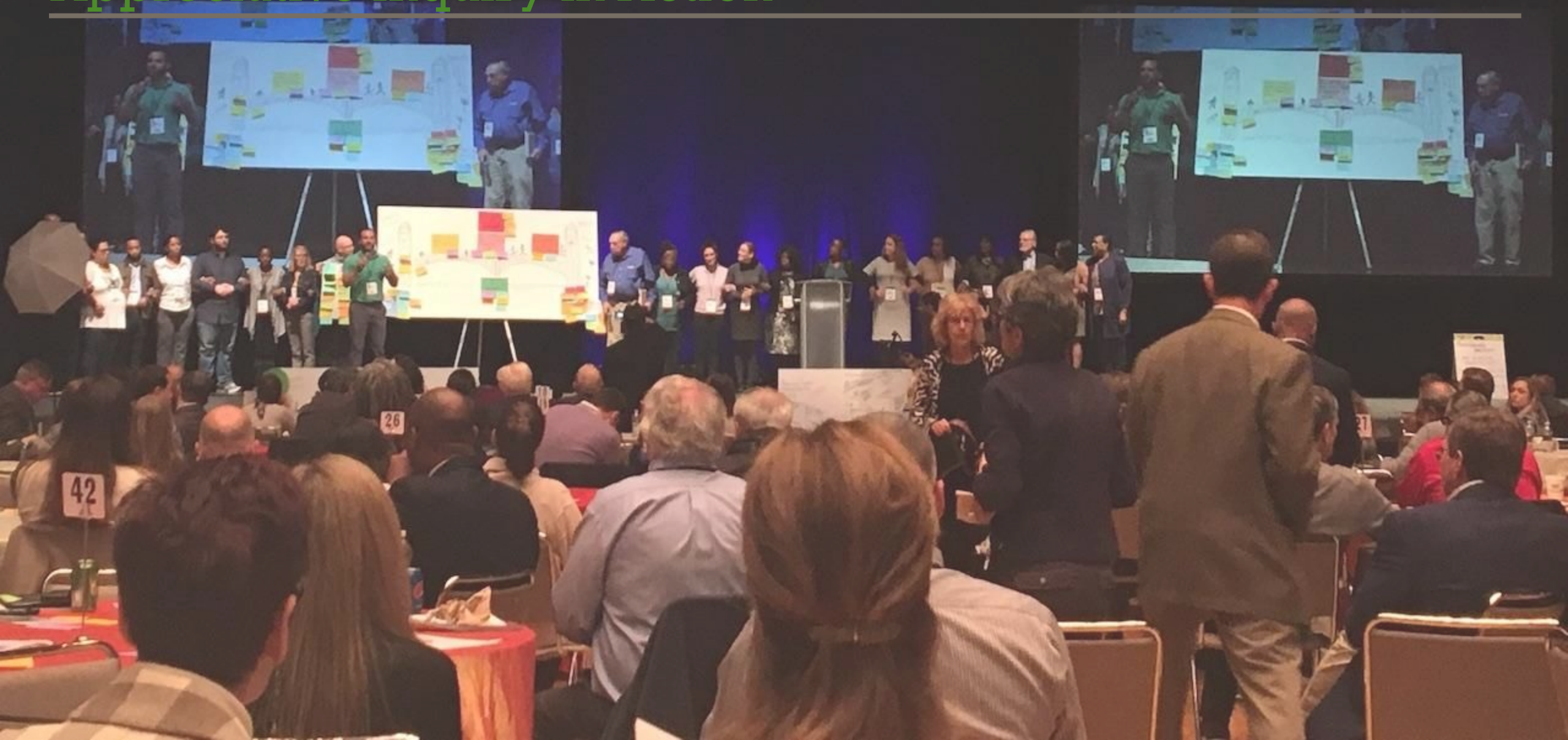
Appreciative Inquiry in Action



The new groups develop **actionable design plans**

Appreciative Inquiry in Action

**design plans are presented
to the entire summit**



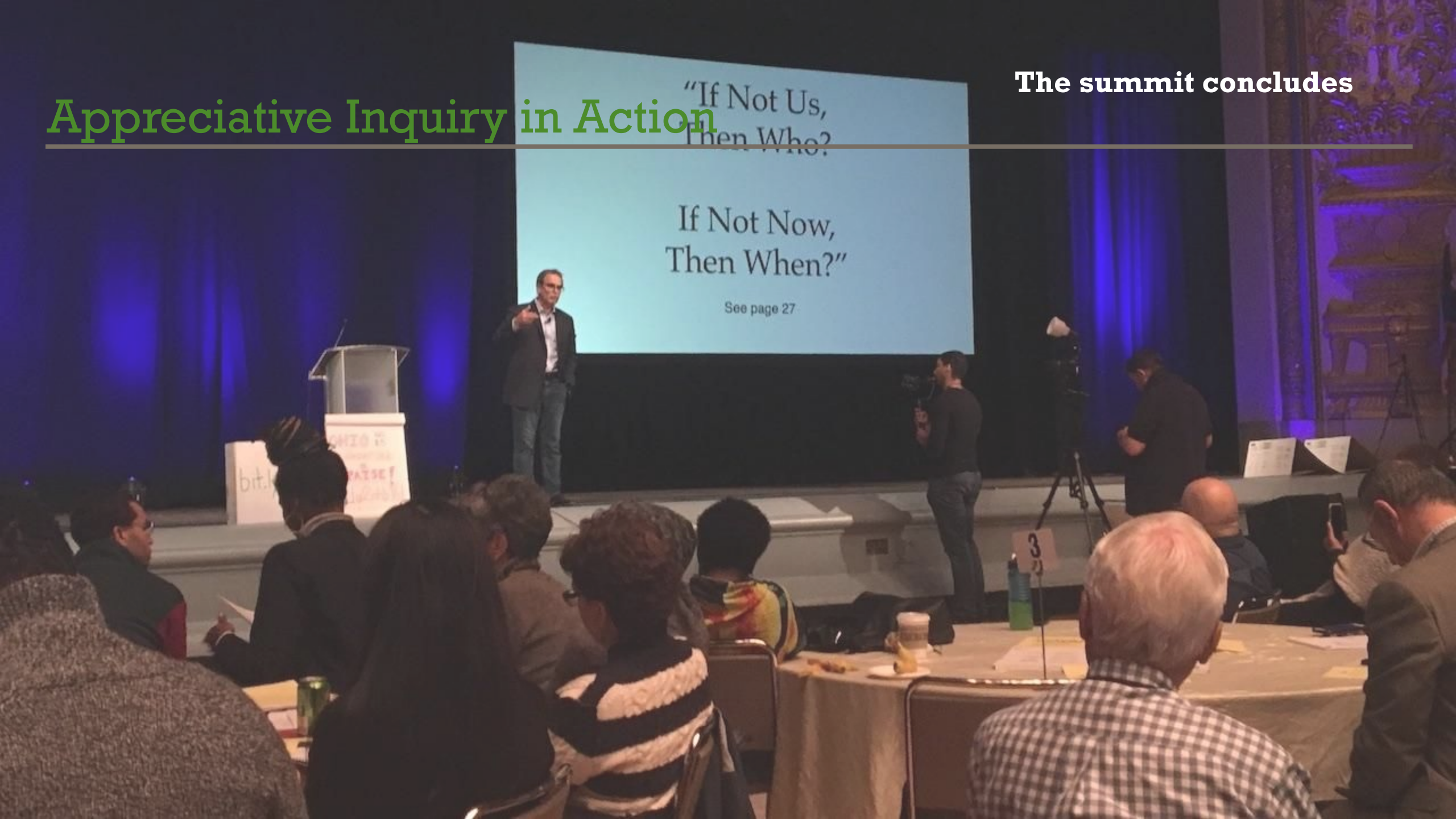
Appreciative Inquiry in Action

The summit concludes

"If Not Us,
Then Who?"

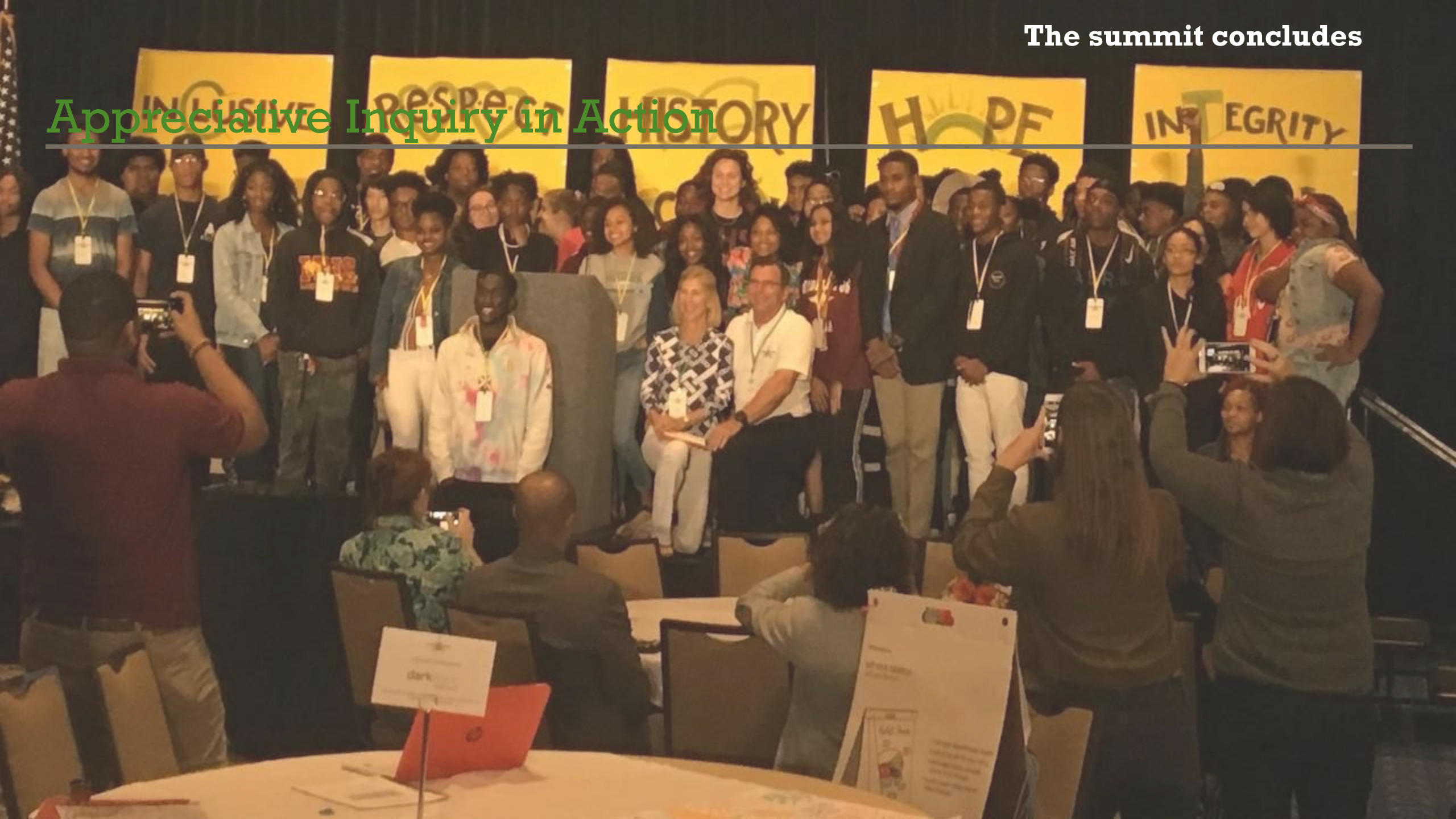
If Not Now,
Then When?"

See page 27



The summit concludes

Appreciative Inquiry in Action



Appreciative Inquiry in Action

Within one week of the summit each group is taking their first step ...and...



Cleveland Rising Summit Attendees Plan to Collaborate on Projects to Improve Cleveland's Economic Future

The Launch Phase

At the conclusion of last month's event, 97% of summit attendees reported having plans in the next six months to collaborate on a project to help improve Cleveland's economic future. This six-month period encompasses the Launch Phase, which we are now in. As working group members, you collectively created 32 aspiration statements and proposed working group initiatives that Cleveland Rising Summit organizers have [grouped into six goal areas](#).

Each working group selected its launch leaders. The launch leaders' commitment is to:

- Convene your group prior by December 15
- Set up a consistent group meeting schedule
- Foster collaboration and transparency
- Communicate regularly with your group
- Consistently update Cleveland Rising Summit organizers on the group's progress
- Prepare for the March 2020 community update

A group of diverse young adults, including men and women of various ethnicities, are smiling and posing together outdoors. They are dressed in casual, contemporary clothing. One woman in the foreground is holding a black tumbler with a white logo that includes the number '40' and the word 'cea'. Another woman is holding a book or brochure with a green and white cover. The background shows a blurred outdoor setting with buildings and other people.

Appreciative Inquiry in Action

...The ubiquitous revitalization of the thrive initiative has taken off with a flurry of excitement, infusing the entire community
Thrive has come alive!

.... This is the Appreciative Inquiry Summit

Enhancing Thrive Culture

Appreciative Inquiry Summit Process

- Remember: **the moment you ask the first positive question culture change**
- AI expert trains **core/design team**: 8 to 20 Thrive-infused leaders / champions
- Create your **Stakeholder Map**: to include representatives of each stakeholder group
- Develop **theme**: perhaps “**Make THRIVE come Alive** at RSC”
- Pre-summit **appreciative interviews** to gather community input into summit
- Summit **championing**, publicity, logistics, metrics
- **Plan post summit** follow-through strategy
- Design and host the summit:
 - **Discovery**: uncovering core institutional strengths
 - **Dream**: imagine our best possible future
 - **Design**: how we will make that dream come about
 - **Deploy**: the execution of specific plans to fulfill the dream
- Post to summit **follow through** (all important)

Phase Three



Individual Skill Building

Recommend subject matter experts to teach applied positive psychology skills

Taught to:

- **THRIVE Coordinator**
- **Key faculty members**
- **Student leaders**
- **Those certified become coaches of these skills**

Example: Penn Resilience Program

An empirically validated program that teaches how to apply positive psychology skills to increase resilience. This program's skills increase the following competencies: *self-awareness, self-regulation, mental agility, character strengths, connection to others, and optimism*

Disclaimer: To avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest, the authors of this playbook affirm that they are not involved with Penn's Resilience Program nor are they sponsoring or officially recommending it; instead, they use Penn's Resilience Program as an example of a type of solution for implementation

Measurement & Evaluation

What are the metrics that THRIVE cares about the most?

We recommend RSC operationalize the THRIVE variables to measure effectiveness (**T**ogether, **H**ealth, **R**esilience, **I**dentify, **V**aluing and **E**mpowering)

Annual well-being survey: We suggest that Russell Sage College implement an annual spring survey, beginning in 2022, that focuses on student well-being. Examples to review include: Columbia University's 2018 report, University of Wisconsin (Madison) 2018/2019 Healthy Minds Survey and University of Pennsylvania's 2017 PULSE survey.

We recommend that RSC publishes the survey findings annually and adapts the THRIVE strategic plan based on student feedback.



Thank you!

RS RUSSELL SAGE COLLEGE
ALBANY & TROY

References and Resources

Thrive Communication

George Mason University Center for Advancement of Well-being weekly newsletter

<https://wellbeing.gmu.edu/articles/15684>

University of Wisconsin Madison Center for Healthy Minds newsletter and events listing

https://centerhealthyminds.org/?utm_source=Center+For+Healthy+Minds&utm_campaign=e447673ef4-Apr2020_DNewsletter_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_cce2315563-e447673ef4-9920298

<https://centerhealthyminds.org/news/events>

Positive College/University Model

Oades, L. G., Robinson, P., Green, S., & Spence, G. B. (2011). Towards a positive university, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6(6), 432-439.

DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2011.634828

Schreiner, L.A., Hulme, E., Hetzel, R., & Lopez, S. (2009). *Positive psychology on campus*. In S. Lopez & C.R. Snyder (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 569–578). Oxford University Press.

Student Residences: University of Wollongong, Australia. <https://www.uow.edu.au/study/accommodation/live-on-campus/marketview/>

Scroll down, click “Meet Ellie and Ron” YouTube video

References and Resources

PERMA

Butler, J. & Kern, M. L. (2015). The PERMA-Profil: A brief multidimensional measure of flourishing. Available from Questionnaires

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being. Free Press

Character Strengths

Via Character Institute <https://www.viacharacter.org>

The Positivity Project <https://posproject.org/resources/>

(Book) Character Strengths Interventions: A Field Guide for Practitioners by Ryan Niemiec (2017)

References and Resources

Optimism

(Assessment): The Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) is one self-report measure often used to measure explanatory styles and optimism.

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/questionnaires-researchers/attributional-style-questionnaire>

Book) Learned Optimism: How to Change your Mind and your Life (Seligman, 2006)

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References and Resources

3 Credit Positive Psychology Syllabi links

Bridges, K. R., Harnish, R. J., & Sillman, D. (2012). Teaching Undergraduate Positive

Psychology: An Active Learning Approach Using Student Blogs. *Psychology Learning &*

Teaching, 11(2), 228-237, <https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2012.11.2.228>

University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center (multiple three credit course syllabi)

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/course-syllabi-teachers>

Penn Resilience Program

Penn Resilience Program and PERMATM Workshops | Positive Psychology Center. (n.d.). [Ppc.sas.upenn.edu. https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/services/penn-resilience-training](https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/services/penn-resilience-training)

Measurement and Evaluation

(links to surveys referenced)