

Thriving @ The University of Arizona: Continued success through college.

Many studies have shown that at four-year universities, students who attended first-year seminar courses had higher retention rates than their peers who did not take a seminar (Clark & Cundiff, 2011; Cuseo, 2010; Jamelske, 2009; Mayhew et al., 2016; Schrader & Brown, 2008). However, first-year programs have to be designed to meet the unique needs of each school implementation. For example, The University of Arizona, a broad access university with a diverse population would not fit a one-size-fits-all model. In the spring of 2019, a five-session workshop based on the construct of Thriving was piloted for first-year students. This dynamic and flexible program focused on the whole college experience from a strengths-based perspective (Schreiner, 2013). The construct of thriving is a framework for helping students successfully transition and grow in college while empowering them to benefit more fully from their college experience (Schreiner, 2012). Students attending three or more sessions had significant increases to overall thriving as measured by the Thriving Quotient (Schreiner, 2016), a highly reliable instrument which includes 25 items on five subscales. Each session of the workshop was designed to address a different factor of thriving, aligning with each subscale of the instrument. Additionally, descriptive analysis of data from post-session evaluations addressing the goals and impact from these evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Three years later, as this cohort is nearing graduation, participants who attended five workshop sessions shared how they continued to thrive in college as a result of their participation. These students faced various challenges during this time, including learning through a pandemic, with an arsenal of tools and strategies to draw upon. During this session I will give an overview of the workshop, share immediate and long-term feedback, and discuss ideas for supporting first-year students as they transition into and through the University of Arizona.

Dr. Victoria (Vicki) Capin

Dr. Victoria (Vicki) Capin has been helping students transition to college for over 15 years both in private practice and at the University of Arizona. As a Graduate Teaching Associate and instructor, she saw first-hand how first-year students were unprepared for the academic, social, and personal challenges facing college students as they begin their college careers. Vicki has a MA in Special Education/Gifted and a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology with a minor in Higher Education and currently works at THINK TANK.

