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Positive Leadership on Campus: Using the Science of Positive Psychology to Enhance Collaboration and Well-Being Among University Staff

Abstract

Higher education is greatly in need of leaders that are able to empower campus stakeholders to solve growing and complex challenges. Globalization, diversity, technology, social change, and other modern day challenges require a collaborative approach to leadership and problem-solving (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). The science of positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship have made great advances in understanding what type of practices fuel collaboration and well-being among teams. This paper explores the elements that generate energy and connection at the individual and group level. Intended to be developed into a micro-course for campus leaders, this paper introduces actionable strategies that can be applied across administrative teams on campus to fuel institutional transformation from within.

Keywords

campus leadership, collaboration, college administrators, positive psychology, positive organisational scholarship, institutional transformation, well-being, positive leadership

Disciplines

Adult and Continuing Education | Community College Leadership | Educational Administration and Supervision | Educational Leadership | Educational Psychology | Higher Education | Industrial and Organizational Psychology | Psychology | Teacher Education and Professional Development

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Positive Leadership on Campus: Using the Science of Positive Psychology to Enhance Collaboration and Well-Being Among University Staff

Diane Jenifer Trif

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Sharon F. Danzger

August 1, 2020

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Capstone Project
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Higher education is greatly in need of leaders that are able to empower campus stakeholders to solve growing and complex challenges. Globalization, diversity, technology, social change, and other modern day challenges require a collaborative approach to leadership and problem-solving (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). The science of positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship have made great advances in understanding what type of practices fuel collaboration and well-being among teams. This paper explores the elements that generate energy and connection at the individual and group level. Intended to be developed into a micro-course for campus leaders, this paper introduces actionable strategies that can be applied across administrative teams on campus to fuel institutional transformation from within.

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Introduction: Need for Leadership in Higher Ed

The world we live in is unpredictable and complex. At the time of writing this paper, a pandemic is sweeping across the planet. The respiratory illness labeled as COVID-19 has affected every single corner of the world, with over 200 countries reporting cases of infection (World Health Organization, 2020). The virus (and its encompassing spread) has created new habits around wearing masks outside of the home and social distancing. It has, and is continuing to, change the way people work, learn, and interact. Furthermore, the past month in the United States has seen the aftermath of police brutality and mounting issues of racial injustice escalate into protests across the country that call for action and change (Harmon, Mandavilli, Maheshwari, & Kantor, 2020). More than ever, there is uncertainty about the future, and people are looking for the guidance and direction that good and effective leaders can provide.

College campuses are not immune to current events; on the contrary, they are typically expected to take center stage as leaders of progress and change. American University President Sylvia Burwell, in her opening remarks at a recent virtual summit hosted by the American Council on Education, stated that leaders must "understand the role of leadership in supporting the campus community in the midst of ongoing racial trauma" (American Council on Education, 2020). Her comments reflect that good leadership is more important than ever. This is especially true in Higher Education, which is currently facing a public trust crisis (Jones, 2018).

The context in which colleges and universities operate has also been changing over the past 30 years. State governments are no longer keen on injecting resources into universities, urging them instead to adapt, assess their impact, integrate new technologies, and deliver quality education at lower costs (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Experts have long been

reporting, "…the days of accountability, assessment, globalization, and competition are here to stay" (p.1). This could mean that the typical hierarchical model of university leadership will not be as successful in the mature industry higher education has become (Levine, 1997). The bottom line is that society is demanding more responsibility from higher education than ever before.

New perspectives on higher education leadership have emerged in response to this maturation. Where leaders were exalted as heroes in the old model, there is now a focus on the impact of leadership on the collective unit and within teams (Kezar et al., 2006). In the last few decades, leadership has also been rediscovered as an "art, craft, or spiritual practice" (p. 3). These changes have given way to more research being done on concepts like collaboration (Gornall, Thomas, & Sweetman, 2018), empowerment (Shaver, 2004), collective process, and the impacts of the global economy. Technology has played a transformational role too, both connecting and speeding up the world, creating more interdependent teams (Kezar et al., 2006). These changes point to the need for a new direction in higher education leadership. Leaders that are adaptable, inclusive, visionary, communicative, and considerate are shown to be the most effective in this new paradigm (Bryman, 2007). In other words, positive leaders that inspire teams to thrive are going to be crucial if higher education is going to transform enough to keep up with the changing times. Like most dedicated leaders at all levels of the university campus, you have likely thought often about how to increase your effectiveness. This course will introduce how *you* can be a positive leader, increase effectiveness and collaboration among teams within your institution, and empower your campus staff and faculty to solve challenging and complex issues facing campuses today.

Overview of Current Challenges

There is a growing complexity to the function of colleges and universities across the world. Increases in student demands are coupled with diminishing resources (Kezar et al., 2006). The growing professionalization of faculty and staff in specific areas of work has led to demands of autonomy and decision-making power (Kezar & Lester, 2009). In addition, division of disciplines and reward systems that encourage individualistic work have fueled a culture averse to collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Bureaucracy and hierarchy in higher education were modeled after the corporations of the twentieth century where there is limited communication within administrative teams and undermined trust between departments (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

In addition, there are growing frustrations among department directors and other leaders on college campuses. Idealistic strategic planning, a lack of financial resources, and archaic staffing models lead to imbalances in personal and professional life (Kezar et al., 2006), particularly at the dean level. Many leaders that transition into administrative roles at universities are not always prepared for the work (Morris & Laipple, 2015). Surveys of deans, directors, and other leaders on campuses reveal low job satisfaction, with many stating that their position significantly interferes with their quality of life, detracts from sleep and time with family, and interferes with regular health behaviors like healthy eating and exercise (Morris & Laipple, 2015). Due to the growing complexities of their roles, extra hours in the office, long meetings, and evening and weekend work are common. Research on burnout shows a link between types of work that are all encompassing and the tendency to become cynical and inefficient in those roles (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Moreover, mid-level leaders, the fastest growing group on campus, also struggle with a tendency to feel invisible. The lack of recognition is often an additional contributing factor to the high turnover rate of this group (Rosser, 2004). Researchers have identified other issues that are of concern such as a lack of involvement with the institutional mission, role-clarity, and conflict resolution, opportunities for growth, and teamwork and relationships (Rosser, 2004). The costs of high turnover rates for university leadership are significant and include a loss of loyalty and knowledge, increase in resources for training, and increase in problems like absenteeism (Rosser, 2004). In a time when colleges and universities are being asked to innovate, adapt, and solve complex challenges, high turnover rates that increase inefficiencies are problematic.

Learning Platform

This paper is designed to be adapted into a 20 minute digital micro-course for an online learning platform called ACE ENGAGE©. The American Council on Education (ACE) is a membership organization serving the higher education sector with a diverse membership of over 1700 colleges and universities (American Council on Education, n.d.). With a rich history in the higher education space, ACE has always been at the forefront of providing research, shaping public policy, and fostering innovation for higher education leadership. ENGAGE was designed by ACE to be a space "where leaders learn" (https://engage.acenet.edu/). The platform integrates professional development with communities of practice, on-demand content, podcast, and courses, allowing members to share resources and collaborate in real time. This course is intended to be a part of the ENGAGE content library as an introduction to how the science of well-being can help higher education leaders transform their institutions.

Learning Objectives: Why Take This Course?

This course offers solutions to the aforementioned challenges through the lens of a relatively new field in organizational studies called Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). POS was introduced back in 2003 to pull together all of the existing knowledge around what optimal functioning and positive processes mean in the context of organizations (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). Some of the biggest names in organizational studies like Jane Dutton, Sarah Spreitzer, Kim Cameron, and Robert Quinn (plus many others) were already doing work on positive organizational phenomenon. Inspired by the field of Positive Psychology, which studies human flourishing at the individual level, they formed the Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship at the University of Michigan to "explore topics that did not seem to have a home among mainstream organizational studies" (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). Some of these topics will be introduced in this course.

The objectives of this course are to introduce both the fields of Positive Psychology as well as Positive Organizational Scholarship, and to explain how they can be applied in the context of leadership within higher education teams. The course explores concepts such as well-being and flourishing at work, leading teams with an emphasis on strengths, generating high quality connections among employees, and connecting teams with the mission and purpose of the institution. The last part of the course will provide applications of the knowledge in the form of practices that can be implemented in a quick and cost-effective way to produce beneficial results. By the completion of this course, you will be able to identify the elements that generate energy in your institution and implement tools to create and sustain these elements.

Intended Audience

The course is designed for current and aspiring leaders in higher education administrative teams, groups of faculty in need of extensive collaboration, and high-level leaders of colleges and universities looking to inspire their own leadership teams to success. The knowledge provided in this course is applicable at all levels of leadership, as it is understood today that leadership is no longer about the individual champion, but rather the collective ways in which teams work and collaborate to solve challenges (Kezar et al., 2006). The tools provided in this course can therefore be used within all types of higher education teams, small or large, to increase vitality, flourishing, and ultimately success.

Digital Course Outline

Figure 1. Proposed Outline for Digital Course

Course Introduction

- ✓ Course Description
- ✓ Learning Objectives
- ✓ Intended Audience
- ✓ Acknowledgments

Learning Module I – Positive Psychology & Leadership

- ✓ Introduction to Positive Psychology
- ✓ Introduction to Positive Organizational Scholarship
- ✓ PERMA at Work – A Model of Well-Being

Learning Module II – Empowering Teams to Thrive

- ✓ Strengths Based Leadership
- ✓ High Quality Connections (HQC)
- ✓ Higher Purpose in Higher Education

Learning Module III – Positive Campus Leadership

- ✓ Leading with Strengths
- ✓ Facilitating High Quality Connections
- ✓ Task Enabling

Course Conclusion and Evaluation

- ✓ Conclusion
- ✓ Summary of Key Concepts
- ✓ Course Evaluation Questionnaire

MODULE I – Positive Psychology and Leadership

In this module, the foundations of the science behind the course are laid out beginning with an introduction to the field of Positive Psychology. We will look at the history of both the positive psychology movement and its close cousin, positive organizational scholarship. We then explore how one of the most cited theories of well-being has applications at both the individual and group level. We also examine how elements of the theory are understood in the context of work as mechanisms that lead to thriving teams and institutional well-being.

A. Introduction to Positive Psychology

The course you are about to complete is based on research within the field of positive psychology, known as the science of well-being. Positive psychology takes an approach to the study of human beliefs, feelings, and actions that lead to positive mental states, desirable life outcomes, and positive organizations (Seligman, 2004). Its goal is to shift the focus from fixing human weaknesses to building strengths, good outcomes in life, and uplifting people from neutral to flourishing (Peterson, 2008). Its essential aim is the well-being of individuals and societies. While psychologist Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania is known as the father of the positive psychology movement, it is important to recognize the history that led to the contemporary interest in the field (Froh, 2004).

The foundation for positive psychology can be traced as far back as 1906 when philosopher William James put forth the maximization of human potential as a potential new area of study (Froh, 2004). Almost fifty years later, Abraham Maslow in his book *Motivation and Personality* labeled this concept “positive psychology.” Maslow was concerned that psychology up to that point did not fully grasp the full possibility of human development

(Maslow, 1954). Maslow was one of the most important figures in humanistic psychology, which identified the very human impulse towards self-actualization. Maslow was dedicated to studying the lives of self-actualized people in order to determine what patterns of thoughts and behaviors led to their positive outcomes (Froh, 2004). The roots of positive psychology intertwine with humanistic psychology, which sought to understand the whole person as a product of their experiences in the world.

Later around the turn of the century, Martin Seligman regenerated interest in the field as president of the APA (Fowler, Seligman, & Koocher, 1999). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) wanted to take the focus away from pathology and challenge their peers to begin "to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities" (p. 5). The main distinction made between humanistic psychology and contemporary positive psychology is its use of empirical, quantitative research (Froh, 2004). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), in their introduction to positive psychology, stated, "Unfortunately, humanistic psychology did not attract much of a cumulative empirical base" (p. 7). While it has been argued by some (Bohart & Greening, 2001; Shapiro, 2001; Taylor, 2001) that this position dismisses much of the empirical research led by those in the humanistic arena, Seligman's work did pave the way for a new wave of positive psychology focused on the scientific study of human strengths to emerge.

The DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) is a handbook published by the APA and widely accepted by healthcare professionals as a classification tool for diagnosing mental illnesses (APA (n.d.). retrieved from https://www.psychiatry.org). In an effort to provide the field of positive psychology a similar method of classifying and studying human

strengths, Seligman and Peterson (2004) developed a manual focused around core virtues that numerous researchers found were stable across cultures and time. The *Character Strengths and Virtues* (CSV) handbook breaks down the six abstract virtues of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, moderation, and transcendence into 24 character strengths that can be empirically measured and observed (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This important step gave researchers interested in studying the qualities that allow people to thrive, a theoretical framework, and presented practitioners with practical applications for the field.

Positive psychology, at the core, concerns itself with the qualities inside each of us that create fulfillment and abundance. Positive emotions, positive relationships, engagement, meaning, and achievement are considered essential components of a “full life” (Seligman, 2002), and are the basis of Seligman’s PERMA model of well-being, the most widely acknowledged model to date. Other perspectives on well-being have been explored on themes such as practical wisdom and decision making (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006), organizational and community well-being (Prilleltensky, 2005), mind/body wellness (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010; Ratey & Hagerman, 2008) and morality (Haidt, 2012; Bloom, 2016). There is tremendous research underway in these and other domains concerned with elements in individuals and organizations that lead to wellness, and positive psychology has much to reveal about cultivating the best of the human condition.

Finally, there have been some central criticisms to the field, primarily concerned with the perceived unilateral focus on positivity (Held, 2004). Kashdan and Biswas-Diener (2014) argue that it is embracing the entire spectrum of identity (both positive and negative) that leads to true lasting fulfillment. There has been criticism around the failure of positive psychology research to

identify appropriate contextual variables (McNulty & Fincham, 2012). Another concern is built around the cultural identification of well-being concepts as westernized, individualistic phenomena (Chang, Downey, Hirsch, & Lin, 2016). While numerous criticisms have been put forward (Frawley, 2015), it is important to remember that positive psychology is still a relatively new field of study. There has recently been an emergence of what is called "second wave" positive psychology (Ivtzan, Lomas, Hefferon, & Worth, 2015) which calls for the study of painful experiences in life and how they can contribute to optimal human functioning. Seligman (2004) has stated in his famous TED Talk on the *New Era of Positive Psychology* that "positive psychology is not happy-ology". Rather it is more about an approach towards cultivating well-being through a focus on building a full life, rather than on alleviating suffering. Positive psychology is as much an approach as it is a new area of study, and it has much to offer in the development of a better world for all.

B. Introduction to Positive Organizational Scholarship

Also labeled flourishing or prospering, *thriving* has been studied since antiquity. In contemporary times, positive psychology is dedicated to exploring the construct using empirical data. As explained previously, positive psychology studies traits and actions that lead to mental health, good life outcomes, and positive institutions (Seligman, 2004). Positive institutions is one of three pillars in positive psychology (emotions and traits being the first two), and is concerned with the *communities and organizations* we build that lead to optimal experiences at the group level (Seligman, 2004). These three pillars are interconnected, for it is individuals that build organizations, and in turn, organizations have the capacity to enable thriving of individuals (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). *Positive Organizational Scholarship*

(POS) is a field dedicated to the study of processes and characteristics that enable optimal functioning of individuals within the context of organizations (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). POS attempts to answer the question around what it looks like to have teams or organizations that are thriving. To better understand how traits and actions increase capacities for excellence that lead to well-being in organizations, we first turn to a short introduction of POS.

Positive organizational scholarship, as described by Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn (2003), arose as a unifying umbrella term for the study of approaches in organizational studies that focused on the positive phenomenon within organization. While POS can be considered a close cousin of positive psychology, it was not conceived in the same way. Positive psychology was introduced as a way to balance the overwhelming focus of psychological literature on debilitating mental states (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). POS, in contrast, recognized that organizational research was not necessarily focused on illness and languishing (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). Rather, POS arose because certain organizational phenomenon such as virtues, flourishing, optimism, compassion, quality connections, and forgiveness were not considered "legitimate" enough to study in scientific circles (p. 4). POS's objective is, in essence, to shift organizational focus from bottom line outcomes like profitability and economic advantage to psychological and social well-being. However, empirical evidence also supports the idea that increasing positive and life-giving practices within teams also increases performance in domains such as profitability, productivity, and employee retention (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012).

In line with this theme, Luthans (2002) offers *Positive Organizational Behavior* (POB) – a theory that is focused on enabling individual's strengths and positive characteristics within organizations. He uses research in organizational behavior to support his concept of POB by

presenting the acronym CHOSE to highlight the elements which improve organizations that he believed were supported by research and evidence. The acronym covers "confidence/self-efficacy, hope, optimism, subjective well-being/happiness, and emotional intelligence" (Luthans, 2002, p. 57). Luthans also highlights that POB can be applied both to manager/leader development as well as employee development. Some other characteristics identified that enable human flourishing are virtuousness, resilience, and growth (Roberts, 2014). POS and POB argue that these characteristics can be cultivated by leaders of organizations at the *individual* level in themselves and at the *collective* level within their teams.

One of the key criticisms of POS is the emphasis on the P *(positive).* Some have argued that to label POS as "positive" can imply that the rest of organizational science is somehow negative (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). This critique arose because of the narrow and at time ambiguous definition of "positive". In POS, the P can be understood in four distinct ways: a perspective (lens), an outcome, a resource, and a goal (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). The *perspective* posits that phenomenon such as obstacles and challenges can be interpreted with the "positive" lens of opportunity and experience. The *outcome* is focused on the study of extraordinary results or performance within teams. The *resource* accepts that positivity allows for expanding of resources and ability (Fredrickson, 2002). Finally, the *goal* assumes that positivity and virtue is pursued for its own sake – that all societies are inclined towards self-actualization and excellence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These varying interpretations of the "positive" within organizational contexts highlight that POS and POB do not deny the "negative" elements of organizational development but complement it. They accept the reality that growth and development are a result of a delicate balance between successes and failures (Ryff &

Singer, 2003), and that studying "positive" phenomenon help to highlight the mechanisms through which positive institutions can be uplifted and maintained.

This course will introduce the beneficial effects of positive psychology constructs, how POS integrates them into organizational practices, and how you as a leader can apply them at the individual and team level. The characteristics that are considered life giving in organizations stem from well-researched concepts in positive psychology. In the *Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*, Cameron & Spreitzer (2012) divide POS concepts into categories of positive emotions, positive relationships, positive human resource and organizational processes, positive leadership, and a positive lens of problems and challenges. These constructs directly and indirectly associate with Seligman's (2004) well-researched PERMA theory of well-being. We now turn to an explanation of the dimensions of PERMA and how they connect with well-being in the context of work.

C. PERMA at Work – A Model of Well-Being

It is widely accepted among administrators and faculty on university campuses that a career in higher education comes with a great sense of purpose. Shaping the minds of future leaders is a worthwhile endeavor with inherent value because people believe what we leave for the future matters. Positive psychology research shows us that mattering is a precursor to meaning in life (Costin & Vignoles, 2019). Martin Seligman (2011) identifies **M**eaning as one of the **PERMA** building blocks of well-being. His PERMA model consists of four other dimensions: **P**ositive emotions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, and **A**chievement. According to his research, incorporating all five of these dimensions into life and work leads to lasting happiness

and the sought-after life well lived. We will now examine each of these dimensions and how they might contribute to thriving and well-being in the context of work.

i. Positive emotions. The P in PERMA stands for positive emotions – defined as positive feelings and patterns of physical arousal, thoughts, and behaviors that are pleasant (Peterson, 2006). Experiencing more positive emotions can lead to success at work and in life. The tendency to experience positive emotions habitually and interact with life in a positive way is known as “positive affect”, which is more similar to a mood state (Peterson, 2006). Perhaps the most widely cited research on the effects of positive affect comes from the work of psychologist Barbara Fredrickson (1998), who found that experiencing emotions such as joy, interest, contentment, and love broadens the individual’s thought-action repertoire (attention and resulting behaviors). This broadening, in turn, can build relational and intellectual resources that can lead to success. Put simply, positive affect, or being in an elevated mood, helps us expand our view of what is possible, and act on these opportunities to create more success and well-being. Experiences of positive affect and positive emotions empower individuals to engage in their environments, explore, play, take in new information, expand the self, and share with others, thus leading to new social connections, setting of new goals, creativity, and integration. For a more in depth description of the broaden and build theory, see Fredrickson’s (1998, 2001) original work.

Despite the common belief that success leads to happiness, research that has been replicated in numerous studies indicates that happiness and optimism are often pre-cursors to success (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Evidence of the “Broaden and Build” theory indicates that while negative emotions tend to narrow focus, positive emotions expand focus and allow for greater processing of information (Fredrickson, 2001). Studies suggest that positive

emotions undo the physical effects of negative emotions on the body (like the increases in heart rate experienced during heightened anxiety), increase psychological resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), and trigger upward spirals by improving future coping with difficult situations. The upwards spirals are shown to compound the effects and increase emotional well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). These findings suggest that positive emotions and positive affect can protect against stress, aid in recovery from adverse events and failure, and facilitate greater social connections and emotional well-being – all necessary in order to persevere and succeed in any challenging endeavor.

The evidence is strong for cultivating positive emotions not just to foster well-being but also for success. In the context of university administrators and leaders, these effects can make a huge difference in improvements in job satisfaction, leadership skills, problem solving abilities, enthusiasm about work, and overall well-being. University administrators, since beginning their appointments, often report becoming less interested and enthusiastic about their work, and believing that their role is interfering with their quality of life (Morris & Laipple, 2015). Cultivating more positive affect at work would be of great benefit to this group. The good news is that while some part of individual affect is hereditary (some are born with a greater tendency towards attaining good moods often), there is strong evidence that increasing positive affect can become habitual by changing specific thought patterns and actions (Garland et al., 2010). Essentially, through certain intentional practices such as the cultivation of gratitude, mindfulness, savoring of good news and events, and even exercise, we can begin to increase the amount of positive affect, which in turn undoes the effects of negative emotions and creates the desirable upwards spiral of positivity (Fredrickson, 2001).

ii. Engagement. We cannot work to increase our positive emotions, build relationships, or seek achievement in work and life if we are not *engaged*. Engagement has been defined as the sense of loss of self in an activity when time seems to stop (Seligman, 2011). This flow state, when we are doing things we enjoy, engages us completely with the present moment and facilitates a state of intense concentration that has been described as blissful. Another definition used for this context refers to the level of deep involvement and concentration on certain activities within work and personal life (Kun, Balogh, & Krasz, 2017). It is intuitive why engagement is an important part of well-being at work and within teams. A lack of engagement can lead to all sorts of productivity issues like recurrent mistakes, missed deadlines, apathy, and a lack of job involvement (described as identifying with one's work in Fisher, 2010).

Research in positive psychology and POS has identified the concept of *engagement at work*. Khan (1990) describes the concept of personal engagement at work as the act of fully expressing and bringing one's whole self into the work task, thereby authentically connecting to others and driving personal energies into "physical, cognitive, and emotional labors" (p. 700). People fully engaged at work are described as alert, involved, vigilant, and empathic to others. This may be due to the element of authenticity by which the individual is acting with when they are immersed in work that feels true to who they believe they are. Engagement has also been defined as a trait, state (momentary or stable), cognition, affect, and behavior (Fisher, 2010). A review by Macey and Schneider (2008) identified engagement as relating one's job with positive affect, persistence, vigor, dedication, and pride.

This course familiarizes the concept of engagement at work as a *psychological state*. Because of the various ways mentioned above in which engagement has been operationalized,

there is little consensus around valid measurement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). It is clear that employee or team engagement can drive an organization's bottom line and increase productivity. However, in line with Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of well-being and research within organizational psychology, engagement is also an asset to psychological well-being because it facilitates enthusiasm and investment of time and effort by employees in their roles (Macey & Schneider, 2008). One study found that individual engagement at work could even lead to collective energy at the group level and within teams by increasing attention and concentration, team motivation, and positive interactions (Rothbard & Patil, 2012).

Although some have conceptualized engagement as the opposite of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001), they do not necessarily sit on a continuum as it can be observed that too much engagement can sometimes lead to burnout. It is important to note that measures of engagement traditionally used in practical applications are more closely related to culture or job satisfaction, which may be efficient at determining the conditions that could *lead* to engagement, though not measuring the actual level of engagement present (Macey & Schneider, 2008). At work, engagement is interrelated to the other PERMA constructs and influenced by relationships, meaningfulness, achievement, and affect.

iii. Relationships. Evolutionary psychology posits that humans desire those things that have helped our ancestors successfully reproduce and advance (Haidt, Seder, & Kesebir, 2008). These preferences extend to groups, as early humans had to bond and cooperate in harsh environments in order to survive. We are biologically wired for connection and bonding because they increased our group fitness and provided advantages for survival (Ratey & Manning, 2014). These social bonds are formed and strengthened through shared positive emotions with others.

Oxytocin is the chemical at work during moments of shared social relations and engagement (Fredrickson, 2013). Our human connections (and oxytocin) lower our heart rate and keep us healthy. Furthermore, joy and happiness flows from merging with groups and acting as a united “hive” (Haidt et al., 2008). This “hive switch” is characterized by an ability to lose our sense of self and connect with something larger (Haidt, 2012), which can deliver a great source of meaning. We need human connections and relationships to flourish, which is why the R in PERMA is a necessary component for well-being.

In the context of work, positive relationships might be one of the most powerful variables to influence well-being at the individual level and the organization at large. Close ties with others can lead to feelings of belonging (Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014). The energy and vitality in a team has been hypothesized to depend on the quality of the connections among the people within the group (Stephens, Heaphy & Dutton, 2012). Positive emotions and respectful engagement are both elements in the development of quality relationships at work. As mentioned earlier, positive emotions can broaden and increase social resources (Fredrickson, 2001) and engagement, understood as psychological presence, indicates respect and encourages more interactions (Kahn, 1992). Any good team leader intuits that strong relationships in the workplace are not only an asset, but also a means by which the best work gets done. By facilitating quality connections within teams, leaders can increase motivation, engagement, and meaning for themselves and others in the organization. We will later explore strategies for facilitating quality connections.

iv. Meaning. In the subjective, personal sense, meaning has been described as the urge to find fulfillment (Auhagen, 2000). Research in positive psychology hints that there are many paths to meaning. The old adage “know thyself” points to the importance of self-awareness.

Socrates famously said, “The unexamined life is not worth living”. Generating a sense of knowledge and understanding of our life and ourselves is the first step towards cultivating meaning. Many people are able to find a sense of meaning and fulfillment from their work, especially when they feel as though their work serves a higher purpose. Quinn and Thakor (2014) define higher purpose as an intent that serves a social benefit beyond monetary reward. Having a sense of purpose that transcends our own immediate interests is essential to cultivating meaning (Steger, 2018). A career in higher education can be very rewarding in this regard; however, the reality of navigating the myriad of challenges and complexities of academic leadership can turn idealism into burnout (Morris & Laipple, 2015).

Cultivating the M in PERMA can help revitalize an organization. As already stated, quality relationships can be one way of nurturing vitality and purpose. The connections and contributions we make can make us feel like we *matter*. Our ability to add value and feel valued can instill a great sense of meaning and mattering, which in turn spurs more motivation towards pro-social behavior and cooperation (Prilleltensky, 2019). Having control over our actions and the environment is key to feeling like we are adding value. Those reporting experiences of meaning in life tend to have greater life satisfaction, more engagement at work, and a greater sense of control (Prilleltensky, 2019). In order to feel a sense of control, some level of self-efficacy is required. Bandura (2001) defines self-efficacy as the belief in our abilities to take actions that will affect outcomes. It is through our abilities to affect meaningful change and work towards a goal that we consider greater than ourselves that a sense of meaning at work can be established. Leaders who are able to inspire and empower their teams to connect with and act in

accordance with their highest values can create congruence between the purpose of the organization and the individual (Quinn & Thakor, 2014).

v. Achievement. The A in PERMA stands for achievement, and this dimension is what contributes to our overall sense of engagement in the world. *Self Determination Theory (SDT)* best explains this mechanism and is broken down into four parts: (1) pursuing intrinsic goals; (2) behaving with autonomy (will); (3) having a sense of awareness; and (4) behaving in ways that satisfy our needs of competence (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Achievement is defined as a sense of accomplishment and success (Seligman, 2011), present when we set goals and regulate our behavior to pursue and reach them. SDT highlights that awareness is needed to pursue goals, which requires attention and engagement in the activity performed. Successful pursuit of goals also creates a sense of self-efficacy and a myriad of both physical and mental health benefits (Maddux, 2009). Most importantly, because self-efficacy fosters a belief in our own abilities to achieve, it inevitably leads to both engagement in the actions performed and meaningful appraisal of the result. Achievement further engages us in future goal pursuits in a self-maintaining positive loop.

The dimension of Achievement in PERMA is perhaps the most noticeable variable in the context of work. However, the marker by which achievement is measured matters. Positive leaders can have a big impact on how achievement is sought after and perceived within their teams. With a focus placed on markers of success based on employee well-being, collaboration, energy, meaningfulness, trust, and respect, an organization can activate what is called "virtuousness" (Cameron, 2014). A virtuous team, organization, or institution is one that helps individuals be the best versions of themselves while at the same time achieve extraordinary

outcomes (Cameron, 2014). While it is evident that virtuousness is inherently rewarding, numerous empirical studies have found increases in performance of teams and organizations that emphasize virtuousness as one of its highest achievements. Improvements in profitability, productivity, creativity and innovation, employee engagement, and even buffers against low morale and politicized environments due to downsizing have been observed (for studies see: Bright, Cameron, & Caza, 2006; Cameron, Bright & Caza, 2004; and Cameron, Mora, Leutscher & Calarco, 2011).

vi. Measuring Well-Being at Work

It is important to note the intersection and cross influences between the dimensions of PERMA in the context of work well-being. Because positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement influence each other, it can be difficult to isolate and measure just one. Kern (2013) developed a work well-being questionnaire called the Workplace PERMA Profiler, which is based on Seligman's PERMA model (Kun, Balogh, & Krasz, 2017). Parker and Hyett (2011) developed their own 31- item measure that involved domains such as work satisfaction, organizational respect for employee, and employer care. New measures are constantly in development as researchers and leaders looks to understand the dynamics within organizations that lead to flourishing. PERMA is just one way that emerging research in positive psychology and POS has been able to support the value in fostering well-being within the workplace, and more research is needed to balance this evidence within the context of higher education leadership. The link to a simple assessment that you can use to measure your own team's well-being can be found in the course assets (Appendix B).

Summary

This module has helped back up much of the information presented in the rest of this course by introducing the main research and theory supporting well-being as an enabler of thriving within organizations and teams. Seligman and colleagues have developed the PERMA model of well-being to identify dimensions of human life that can be influenced and improved to lead to flourishing. Positive organizational scholarship uses the lens of PERMA and other constructs to highlight that which is life giving in organizations. In Module II, we explore some of the most impactful elements identified by POS that leaders can adopt to enable their teams to thrive within their roles and transform their institutions.

MODULE II – Empowering Teams to Thrive

Module I looks at the ways Positive Psychology and Positive Organizational Scholarship contribute to leadership. Specifically, we examine the concepts of *Character Strengths*, *High Quality Connections*, and *Higher Purpose* in the context of work. These elements all relate back to the PERMA model introduced in Module I, and are considered key factors that can empower individuals and groups to thrive and increase their well-being and effectiveness.

A. The Strengths of Character

When researchers studying Positive Organizational Scholarship talk about the elements that are “life-giving” in organizations, what they are referring to is the variables that lead to energy or vitality. Leaders that can generate vitality within their team are more likely to have a team that is deeply engaged in the work (Spreitzer, Lam, & Quinn, 2011). Module I introduced Khan’s (1990) notion of human energy being applied in the context of *work engagement*. His theory essentially states that when an individual brings his or her *whole self* into the work task,

an authentic connection is established which could lead to physical, cognitive, and emotional investment of personal energy into the work. Related concepts from research focused on energy creation are Ryan and Fredrick's (1997) concept of subjective vitality – the basis for *Self Determination Theory (SDT*), Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of *flow,* and Spreitzer and colleagues (2005) model of *thriving at work*. While examining all these constructs in detail is outside the scope of this course, it is important to note human agency as the underlying common denominator behind most of the aforementioned models of energy creation. Bandura (1997; 2004) sees agentic individuals as intentional and future minded, being motivated to set goals and plan strategies to achieve them, as well as self-regulatory and self-reflective, consistently adjusting their actions and reintegrating new information into their existing frameworks. He positions the capacity and intention to act as crucial to the motivation of individuals because it generates in them a sense of self-efficacy, or belief that they can perform a task successfully (Bandura, 1997). In this section, we look at how leadership that is based on identifying and encouraging use of individual's strengths leads to an increase in agency, energy, vitality, and ultimately well-being and engagement at work.

Module I introduced Seligman and Peterson's (2004) classification of human strengths and virtues known as the CSV (Character Strengths & Virtues) handbook. The CSV provides practitioners with a manual for identifying and cultivating human traits that lead to well-being and success. It was the first manual of its kind to provide "conceptual and empirical tools to craft and evaluate interventions" (p. 3) that help nurture character formation. The author's intention behind the development of the CVS was to legitimize the study of character and virtue as topics of psychological research and empirical discourse. As such, they placed a significant investment

in the methodology through which the 24-character strengths and six umbrella virtues were identified (outlined in Table 1).

Seeking to develop a common language, scientists, with the backing of the nonprofit VIA Institute on Character, completed a lengthy three-year analysis on the topic of character throughout history, philosophy, culture, morality, psychology, and theology (Niemiec, 2018). Seligman and Peterson (2004) describe their process in the *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. The most important takeaway is that the identified 24 strengths of character are found universally across all cultures, religions, and belief systems to be desirable, stable, trait-like, and contribute to the collective good (Niemiec, 2018). Perhaps most critical to their work is that these traits of character are malleable, meaning they can be influenced and developed over time. In order to measure the presence of the various strengths within individuals, the VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA Survey) for adults and the VIA Survey for Youth (10 to 17 year old) was developed (Niemiec, 2018). The VIA Survey has been taken over 11 million times around the world and shown to have good reliability and validity across time (Niemiec, 2018). This assessment is available free at https://www.viacharacter.org, and has been translated in over 35 languages. Another tool developed by Gallup researchers that identifies thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that lead to success (Asplund & Blacksmith, 2012) is the Clifton StrengthsFinder (CSF). Research conducted with both the VIA and the CSF shows that once people can label their intrinsic positive characteristics and use them both at work and in how they relate to each other, they are better able to identify with and call on these strengths to overcome future challenges (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Niemiec, 2018).

Table 1.
Character Strengths by Umbrella Virtue

Wisdom	***Courage***	***Humanity***	***Justice***	***Temperance***	***Transcendence***
Perspective	Bravery	Love	Teamwork	Humility	Gratitude
Judgement	Honesty	Kindness	Leadership	Prudence	Hope
Curiosity	Zest	Social Intelligence	Fairness	Forgiveness	Humor
Creativity	Perseverance			Self-Regulation	Spirituality
Love of Learning					Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence

Since the creation of the CVS classification, many practitioners and researchers have developed iterations on the original classification. Ryan Niemiec (2018) wrote the *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Field Guide for Practitioners* manual that offers a deep dive into different dimensionalities and contexts of the use of character strengths (such as situational themes) and useful interventions for cultivating strengths in individuals. Peterson and Park (2006) describe findings related to the benefits of character strengths within the organizational setting, both for individuals and organizations at large. They describe how various findings highlight the positive associations of character strengths and relevant desirable outcomes at work (Peterson & Park, 2006). For example, there are findings that show use of strengths such as *zest, gratitude, curiosity*, and *love* is robustly linked to work satisfaction across a multitude of occupations and among hierarchical ranks (p. 1151). In the *Oxford Handbook of Positive Organization Scholarship*, Rego, Clegg, and Cunha (2012) explore how certain virtues of character such as *wisdom, courage*, and *humanity* help global leaders tasked with navigating an increasingly complex cultural, political, and economic landscape navigate challenges and seek

opportunities for growth and development. The authors agree that strengths and virtues are beneficial when recognized and called upon by leaders to continue to grow and adapt to diverse challenges (Rego, Clegg, & Cunha, 2012). One can envision the benefit of this identification and use of strengths in leadership within Higher Education institutions, which are becoming more globalized and complex with each passing decade (Kezar, 2009).

To further make the case for the importance of leading with strengths, research shows that over two thirds of people do not know or understand their strengths or talents (Linley, 2008). For those that do, a study examining the alignment between people's strengths and the amount those are required at work found most to be only moderately matched, meaning that there is a great opportunity to encourage employees to find new ways to bring their strengths into their work (Money, Hillenbrand, & Camara, 2009).

While there is certainly much to be learned from the research in personal application of character strengths for leaders, the purpose of this course is to assist and encourage leaders to leverage the application of strengths within their teams. As mentioned earlier, leaders that can create vitality and energy within their teams are more likely to generate a committed, engaged, and solution-oriented organization. Strengths-based leadership operates on the assumption that individuals generally desire to hold a positive view of themselves and be seen favorably by others. It allows for the cultivation of a positive identity among team members (Roberts, 2014). Research on human agency shows that when we bring our whole, *authentic* selves into what we do, energy is invested into further pursuit of goals (Khan, 1990). Authenticity comes from truly expressing and acting out individual values and identities. This is where leaders can play a key role by helping their teams construct positive identities through recognizing and calling upon

their individual strengths to deal with novel and challenging circumstances for which they may not feel trained (Roberts, 2014).

A national survey of 1515 university administrators (such as deans, directors, and department chairs) found almost half feeling overwhelmed and unenthusiastic about their role, believing it significantly interfered with their well-being (Morris & Laipple, 2015). One of the reasons reported for this downward trend in job satisfaction was feeling unprepared in certain areas of work such as developing metrics to measure success and dealing with grievances. It is possible that developing positive identities around their existing strengths could help buffer against some of these challenges, encourage individuals to lean on their strengths when faced with unexpected tasks, and lead to increases in well-being and productivity. As researchers have pointed out, one of the outcomes of using strengths are energy and authenticity, meaning that individuals feel more vigorous, focused, and resilient in the face of challenges (Dubreuil, Forest, & Courcy, 2014). Being able to understand what we are good at, and call upon those qualities when faced with unpredictable obstacles, can increase feelings of competence and commitment to solving the issue at hand. Moreover, this process of using a trait that comes naturally energizes us and feels good (Dubreuil et al., 2014). While energy and engagement are not the opposite of burnout, they may help buffer against it (Rothbard & Patil, 2012).

In addition to the added benefits of engagement, vitality, and agency in work, use of strengths and positive identities can help increase the experience of work as a meaningful endeavor and promote quality connections within teams. Researchers in POS have identified that when work is perceived as critical to one's identity (a destiny or duty), it is considered a calling (Wrzensniewski, 2011) and perceived as meaningful. As we have observed through the theory of

PERMA, M (meaning) is one of the critical elements of well-being. While customary employee development practices aim to remedy areas of weakness, strengths-based leadership takes a different approach. By recognizing that organizations have more to gain through leveraging their employee's natural talents, skills, and knowledge, positive leaders open up opportunities for people to increase the frequency of positive experiences at work (Asplund & Blacksmith, 2012). In the next section, we will explore how strengths use is related to meaning and social connections, as well as the mechanisms through which leaders can enable greater experiences of these elements within their teams.

Looking ahead. To help you begin to apply strength-based leadership practices with your teams, Module III provides an exercise called "Strengths Spotting" that encourage employees to identify and lean on their strengths within their work. Having team members take the VIA assessment and learn the language around strengths will help them identify with what they do best and spot these traits in others on the team, thereby creating energy and an upward spiral of vitality.

B. High Quality Connections

A copious amount of literature in both Positive Psychology and POS speaks to the protective powers of social connections and relationships. The "R" in PERMA is identified in Module I as critical to individual well-being. In the context of work, relationships and collaboration are key to organizational success. Due to their lengthy history and scale, Higher Education institutions are not known to be particularly agile, and collaboration is often not easily achieved (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Leaders, therefore, must understand the dynamics that lead to collaboration and the synergies that create the energy needed for innovation among their teams.

POS can help in this regard through research that explores the importance of social connections in the context of organizations. We will explore this topic in depth in this section.

By way of social support, organizations have been shown to protect individuals against adversity that could otherwise lead to burnout (Caza & Milton, 2012). This means that through the right initiatives, leaders can develop resilience in their institutions. Quality relationships that help individuals feel valued and connected play a big role in this process (Caza & Milton, 2012). Leadership that builds trust and authenticity helps to facilitate both a culture of connection and communication (Youssef & Luthans, 2011). Relational constructs such as trust and social support are rooted in the premise that people exchange valuable resources between each other. In contrast, High Quality Connections (HQCs) are based on the notion that the experience of connection itself is the resource that affects individual and group performance in positive ways (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2012).

In her cornerstone book *Energize Your Workplace,* POS expert and Professor Jane Dutton (2003) defines HQCs as moments characterized by shared positive regard, engagement, and trust between individuals (p. 2). She emphasizes that there need not be a lengthy and invested relationship present in order to experience a high quality connection. Something as simple as an e-mail exchange or moment of acknowledgment in a meeting has the potential to become a quality connection. Dutton (2003) describes the outcome of these types of connections as energizing and opening, speaking to the high level of vitality and engagement they create. Module I introduces the work of psychologist Barbara Fredrickson on shared positive emotions as expanding and building of social resources (Fredrickson, 2001). The link between Fredrickson's work on positive upward spirals and Dutton's high quality connections is centered

on energy formation and positive affect. Energizing interactions between team members at work are infectious, having the ability to sustain further vitality and move the entire team to experience more interest, joy, commitment to solving problems, and creativity (Dutton, 2003).

Many studies have found further benefits of HQCs on behavioral, emotional, and even physiological processes. A review of studies exploring the physiology of social interactions at work found positive effects of quality social connections on cardiovascular health, the immune system, and the neuroendocrine system (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). For example, quality social support was shown to lower cortisol (a stress hormone) levels through increases in oxytocin (the bonding hormone). HQCs are also shown to aid individuals in developing positive identities, discussed in the previous section, by enabling them to explore self-concepts and feel valued, and identified by others (Roberts, 2007). At the group level, HQCs are related to greater trust and psychological safety, which are effective at increasing collaboration (Stephens et al., 2012). Of particular interest to campus leaders, there are studies showing that greater unit learning from mistakes, improvements in coordination, and higher levels of error detection are linked to the beneficial effects of quality connections in teams (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Gittell, 2003).

In Higher Education, HQCs can have a monumental impact on team effectiveness. This is because college and university campuses are traditionally bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations, plagued by stringent administrative structures, clashes between academic and administrative priorities, and responsibility focused budgeting (Kezar & Lester, 2009). All of these characteristics support individualistic behavior and hinder collaboration and innovation. Specialization, known as the division of units into distinct structures (such as academic advising, financial aid, etc.) has also led to a separation of values and priorities, each unit believing their

work more important than the overall mission of the institution (Kezar & Lester, 2009). These types of beliefs and the micro-aggressions that ensue from them are what Dutton (2003) refers to as "corrosive connections" (p. 110). Corrosive connections are the opposite of HQCs and tend to suck out the energy and vitality from a team. Dutton (2003) offers numerous strategies for dealing with corrosive relationships at work from bringing awareness to the issue, creating a sense of control, and strengthening one's own internal resources. However, it is important to note that strengthening positive relationships though HQCs is an effective way to protect against corrosive connections that cannot be remedied at work. Leaders can encourage teams to begin to build upon these resources by promoting mentoring programs, support groups, and other safe spaces where HQCs can be built and a sense of worth and validity re-established (Dutton, 2003).

Many mechanisms describe how HQCs are facilitated. Cognitive mechanisms include an awareness and acceptance of others, plus the ability to take multiple perspectives that allow for empathy formation (Stephens et al., 2012). Emotional mechanisms are discussed earlier and include positive affect (Fredrickson, 2001) and emotional contagion (Stephens et al., 2012). Finally, behavioral mechanisms are perhaps the most easily influenced by leaders and include respectful engagement, task enabling, and building trust (Stephens et al., 2012). Module III introduces some helpful strategies that can be applied immediately to increase the likelihood of HQC formation within and between teams.

Looking Ahead. In Module III, we look at simple and specific ways you can facilitate the development of quality connections within your teams. Best practices are discussed in the context of Higher Education administrative units as well as strategies that leaders can adapt to increase the likelihood for individuals to feel seen, valued, and validated at work.

C. Higher Purpose in Higher Education

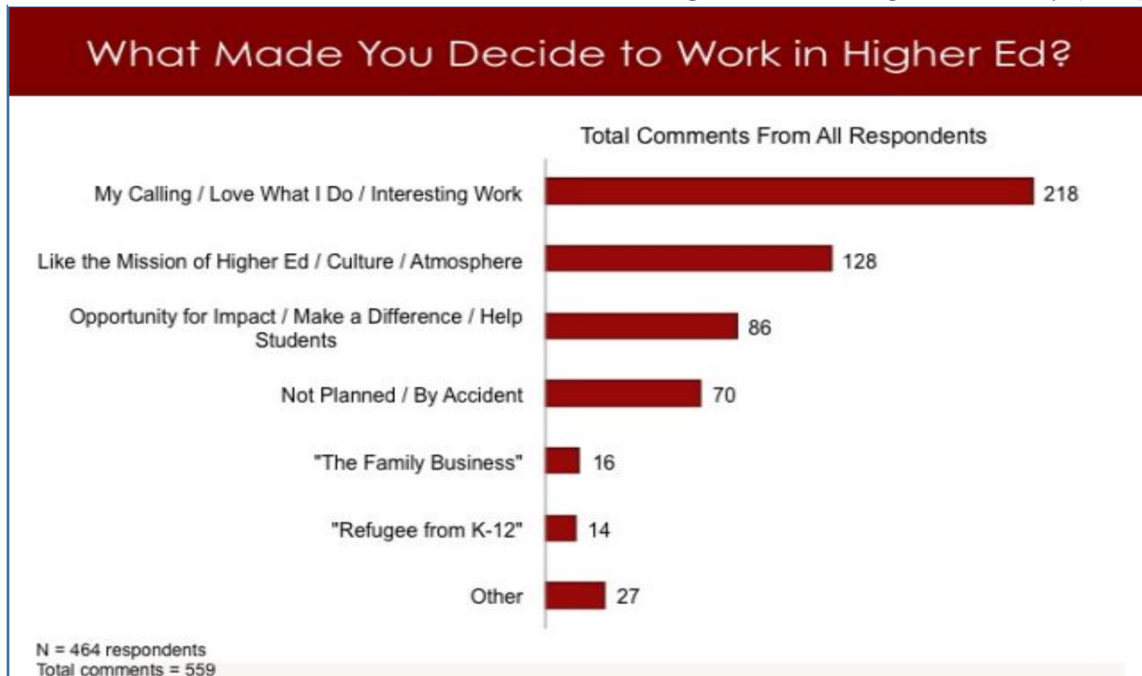
Why pursue a higher purpose at work? The average individual will end up spending about one third of their life working. The work sphere demands so much energy, attention, and personal resource investment that it often becomes one of the biggest factors in our sense of identity. In Module I, the M in PERMA is identified as a critical component of well-being. Adopting a higher purpose at work has been found to lead to increased meaning, life-satisfaction, work engagement, and even physical health (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). In addition to the myriad of benefits to the individual, embedding a sense of meaning and higher purpose in an organization can uplift it to reach its full potential. In this section, we will explore the beneficial effects of embedding meaning and purpose within teams, the challenges faced by higher education administrators in this arena, and pathways that can lead to meaning and purpose alignment.

Purpose has inherent value to people insofar as it is a conduit to meaning and fulfilment in life. Steger (2009) defines purpose as long-term goals that people are motivated and committed to pursue. Victor Frankl (1963) has identified meaning as deriving from a unique purpose or important aim in life that each individual possesses. A review of the literature on meaning and purpose found countless studies supporting the notion that well-being, happiness, life-satisfaction, and engagement at work are all increased when a sense of purpose is present (Steger & Wong, 2012). Additionally, purpose and meaning are also beneficial at the organizational level. Quinn & Thakor (2014) define a higher purpose in organizations as "something that is perceived as producing a social benefit over and above the tangible pecuniary payoff that is shared by the principal and the agent" (p. 2). In their paper on "The Economics of

Higher Purpose", the authors explain that a higher purpose can emerge when transformational leaders create meaning by linking their organizations business goals and purpose to that of the individuals own values (Quinn & Thakor, 2014). This, in turn, increases the agent's intrinsic motivation to invest effort thereby decreasing the amount of external rewards that they require.

As an establishment designed to provide important value to society, the higher education mission is laden with purpose and meaning. The financial benefits are not what usually attract individuals to pursue a career in higher education. It is the opportunity to have an impact on students, the future workforce, and the research and knowledge produced that will be of benefit to society which draws individuals to these careers. In a 2013 survey conducted by *Inside Higher Ed*, 218 out of 464 (46%) respondents said their main reason for choosing a career in higher education was because they considered it their "calling" (Catropa & Andrews, 2013). Another 27% (128 people) said they identified with the "Mission of Higher Ed", and 18.5% (86 people) said it was because of the opportunity to make an impact. As can be observed in Figure 2, well over three quarters of respondents identified some type of personal or universal purpose as their main reason for choosing a career in higher education. The responses are indicative of the primary driver of these employees to their jobs – they want to find meaning at work. The responses do not, however, indicate why many continue to stay in their positions despite feeling burned out or overwhelmed.

Figure 2. *Inside Higher Ed Survey (2013)*



A "calling" has been defined in numerous ways in organizational literature, with the most traditional definition being "a meaningful beckoning towards activities that are morally, socially, and personally significant" (Wrzesniewski, 2011, p. 46). With so many respondents identifying higher education work as their calling, it might seem as though there would be no need to focus on imbuing a higher purpose into college and university faculty and administrative teams. However, the reality is more complex than simply looking at the reasons someone seeks work in higher education. For example, one study looking at job satisfaction of mid-level university administrators reported that they often feel invisible and disconnected from the mission and goals of the university (Johnsrud & Russer, 1999). In the previously mentioned study of 1515 university administrators, it was reported that the majority of participants had admitted to feeling less enthusiastic or interested in their work since beginning their position (Morris & Laipple,

2015). The main reasons for the disengagement were reportedly due to the effect that the role was having on their well-being (feeling unprepared or un-appreciated) and interference with life outside of work (i.e. having to work long hours and weekends). Given the lack of direct contact with the students they are making a difference for, coupled with the administrative red tape and political challenges they must face daily, campus administrators might lose their connection to the original mission and purpose that attracted them to the field. Reconnecting these individuals with the higher mission of the institution could help re-energize them and restore their sense of purpose and meaning to their work.

To understand potential pathways to meaning formation in the context of work, we can look back at the previous sections in this course. The section on character strengths introduced the idea that individuals are motivated to create positive identities of themselves and be seen favorably by others. Agency is presented as a way through which people seek out to create and confirm their identities, calling on their unique character strengths to build and sustain meaningful connections, solve difficult challenges, or innovate. Self-efficacy, or the belief that one has the ability to succeed at any given task, plays a big part in this process because it is obtained through observing the cues and responses from the environment (Bandura, 1997). If an individual receives a positive response to their action, then they are more likely to build self-efficacy. Similarly, Wrzesniewski, Dutton, and Debebe (2003) argue that meaning in the context of work is created through cues about the significance of the task they are performing as well as from the acts of others. This can explain why use of character strengths (that come naturally) could be a pathway to meaning formation – through the authentic expression of identity and natural talents, employees can feel more connected to the work they are doing. Additionally, the

authors argue that further work meaning is derived from employees seeking out interactions and constructing positive relationships that reinforce positive relationships at work (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). This is where facilitating more opportunities for employees to experience HQC can help them create more meaning in their work since "employees want meaning through connection to others" (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003, p. 93).

Looking Ahead. There are many strategies a leader can adopt when attempting to connect their team to a higher purpose within their work. We will examine one in Module III that combines the "Vision Formulation" and "Vision Implementation" strategies introduced in Dutton's (2014) *How to Be a Positive Leader* with the use of character strengths and High Quality Connections in order to empower and energize teams to thrive and aim to reach their potential, generating an overall sense of well-being.

> *"Purpose is the deepest dimension within us – our central core or essence – where we have a profound sense of who we are, where we came from and where we're going. Purpose is the quality we choose to shape our lives around. Purpose is a source of energy and direction."*

Leider, 2015

Summary

In Module II, we looked at three constructs that are related to the PERMA theory of well-being from Module I. We saw how the use of character strengths leads to more engagement, meaning, and achievement at work. We examined the ways in which high quality connections allow for building of positive relationships and protect against corrosive connections. And we looked at the benefits of enabling the creation of meaning at work and how it can be achieved

through using strengths and building positive connections. In Module III, we examine three strategies that integrate this knowledge in practical ways to begin generating use of strengths, quality connections, and meaning within your leadership teams.

MODULE III – Positive Campus Leadership

A. Leading with Strengths

The first part of the section on positive leadership tools is focused on identity and connection to the things that individuals do well. Niemiec (2018) notes that practitioners who generate an awareness of strengths and encourage use of strengths can increase meaning and engagement, positive relationships, resilience, and goal achievement. When strengths are known and recognized, they can become "positive identity labels" (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014, p. 59). Even though adopting positive identity labels can lead to improved behaviors and performance, many leaders are unaware of their own strengths (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). To further highlight the lack of awareness, survey results show that two thirds of individuals do not have a meaningful understanding of their own virtues and strengths (Linley, 2008). A positive leader actively encourages all members of their institution to build positive identities (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). We will now look at some ways you can get started with exploring and applying strengths within your leadership team in order to increase effectiveness and well-being.

i. Values in Action (VIA) Survey. In Module II, we introduced the VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA Survey) developed by the non-profit VIA Institute on Character. This survey is available for free at https://www.viacharacter.org and is offered in multiple languages. The first part of using strengths at work is developing an awareness of top strengths at the individual level. As a leader, taking the VIA assessment and learning your *signature strengths* (top five

strengths) will help you develop a language around the characteristics that come most naturally to you. For example, you may find that *perspective* and *perseverance* are in your top five strengths. Knowing that perspective is a strength might encourage you to seek out different possible solutions to a leadership problem. Knowing that you have perseverance might enable you to stay adaptable and safeguard you against stress in coming up with solutions to challenges.

After you complete the VIA assessment, you will receive your 24 strengths in rank-order. Niemiec (2018) recommends reading each definition and noticing what most interests or surprises you about the results. There may be inclinations towards positive actions to take pertaining to certain strengths which should be regarded. It is important also to note that your lowest strengths are not considered “weaknesses” in the VIA classification. Rather, they are characteristics that might require more energy for you to apply (Niemiec, 2018). Learning the definitions and language around strengths will start to boost your connection to a positive identify for yourself.

The first step to leading with strengths is to understand your own, and to use them in the way you lead and work.

ii. Team Assessments. The second step in strengths leadership is to have your team take the VIA Assessment. You could then facilitate a workshop where you allow them to share and discuss results with each other. Some ideas around how to facilitate team conversations around strengths can be found in the *Character Strengths Interventions* handbook by Ryan Niemiec (2018). He recommends starting with asking the group what their initial reactions were to their top strengths and reminding them that any reaction is acceptable, since the goal is growth and personal development. Letting your team explore how they see each other’s strengths manifest is

another powerful way to get their engagement up and to facilitate positive identities. When others recognize something is good within us that we already know, it confirms our belief.

Another exercise Niemiec (2018) recommends which you can do with your team is called "Strengths Alignment" (p. 83). This entails having each team member list the five tasks they do most frequently at work (e.g., emailing students, tracking budgets, designing curriculum, etc.). Next, using the list of their top five strengths from their VIA profile, have them write down one way they could use any *one* of their top five strengths with each of their five most common work tasks. Have them explain how they can bring their strength into their work, and have them repeat this exercise for each of their top five strengths. An example of this might be, using *humor* when writing to students to make the emails and letters more entertaining to read. Studies behind this activity show that it can increase levels of life satisfaction and the tendency to see one's job as a calling (Littman-Ovadia & Niemiec, 2017).

The way to ensure that your team stays engaged in the work is by encouraging them to express their most energizing characteristics in the tasks they do daily.

iii. Develop a Common Language. Once strengths are identified and applied to daily tasks, the common language can be integrated into the institutional culture by encouraging something Linley (2008) calls *Strengths Spotting*. This is observing and recognizing in one's self or in others when a strength is being used. Encouraging team members to recognize and call out strengths in each other can bring both positive influences at the individual level (as the person begins to identify with a specific strength) and at the group level (as increases in positive interactions among team members generate trust). Bowers and Lopez (2010) found that support from peers and reinforcing personal strengths, coupled with success using strengths, led to

maximum benefits. This means that the social context of the environment and team significantly affects how beneficial strength use is (Asplund & Blacksmith, 2012).

As a leader, one way that you can practice strength spotting with your team members is through giving *Strengths Feedback*. Effective performance feedback has been shown to increase engagement and enjoyment with the job (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2012). One strategy for providing this type of feedback is to not only use strengths to highlight what the employee is doing well, but also to encourage improvement in areas where there is opportunity for improvement. For example, you could say something like" "Lisa, I noticed that *love of learning* is one of your top strengths, how can you imagine bringing that into the good work you are doing outlining our department's processes?". This approach understands that people can develop best through their natural strengths and integration with talents and knowledge, rather than by building up what they lack (Asplund & Blacksmith, 2012). In addition, this type of growth generates more energy and alignment to the authentic self, leading to increases in employee well-being and other benefits.

Leading with strengths means that team members will develop and call upon their most authentic character traits to tackle challenges, which can lead to increased well-being.

B. Facilitating High Quality Connections (HQCs)

Jane Dutton (2003) describes in her book, *Energize Your Workplace*, that High Quality Connections (HQCs) are essential for a team's energy, well-being, and performance. As we learned in Module II, leaders who build trust and authenticity help facilitate connection and collaboration among their followers. One way that trust and authenticity is built is by adopting and encouraging values, as well as facilitating a culture of openness (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014).

We will now look at a few strategies that you can adopt to encourage the development of HQCs within your leadership teams. When these practices are rooted at the cultural level, they can become second nature and spread across the institution.

i. Modeling for High Quality Connections. First, we look at what you can do as a leader to model the type of behaviors that lead to HQCs among campus staff. At the core of any organization or institution, beyond even its mission, are a set of shared values. Dutton (2003) describes values as those elements in an organization that individuals believe are important, worthwhile, and beneficial. Leaders create and sustain these values by how they recruit, reward, and promote, but also by how they act (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). Creating clear values around teamwork, valuing the whole person, the development of people, and the respect and dignity of others has been found conducive to employees building HQCs across departments and units (Dutton, 2003). Creating rewards linked to team performance and relational skills focuses attention on collaboration (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). The campus values and mission can be reoriented to support team-based leadership and reward open communication (Kezar et al., 2006).

Another way that leaders can show they value people is through *Respectful Engagement,* which "shows esteem, dignity, and care for another person" (Stephens et al., 2012, p. 390). This involves paying attention to how one communicates and shows psychological presence when interacting (Khan, 1992). Active listening, which involves being responsive when someone is speaking through paraphrasing or asking questions, is a good way to convey presence (Rogers & Farson, 1979). Body language, eye contact, and empathy are all signals leaders can use to show they are valuing the person and the interaction in front of them (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014).

Supportive communication through making requests instead of demands (Rosenberg, 2002) promotes voluntary interactions that can lead to HQCs. In the University setting, it may not always be easy to engage in this type of behavior due to busy schedules and urgent demands, so special effort may be required to actively communicate in this way.

Leader's behavior model what is desirable in an institution, therefore they must conduct themselves in a manner that promotes connection building to enable development of HQCs.

ii. Build Trust. Trust is an enabler of HQCs. While not always easy, trust facilitates connection and makes interrelating more pleasant (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). True teamwork is centered on trust, good communication, and a lack of hierarchy among members (Kezar et al., 2006). Trusting means believing that others are dependable, benevolent, and acting with integrity (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). When we assume good intent on the part of others, we are likely to be more open to communication and collaboration, leading to higher quality of connections. Because trust is a resource that increases with use, the first step to creating trust is to be vulnerable and act in trusting ways (Dutton, 2003), but it can be difficult to be vulnerable. This is why building trust is hard and becomes even harder once it is broken (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). Research conducted on campuses attempting to move towards a team based leadership model shows that the history of a campus can affect trust for many years to come (Kezar et al., 2006).

Trust can be built by what leaders and teams say, do, and don't do (Dutton, 2003) Sharing valuable information, using language that is inclusive, not accusing others of bad intent, and giving away control are all recommended strategies that help to communicate an attitude of

trust among team members. Tierney (1993) highlights the importance of higher education leaders to promote shared responsibility and decision-making, and to reduce hierarchy among teams. This enables the building of trust and HQCs by signaling that the team values each other's voices, allowing multiple perspectives to be shared and improving decision-making outcomes. In contrast, a leader who conveys a lack of trust fosters employees who are also distrustful and insecure (Dutton, 2003), and who tend to close off in silos and hold off sharing of information.

By building trust, leaders can create real teams defined by open communication, limited politics, and a willingness to face challenges together, due to the HQCs that form among members of the group.

iii. Design Meetings to Foster HQCs. Because employees spend a significant amount of time in meetings, there is a great opportunity to facilitate HQCs in the way meeting are designed and run (Dutton, 2003). "Meetings can have important strategic consequences for an organization because they can spark or kill the productive conversations through which people share knowledge and build connections" (p. 154). Furthermore, meetings can be good opportunities for employees to show esteem and regard, to convey that they *value* each other (Stephens et al., 2012). The way meetings are currently run in an organization or institution can give clues as to how likely they are to help generate HQCs. Specifically, meetings designed so that people can engage with each other in both enjoyable and productive ways are most likely to generate a sense of energizing connections (Dutton, 2003).

One strategy for creating meetings that are energizing is to ensure that all participants are clear on each other's roles and purpose ahead of and during the meeting. This allows them to connect and acknowledge the impact each can have on the final outcome (Dutton, 2003).

Encouraging active listening ensures mutual engagement and development of trust. In addition, some element of play or fun should be present, as play is a form of interaction beneficial to the building of HQCs through shared positive emotions (Stephens et al., 2012). One example of a positive meeting practice is a short, daily "stand up" meeting, where all members of a work team gather in a circle at the beginning of the day for 15 minutes to share project updates, needs, appreciation, or concerns in a visible group setting.

Meetings are valuable opportunities for people to express positive emotions, gratitude, and value by acknowledging others and their contributions, which lead to HQCs.

C. Task Enabling

The last section of Module III introduces a powerful strategy that combines both elements of strengths and positive identities as well as high quality connections to empower individuals within teams. *Task enabling* builds connections while also energizing and strengthening learning and adaptation of the work unit or institution as a whole (Dutton, 2003). It is about investment of resources in the way of time, motivation, advice, etc. from one person to another that is mutually beneficial. This practice is powerful because it is directly connected to the concept of empowerment that has become a primary focus in higher education leadership. Empowerment is defined as "enabling organizational constituents to act on issues they feel are important and relevant" (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 77). It pertains to the strengthening of the institution through shared governance and power, and drives the notion that in leadership, power is about creating energy, not exercising control. The effective leader is one who can create opportunities for others to act collectively towards a goal (Kezar et al., 2006). Taking it farther through the lens of positive psychology, the effective leader can enable individuals to act from

their genuine strengths, enabling each other to aim for a common higher purpose. As we observed in Module II, energy is created when people are acting authentically and connecting with each other and a higher purpose. We now look at ways to combine task enabling with strengths and quality connections, bringing together all of the elements we have looked at thus far which empower teams. Finally, we look at how these practices can be used to articulate a shared vision for the institution, connecting the team to the higher mission that will lead them to find engagement, meaning, and well-being at work.

i. Strategies for Enabling. The main idea behind task enabling is to strive to do just the amount necessary to support people so they can accomplish on their own (Dutton, 2003). This is mutually beneficial because the act of helping or enabling another in return enhances the positive identity and worth of the enabler (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Five pathways described by Dutton (2003) that lead to task enabling are teaching, nurturing, designing, accommodating, and advocating. In this course we will focus on the first four, but for a full list and recommended applications see Appendix A. The approaches can be combined together in different ways and can also be based on the needs of an individual in any given work situation. It is important to note that enabling happens at all levels of the institution and not just from those in positions of power. Peers can enable one another, assistants enable their executives, and different departments can enable each other's work even though it does not intersect.

Teaching and *nurturing* are similar but distinct ways to enable individuals. Teaching involves offering guidance, information, or advice that helps others perform their work more efficiently (Dutton, 2003). Informally, this can be applied by offering a mentoring program to onboard new staff members (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The mentor would get the opportunity to

share their knowledge of the department, offer political advice around culture, and generally guide a new employee through their first few months on the job. This type of enabling can ensure the cohesion of the team by helping the incoming employee to adequately adapt and be accepted by others. More formally, teaching can be applied through official training programs around specific job tasks. As we saw earlier, there is a high percentage of university administrators that do not feel prepared for their roles due to lack of certain skills (Morris & Laipple, 2015). Providing training for new staff members (for example around how to develop appropriate metrics) can enable them and empower them to move forward in their roles with confidence which can also influence their success.

Nurturing, while also about people development, is more focused around the person's developmental needs such as identity, personal growth, and character (Dutton, 2003). This is considered to be more emotional and psychologically involved than the teaching of skill. It is within the nurturing dynamic where opportunities to apply positive psychology tools (like leading through strengths) can be fully enacted. Dutton (2003) describes three types of nurturing activities: role modeling, personal counseling, and motivating through encouragement. Role modeling gives the opportunity to emulate the type of values we discussed earlier which lead to high quality connections and desirable behavior. To have a team that is highly collaborative and trusting, values such as inclusivity, openness, and transparency can be modeled through sharing of information, giving people autonomy to solve problems, and trusting in their perspective (Kezar et al., 2006).

ii. Weaving in Strengths. Personal counseling, a second form of nurturing, can be achieved through the application of character strengths we examined earlier. Helping individuals

discover what they are good at and then encouraging them to develop from those strengths, actively listening to their concerns, or simply indicating their value are all beneficial strategies (Dutton, 2003). Additionally, motivating through encouragement can be transformative for individuals especially those in mid-level administrative jobs on campus. As we saw earlier, this group is most likely to feel invisible and unrecognized (Rosser, 2004). The emotional rewards of receiving encouragement can energize individuals to connect and perform better (Dutton, 2003). These strategies are all likely to increase energy and connection between and among team members.

Designing and *Accommodating* are all about how the work environments are arranged and managed to enable individuals to succeed (Dutton, 2003). Designing is focused around giving people autonomy to decide how they want to accomplish their tasks, which evidence shows is incredibly motivating (Chung-Yan, 2010; Liu, Zhang, Wang, & Lee, 2011). Creating opportunities to break down large assignments into smaller tasks, or add variety to tasks to make them more interesting, are two ways to increase autonomy and individual control. Reallocation of tasks based on skill and interest is another way to bring more meaning and engagement to people's work. This is another area where understanding and applying character strengths can be beneficial. Research shows that people's highest character strengths are intrinsically linked to their interests and passions (Niemiec, 2018). By allowing employees to focus on what they enjoy and are good at, they can bring more of their passionate selves into the work.

Accommodating is beneficial among team members because it allows for greater flexibility and the pooling of human resources. It is defined as adjusting the timing or execution of one's own responsibilities to enable another team or individual's work (Dutton, 2003). The

mutuality element is key, because it means that teams can rely on each other when needed to solve problems. One example would be taking on additional tasks when someone expresses that they feel overwhelmed. Encouraging this type of accommodating spirit begins with supporting joint problem-solving and shared responsibility for an outcome, therefore encouraging collaboration (Dutton, 2003). There is plenty of evidence in higher education literature that supports the notion that collaboration creates more efficient leadership, and that shared accountability is one element of effective collaboration (Kezar et al., 2006).

iii. Vision Formulation and Implementation. Finally, one last important way to task enable individuals and teams is through *significance*, or framing a meaningful view of the institution's activities and the individual's work (Dutton, 2003). As we have seen, meaning and purpose are key reasons why people choose to work in higher education (Catropa & Andrews, 2013). However, campus administrators are not as closely associated to the student population and many begin to see their work as disconnected from the mission of the institution (Johnsrud & Russer, 1999). At the essence of this practice is helping others see the *value* and importance of their work (Dutton, 2003). In fact, creating a link between the individual and the institutional values is a key element behind the theory of "Transformational Leadership" (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014, p. 103), which has been studied significantly in the context of higher education leadership. Transformational leadership focused on empowerment, articulating a vision, and setting direction is considered an important component of moving higher education into the future so that it may better accomplish its goals (Kezar et al., 2006).

Dutton and Spreitzer (2014) offer *Vision Formulation* and *Vision Implementation* as two strategies that can help enable the adoption of a higher purpose within teams. Vision formulation

captures what is critical about the work, not just of the institution, but also of the individual team and its members. To engage in vision formulation, leaders must listen intently to a diverse group of stakeholders, identify their most significant values and hopes, and articulate the strategic goals that resonate with the majority of members (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). The success of this strategy depends on the enabler's ability to express the shared higher purpose and link it with current ways that each individual is contributing to it. The second step of enabling significance in the work is through vision implementation, achieved by hiring innovators, emphasizing positivity and flexibility, rewarding learning, and setting goals around innovative practices (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014). It is also important to be consistently re-assessing the higher vision to ensure that it is still aligned to the individuals' most important values as the team evolves. As research in positive psychology and organizational psychology shows, leading by enabling a higher purpose is beneficial to employee commitment, performance, and well-being overall.

Task enabling is a powerful intervention because it can be adapted to incorporate the facilitation of quality connection, embedding character strengths, and create a shared vision for the future by aligning individuals' values to their work.

iv. Planning for Pitfalls. While Task Enabling is a powerful tool, there are some challenges practitioners should be aware of. Firstly, the timing and communication around beginning to implement the practice matter (Dutton, 2003). The initial culture of the team needs to be taken into consideration, as there are often barriers to seeking or accepting help. It is important to first build trust and normalize task enabling by communicating the desire to engage in it as a practice. It is also important to consistently seek feedback around what is and isn't working (Dutton, 2003). Until individuals become more accustomed to seeking help, leaders can

anticipate when task enabling might be useful and attempt to begin the process before being asked. Creating a culture where team members are not hesitant to seek out help will take some time, but can be accomplished by rewarding help seeking and having consistent dialogue around the power of effective task enabling (Dutton, 2003). As with any behavior change process, building the habit early on will have compounded benefits later.

A second challenge that practitioners should be aware of is the possibility of task enabling to be debased or perceived as a weakness (Dutton, 2003). Often times, due to the competitive nature of work environments, open collaboration and helping behavior is difficult to achieve. Kezar, Carducci, and Contreras-McGavin (2006) observe that when leadership is shared on campuses, there is an assumption that collaboration is happening. This is not always true. If there is an underlying culture of mistrust, a history of individualism or tendencies to work alone, culture differences between units, or inconsistent leadership, it can work against collaboration (Ferren & Stanton, 2004) and task enabling can be perceived as an inadequacy on the part of the helper. Dutton (2003) recommends creating specific reward systems for doing task enabling as a strategy to combat this issue, but recognizes that leaders will have to work hard to overcome the deep-rooted bias that favors individualism and independence within certain work cultures.

"Leadership is about inspiring and enabling others to do their absolute best together, to realize a meaningful and rewarding shared purpose."

George B. Bradt

Conclusion: Tools for Your Toolbox

In the beginning of this course, we articulated the need for good leadership in the higher education arena. Changing demands from local and federal governments, increased social and economic complexities, worldwide pandemics, and other unpredictable events are putting pressure on colleges and universities to adapt and innovate at a rapid pace. Furthermore, traditional models of hierarchy and transactional leadership structures have not been shown to support the type of modernization demanded of higher education (Kezar et al., 2006). It is clear that there are huge opportunities for leaders across campuses to transform the way they direct and engage their dedicated staff and faculty members.

The research developed over the past two decades in positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship supports a way of leading focused on bringing out the most life giving and inspiring elements of individuals and teams so they can do their best work. Through understanding human motivation as a need for authenticity, autonomy, connection, and purpose, we have looked at how components of meaning, relationships, and engagement are critical to employee well-being, job satisfaction, and ultimately performance. We also explored how character strengths, high-quality connections, and a higher purpose are mechanisms that facilitate well-being and energy within teams. The role of the leader is critical for directing the focus of the institution towards one which is more aligned with the values of the faculty and staff.

It is also key to remember that measurement is an important part of any successful intervention. This course introduced you to some effective measurement tools to assess current levels of well-being at work such as the Work PERMA Profiler. The VIA Survey for adults has also been presented as an effective way to determine individual’s character strengths. Other

effective measurement tools have been developed to assess the constructs introduced in the course such as high quality connections (Carmeli & Gitell, 2009), trust (Costa & Anderson, 2011), meaning and calling at work (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). You can find these resources along with links to the measurements (when available) in Appendix B. Measurement helps you assess the current climate of your team cohesiveness and engagement. It is also important to implement measurement tools post interventions, or every few months, to measure progress and make adjustments where needed.

This course introduced some useful strategies that will help you begin thinking about what it means to be a positive leader. The recommendations provided in this 20-minute micro-course are intended to inspire you to seek out further knowledge and find ways you can apply the science of positive psychology to your institution. Many great books have been written on these topics, some referenced in this course, which you can use to expand on the knowledge presented in this course. It is also important to realize that many of the current revolutionary concepts around leadership in Higher Education such as empowerment, social change, collaboration, emotions, accountability, and spirituality all have elements that link them to constructs in positive psychology to which you have now been introduced. You, as campus leaders, are now empowered with evidence-based tools that will enable you to bring out the best within your institution and transform higher education from within.

Appendix A –Strategies for Task Enabling

Pathway	Description	Strategy	How to Apply
Teaching	Sharing information that helps people do their work tasks more efficiently.	Informal Teaching	Giving advice on a new way to think about a work task or a challenge to colleagues, superiors, etc. Sharing one's own strategies for success.
		Coaching	Sharing strategies that help employees reach their career goals. Mentoring programs, one on one routine quarterly "coaching" meeting with staff, etc.
		Training	Provide opportunities for employees to strengthen job-specific skills or basic knowledge that leads to excellent performance.
		Political Assisting	Providing information around organizational politics, warning others of sensitive political issues to avoid, sharing tactics to help navigate internal politics within units
Nurturing	Focus on individuals developmental needs to improve performance.	Role Modeling	Setting an example of what it means to be successful or to adopt certain desirable values that have positive results.
		Personal Counseling	Provide support and advice (outside of specific work context), active listening, being present to others, sharing one's own experience to open up dialogue and allow for vulnerability, creating a deeper connection.
		Motivation & Encouragement	Offering encouragement as emotional reward when someone performs well or when they are struggling. Acknowledgement and validation of effort, making the other feel "seen" and valued.

Designing	Focused on enabling others by arranging features of a role to make it more interesting.	Task Chunking	When a task is overwhelming in scale, helping other break down the task into smaller "doable" parts and encouraging small wins.
		Enhanced Variety	In cases where tasks may be too boring, helping others add variety by engaging in additional activities based on their strengths and interests. Rotating people through different assignments based on interests and talents.
		Task Reallocation	Reallocating tasks based on talent so employees can focus on tasks they do well more often. Allowing trade between responsibilities so each person can work on what they excel at.
		Increased Autonomy	Giving people more control over parts of their work, having the confidence that people will perform well and providing the trust to enable action.
		Clear Significance	Framing the meaning of the tasks employees do, in a grand universal vision but also in small ways, showing the significance behind their work.
		Process Facilitation	Helping a collective group improve on their process effectiveness by facilitating interactions, keeping the group on task to achieve their desired outcomes. Unlock positive communication patterns and interactions.

Accommodating	Altering the substance, pace, or process of one's own work to enable others to succeed in their tasks.	Easing Tensions	Involves giving employees opportunities to step back when their mental energy is used up due to external events, accommodating life events and focusing on the whole person instead of just the person as a worker.
		Adjusting Timing	Peers can accommodate each other's work loads and take over tasks when others are overwhelmed, or accommodating special circumstances by helping to ease the pressure of a deadline.
		Encourage Accommodating	Leaders can encourage accommodation by rewarding group problem solving and collaboration with a shared element of accountability.
Advocating	Helping others perform by easing the tension of political navigation within the organization.	Providing Exposure	Creating opportunities for people to get recognized in front of important stakeholders, improving their access to information, resources, or visibility.
		Championing	A more public way of promoting someone's abilities, potential, or competence in front of the organization.
		Protecting	Shielding others from delicate situations that might put their reputation at risk.
		Providing Resources	Providing access to necessary materials for increased performance like office space, supplies, IT support, and advanced training that they otherwise could not access on their own.

(Dutton, 2003)

Appendix B: Additional Resources

Measurement Tools

- **PERMA Work Profiler**

  What it measures: Designed to measure the five pillars of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement in the workplace context.

  Link: *https://permahsurvey.com/*

- **VIA Character Strengths Survey**

  What it measures: The VIA Survey measures the 24 character strengths all individuals possess in different degrees, giving each person a unique profile they can use to bring more of their authentic selves into light.

  Link: *https://www.viacharacter.org/*

- **The Work and Meaning Inventory**

  What it measures: Measures dimensions of experiencing positive meaning at work, sensing that work is a pathway to developing meaning, and perceiving one's work benefits a greater good.

  Link: *http://www.michaelfsteger.com/?page_id=105*

Resources for Further Study

The following are a collection of resources to further increase your knowledge in both the positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship domains.

- Center for Positive Organizations: *https://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/*
- Positive Psychology Center: *https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/*
- Positive Psychology Master's Program: *https://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/graduate/mapp*

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