



# Academic Flourishing Initiative

## The Flourishing Data Collaborative

Colleges and universities often express noble aspirations, to cultivate virtue, wisdom, and leadership among students. Stanford University's founding mission is *"to promote the public welfare by exercising an influence on behalf of humanity and civilization,"* while Harvard College seeks *"to educate the citizens and citizen-leaders for our society."* Yet achieving these aims requires more than good intentions, it demands clear measurement and evidence-based management.

In 2025, the **Human Flourishing Program (HFP)** launched the **Academic Flourishing Initiative** to help higher education institutions assess how well they are fulfilling their formative missions. Central to the initiative is a **24-item Student Formation Assessment**, a survey designed to evaluate students' experiences of university life as they relate to flourishing. The instrument complements the HFP's general flourishing measures and captures how academic environments foster moral, intellectual, and relational growth.

### Purpose and Approach

The assessment examines how universities contribute to students' development across several key domains:

- **Wisdom and discernment** – cultivating depth of understanding and moral judgment.
- **Character and integrity** – promoting responsibility and self-regulation.
- **Leadership and service** – preparing students for ethical and civic engagement.
- **Critical thinking and clarity** – strengthening analytical and reflective skills.
- **Social connection and purpose** – encouraging collaboration, empathy, and the pursuit of the common good.

Unlike traditional metrics, such as grades, retention, or test scores, the AFI focuses on **formation rather than performance**. It helps institutions understand whether they are truly equipping students to become capable and virtuous leaders who can contribute meaningfully to society.

### Flourishing Data Collaborative

To expand this effort, HFP created the **Flourishing Data Collaborative**, a **member-sponsored research consortium** uniting colleges and universities around the world committed to promoting student flourishing. The Collaborative has three primary goals:

1. Conduct rigorous, comparative research on academic flourishing and student formation.
2. Equip university leaders with actionable data to enhance institutional culture and student well-being.
3. Build a global community of practice in higher education centered on human flourishing.



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Participating institutions administer the Student Formation Survey and other flourishing assessments campus wide. Aggregated data reveal patterns, highlight institutional strengths and challenges, and inform strategies for improvement.

### **Building a Movement**

The initiative has already drawn national attention to flourishing as a new educational outcome. In 2025, a subset of the assessment was included in **The Wall Street Journal's Survey of U.S. Colleges and Universities**, offering one of the first large-scale benchmarks of academic flourishing. This movement aims to redefine the success of higher education, not merely as the transfer of knowledge, but as the cultivation of wisdom, virtue, and purpose.

### **Fund Development**

The Academic Flourishing Initiative offers universities a bold and integrated vision: to educate minds while also forming character and inspiring a life of service to humanity. By uniting formation, evidence, and mission, we empower institutions to advance academic excellence and human flourishing.

To sustain and expand this work, we seek strategic funding partnerships in the following key areas:

- **Research Support – \$200,000:**  
Research is at the heart of the Academic Flourishing Initiative. Your support enables a team of gifted Harvard researchers to lead critical data collection and assessment efforts that shape evidence-based approaches to flourishing in higher education. This is our most urgent funding need.
- **University Engagement Manager – \$50,000:**  
This role is essential for managing participant engagement and coordinating the logistics of both the Academic Flourishing Initiative and the Data Collaborative.
- **University Membership Sponsorship – \$10,000 annually / \$50,000 for 5 years:**  
Sponsors help underwrite membership for universities eager to participate but facing
- **Asia University Collective – \$200,000:**  
Help establish a dynamic community of 20 strategically selected Asian universities. Your investment will launch a region-specific network focused on research collaboration, cultural exchange, and long-term impact.

For more information, please contact Michele Ruby: [hfhpartnerships@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:hfhpartnerships@fas.harvard.edu)

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