

# The Academic Flourishing Initiative

at *The Human Flourishing Program, Harvard University*



## Our Mission:

The Human Flourishing Program studies and promotes human flourishing, and develops systematic approaches to the synthesis of knowledge across disciplines.

The Academic Flourishing Initiative equips university leaders to assess and improve student formation for lifelong flourishing.

Dear Friend,

We at the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University are pleased to invite your institution to join the Flourishing Data Collaborative, a consortium of colleges and universities partnering to better understand and promote student and institutional flourishing on their campuses.

Our program has developed an Academic Flourishing Survey which assesses: individual student flourishing, university community well-being, and students' perceptions of the extent to which university life has contributed to their own formation. This survey is deployed campus-wide at member institutions.

Your participation in this work will not only help spearhead a crucial field of study, but also help to enable flourishing in future generations.

Thank you for your interest in flourishing,

*Dr. Tyler J. VanderWeele*

Director, Human Flourishing Program  
Professor, T.H. Chan School of Public Health

## What is the Flourishing Data Collaborative?

It is a member-sponsored research collaborative with three distinct goals:

1. Generate new research on academic flourishing and student formation
2. Improve university leaders' ability to understand, influence, and promote student flourishing and community wellbeing.
3. Advance a community of practice in higher education oriented toward human flourishing.

Benefits of membership include a campus-wide research study conducted by the Human Flourishing Program, access to the resources created by a dedicated community of practice, invitations to future events, and opportunities to make use of or publish the results of the data reports.

# Emerging Insights

The student formation measure was evaluated and revised through cognitive interviews with students at Harvard University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Campus Bio-Medico University of Rome. Extensive campus-wide data collection has been carried out at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is underway at several other institutions.

In addition, the Human Flourishing Program collaborated with the Oxford Character Project and The Wall Street Journal to include four of the Student Formation items in The Wall Street Journal's 2025 Annual College Rankings survey of 500 colleges and universities in the United States.

Most university assessments are heavily deficit-oriented and fail to properly measure what is promised in many college and university mission statements. Our initial efforts suggest that it is possible to assess the university's contribution to even such apparently intangible matters as wisdom, leadership, integrity, and flourishing. Universities can and should gather data about these matters.

Leaders ought to evaluate and promote student flourishing. Education is not only a pathway to flourishing, but also a pillar upon which a flourishing society stands.

The Academic Flourishing Initiative exists to help colleges and universities develop a greater positive influence on their students both for their students' flourishing, and for the greater flourishing of society as a whole.

More information on the approach can be found in: VanderWeele, T.J., & Case, B. (2025). Academic flourishing and student formation. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 15(2), 5003, 1-29.

**Questions?** Write to us at:

[academicflourishing@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:academicflourishing@fas.harvard.edu)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q: What is the cost of membership?

The cost to participate as a member for the 2025-2026 academic year in the Data Collaborative is \$10,000 per institution. Membership can be renewed annually or prepaid to cover the four years of student life from matriculation to graduation.

## Q: How is data collected?

The Human Flourishing Program's team will provide a custom link using our Academic Flourishing Survey to be deployed across your campus. The data collected are fully anonymous and covered by our comprehensive data use authorization agreement, which can be found on our website.

## Q: When does data collection happen?

Data collection will take place in the spring so that freshman students will have had at least one semester of college life.

## Q: Can graduate and professional schools participate?

Yes, but membership must be school-wide. The fee structure for graduate and professional schools is available upon request.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

*The following are a list of events sponsored by the Academic Flourishing Initiative or within our community of Practice:*

- Academic Flourishing Initiative Informational Webinar and launch event:
  - August 20th, 2025, 1:00pm EST
  - [Register here](#) or on our website.
- Jubilee Centre Annual Conference
  - January 8 - 10, 2026