Encouraging flourishing and mental well-being

ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC &
LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES

Robert D. Reason, Iowa State University

Psychosocial Well-being Initiative

BTtoP initiative created in 2013

How does learning support the psychosocial development of our students?

How (and why) does a commitment to students' psychosocial development positively affect their learning and civic engagement?

Partnership with Iowa State

Civic learning dimensions and mental health

- Civic engagement behaviors (service-learning, community-based programs)

- Perceptions of campus climates (community, perspective taking, ethical/moral)

Importance of Positive Mental Health

Increasing emphasis on mental health
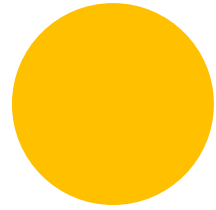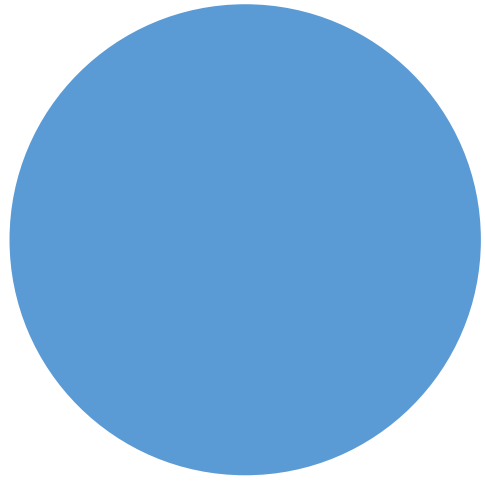
Scholarship and practice

Dual continuum of mental health

Positive mental health (flourishing) and mental health problems (psychopathology)

Optimizing human potential

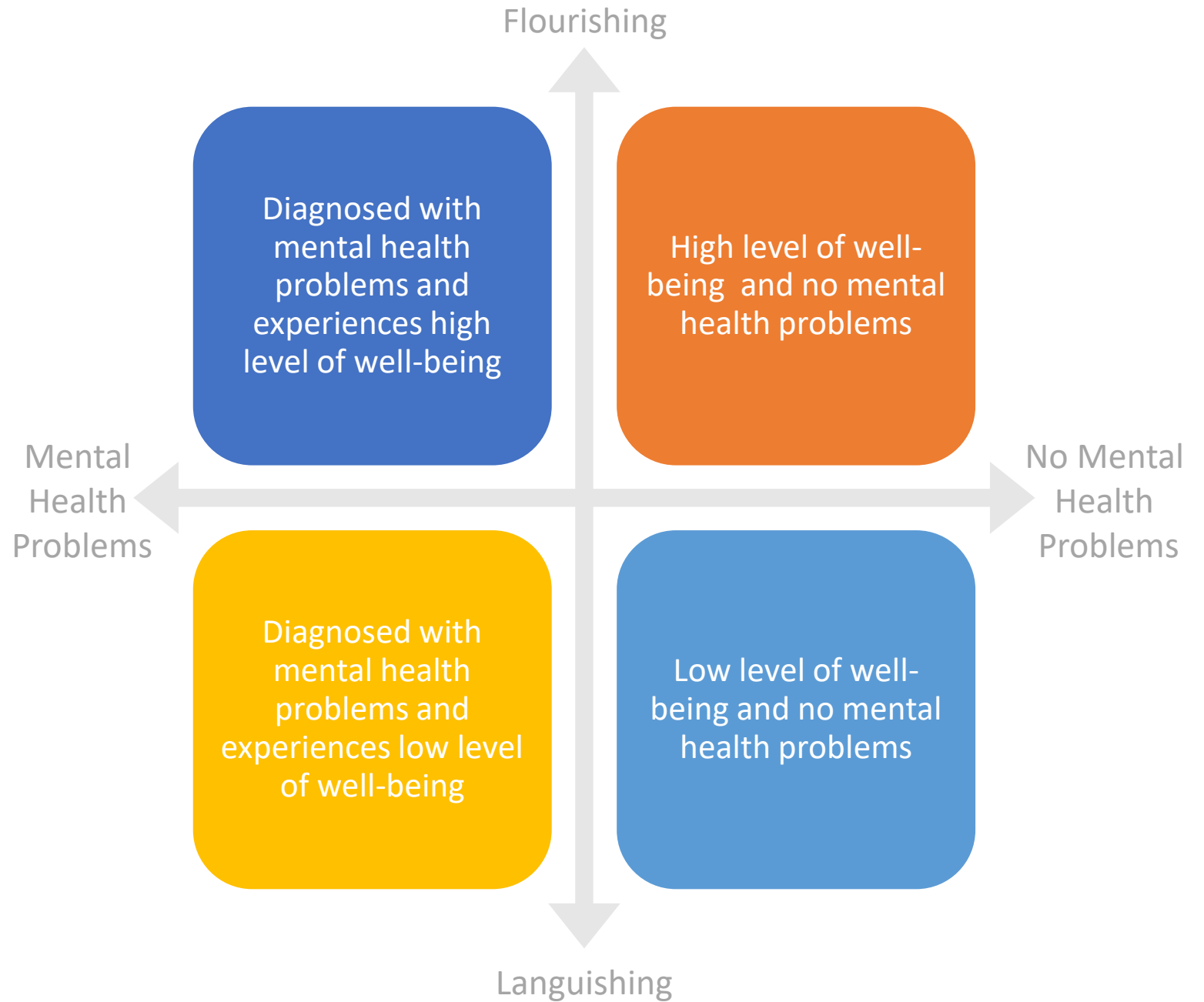Shift from minimizing negative experiences to promoting positive experiences

"preventing the worst from happening
does not equal promoting the best in people"

(Keyes & Haidt, 2003, p. 5)

From the Literature

Positive mental health and mental illness are distinct, but related

Positive mental health can protect against mental health problems

Civic engagement, campus experiences, and perceptions of climate influence mental health

Examples of Campus Climate Scales

Developing ethical and moral reasoning

- Develop the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly

- Frequently communicate importance of ethical and moral reasoning

- Provides opportunities relevant to academic work and personal life

Advocating for perspective taking

- Focus on exploring aspects of diversity within and outside of the classroom

- Provide opportunities to engage with issues using evidence-based claims

- Advocate for respecting perspectives different than ones own

Advocating for contributing to community

- Advocate for the need to become active and engaged

Our Findings

Aspects of civic learning and engagement—and perceived campus climates—influence mental health

Students from racial and ethnic groups experience and perceive campus differently, which affects student outcomes differently

No difference in mental health among Asian, Black, Hispanic, White

Ethical and moral reasoning, contributing to community, and perspective taking are important considerations for mental health

Integrating a focus on mental health into the institution's policies and practices can enhance the educational environment and contribute to the institution's mission.
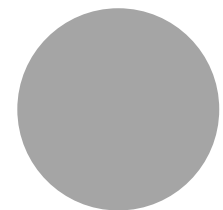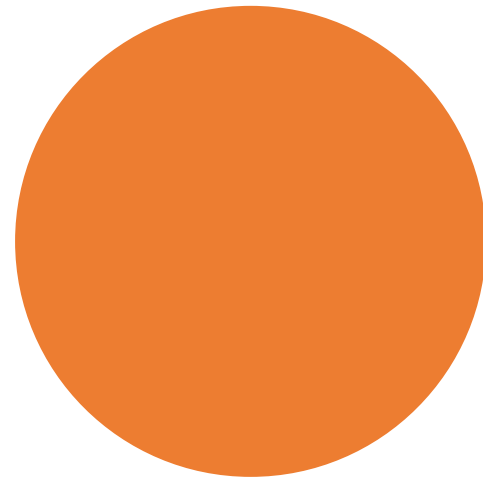
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About the PSRI

The **Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory** (PSRI): An Institutional Climate Measure is a campus climate survey developed originally as part of an initiative called Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility. Sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and directed by Caryn McTighe Musil, Core Commitments was supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

The initial inventory was developed in 2006 by L. Lee Knefelkamp, Teachers College, Columbia University, who consulted with Richard Hersh, Council for Aid to Education, and drew on the research assistance of Lauren Ruff. The initial inventory was then refined in cooperation with Eric L. Dey and associates at the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education and refined after Dey's death by Robert D. Reason, at Iowa State University.

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