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Challenge or support? Exploring academic burnout in residential learning communities

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CHALLENGE OR SUPPORT? EXPLORING ACADEMIC BURNOUT IN RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Residential learning communities (RLCs) are on-campus programs aimed at seamlessly blending the in- and out-of-class experiences for college students. Scholars have demonstrated how RLC initiatives are valuable because they build and reinforce an academic environment, and help facilitate related outcomes (e.g., academic transition, GPA, critical thinking). With such an emphasis on aligning academic and residential experiences for students, this article explored if RLC participants were susceptible to higher rates of academic burnout. Using survey data to assess RLC and non-RLC students, we established that participation was not associated with meaningful differences in academic burnout. Conversely, by measuring thriving we also determined that the ways students experience success in RLCs is in fact different than their non-RLC counterparts. Student affairs practitioners can better understand how their students experience burnout when they also understand how their students succeed, as demonstrated in the study's findings. Recommendations to alleviate burnout while promoting success are discussed in light of RLC participation.

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Many higher education scholars have demonstrated a positive link between Residential Learning Community (RLC) participation and student outcomes, such as increased academic self-confidence, elevated academic achievement, higher GPAs, and aiding in the college transition (Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Caviglia-Harris, 2022; Cintron et al., 2020; Inkelas, Brower, et al., 2008). The listed positive outcomes are not achieved due to happenstance (Erck & Sriram, 2021), but are instead the result of an intentional academic focus that often includes increased connection to faculty, dedicated classroom objectives, and collaboration between academic and student affairs (Inkelas et al., 2018; Stassen, 2003). Often, these foci require substantial university and personnel resources to be successful.

As many RLCs are associated with specific academic departments or majors (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011; Wawrzynski et al., 2009), concern may exist surrounding the immediate integration with the deeper academic focus during the first year of college. RLC participants often operate under an assumption of being locked into their already established career trajectory (e.g., "I'm going to be an engineer"), while their counterparts more broadly explore and develop their identity both personally and academically. It is worth exploring if the dedicated and intentional academic environment facilitated within RLCs may also create situations where RLC participants are overloaded by the academic focus, experience an absence of overall personal growth, or feel unable to cope with challenges outside their directed academic pursuits. These byproducts all fall within the concept of academic burnout (Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al., 2011), a negative outcome that may manifest within a college student's experience.

If academic burnout is one end of the spectrum of the college student experience, the construct of thriving may represent the other end. Many components within thriving run parallel to the RLC mission, most notably Academic Determination and Engaged Learning (Schreiner, McIntosh, et al., 2009). Thriving also appears to be a possible counter to and relief from academic burnout. This study aimed to bridge the gap in existing RLC literature by understanding both academic burnout and thriving within RLCs. Specifically, the following research questions were asked:

1. Is there a difference in academic burnout between RLC and non-RLC participants?
2. Is there a difference in thriving between RLC and non-RLC participants?
3. Does thriving influence levels of academic burnout within RLC and non-RLC participants?

Residential Learning Community

The initial concept of RLCs dates back to the Oxford and Cambridge college models, but was more firmly established in American higher education through Alexander Meiklejohn's *experimental college* at the University of Wisconsin in the 1920s (Nelson, 2009). Inkelas and Soldner (2011) describe Meiklejohn's historical effort as the progenitor of the modern RLC. Today, these communities are categorized by labels such as living-learning communities, living-learning programs, and residential colleges. Irrespective of the name, RLCs in general share some common components. Specifically, students (a.) live together on campus, (b.) take part in a shared academic endeavor, (c.) use resources in their residential environment intentionally designed for them, and (d.) engage in structured social activities that also emphasize academics (Inkelas, Zeller, et al., 2006). Brower and Inkelas (2010) describe effective RLCs as representations of what our institutions can and should be: "intentionally designed learning environments that work doggedly to maximize student learning, and particularly student learning related to the high-order skills and abilities that allow students to become citizens and leaders of the world" (p. 43).

The effectiveness of these programs in con-

tributing to student success is not random and does not occur merely because an environment is labeled as an RLC. Erck and Sriram (2021) emphasized that "residential learning communities characterize highly structured and concentrated efforts toward positive student outcomes" (p. 4). Scholars have identified myriad outcomes associated with RLC participation, including student engagement, retention, commitment to civic involvement, smooth social transitions, greater opportunities for beneficial interactions, and many others (Brower & Inkelas 2010; Erck & Sriram, 2022; Inkelas, Brower, et al., 2008; Inkelas, Soldner, et al., 2008; Mayhew et al., 2016; Shushok & Sriram, 2009; Sriram et al., 2020).

Of particular interest for the current study are academic-related effects of RLCs, as well as the unique educational environment or academic culture these programs prominently emphasize. Brower and Inkelas (2010) demonstrated that RLCs can produce academic-related outcomes for students such as increased academic self-confidence and improved academic achievement. Other scholars posit that RLC participation helps students with the academic transition to their university and can even influence positive increases in GPA (Caviglia-Harris, 2022; Cintron et al., 2020; Inkelas, Brower, et al., 2008). Through multiple studies referenced above, it is clear RLCs work in producing many desired student outcomes. However, little is empirically known about academic burnout in the campus housing environment, and more specifically within RLCs. With the increased prominence and focus on specific academic pursuits in these communities, the current study explores how students participating in RLCs experience academic burnout differently than their non-RLC peers.

Academic Burnout

The study of burnout began in the 1970s (e.g., Freudenberger, 1974, Maslach, 1976; Maslach, 1978) and quickly expanded into research agendas across many care-giving professions such as counseling, teaching, and nursing (e.g., Laschinger et al., 2012; Minarik et al., 2003). Much of the previous burnout literature focused on employee burnout, centered around outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee retention, and overall quality of service (Brook et al., 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021). The most common conceptualization of employee burnout includes three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001).

Scholars have recently focused on *academic burnout* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) to explore students in pursuit of academic goals. This expansion is largely due to increased understanding that feelings of burnout are not exclusive to people who participate in caregiving relationships with others (Chang et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2002), as was originally described (Maslach et al., 2001). Within academic burnout, three subtypes emerged: Overload, Lack of Development, and Neglect (Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al., 2011). Each subtype maintains association with the generally understood dimensions of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment, respectively (Maslach et al., 2001). The primary difference is the academic focus of the construct on personal goals rather than existing relationships (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Overload manifests when a person sacrifices personal needs and personal health in the pursuit of good academic results (Montero-Marin, Skapinakis, et al., 2011). The Lack of Development subtype appears when students experience "an absence of personal growth" combined with "taking on other jobs where they better develop their skills" (Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al., 2011, p. 2). Finally, Neglect is the subtype marking when students adopt "passive, inefficient strategies to cope with obstacles," thereby lowering efficacy and surrendering when faced with challenges (Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al., 2011, p. 10).

Substantial research on academic burnout exists in healthcare related academic majors (e.g.,

Wei et al., 2021, Thrush et al., 2021), which is a logical expansion from the existing workplace burnout research on nurses and other medical professionals. Outside of this discipline-specific scholarship, little is known broadly about academic burnout within campus housing-facilitated academic-centric programs, such as RLCs. It is important to explore this gap in the literature to understand if there are potentially negative by-products of the intentional design and increased focus on positive academic outcomes which RLCs have been historically built upon.

College Student Success

Though a theoretically distinct concept, burnout symptoms are related to the concept of languishing, or a state in which an individual is not functioning well psychologically or socially and is devoid of positive emotion toward life (Keyes, 2003). In direct opposition to languishing, flourishing embodies positive emotions and optimal well-being. Flourishing is considered optimal psychological and social functioning, and individuals who flourish engage life with a sense of purpose and meaning (Seligman, 2011). Schreiner, Pothoven, et al. (2009) applied this concept to college student success to describe *thriving* as a student's optimal functioning related to the areas of academic engagement and performance, interpersonal relationships, and intrapersonal well-being (Schreiner, McIntosh, et al., 2009). Effectively, thriving students are fully engaged academically, socially, and emotionally in their college experience.

The study of college student success outcomes often entails a narrowed focus on grades, graduation, rankings, or credentialing (Bok, 2006; Schreiner, 2013). Thriving represents a more nuanced and student-centered approach. Although grades and graduation rates are important and necessary, the thriving construct was created in response to the need for a theory offering greater attention to the quality of students' experiences that foster such success. Thriving encourages thinking beyond simple and easily measured metrics, and aims to fill the theoretical gap occurring when a narrow focus is applied to the college experience by measuring whether students are vitally engaged in learning and making the most of their education (Schreiner, 2013).

The thriving construct contains five unique factors representing students' academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains: Academic Determination, Engaged Learning, Social Connectedness, Diverse Citizenship, and Positive Perspective (Schreiner, McIntosh, et al., 2009). When students operate at ideal levels in these five areas, they are not experiencing burnout, but rather intentional engagement and success. Positive behavioral outcomes include engagement within the learning process, time management skills, healthy connections to others, and maintaining a positive outlook about their future (Schreiner, 2018), to name a few. Thriving offers a framework of student success that takes into consideration numerous established student success theories. In doing so, it offers a well-rounded and more complete picture of college student success and as a result offers an appropriate proxy for the opposite of burnout, which this study aimed to explore.

Methods

Data Source and Sample

We employed a post-positivistic epistemology and a cross-sectional, correlational methodology for this study. Specifically, we used a survey research design for data collection during the spring 2022 semester. We gathered data through convenience sampling procedures from a single institution in the southwestern region of the United States. The site was a large (10,000+ undergraduates) four-year, primarily residential university based on Carnegie Classifications. We worked with campus partners who had interest in gathering data to better understand how their students process academic burnout and student success.

Two partners worked with residence halls considered RLCs and one with a non-RLC residence hall. Given the accessibility to these RLC and non-RLC halls and the representation to the larger population (described in the Description Analysis section), this convenience sample seemed appropriate for our needs. The voluntary survey was distributed to students during April 2022 via email. The population size for distribution was 1,190 students.

Instruments

We combined two established instruments for the current study. The first was the Burnout Clinical Subtype Questionnaire Students Survey (BCSQ-12-SS; Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al., 2011), which was originally developed as a theoretical alternative to other characterizations of burnout. While burnout has clinically been characterized through frenetic, underchallenged, and worn-out subtypes (with the MBI measuring exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of efficiency), the revised and condensed BCSQ-12 remapped these constructs for a student version into clinical subtypes which improves researchers' abilities to accurately measure the type of dissatisfaction and discomfort in the individual experience. The contribution of this survey makes "it easier to understand the particular idiosyncrasies of individuals suffering from burnout" (Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al., 2011, p. 10). The instrument demonstrated strong validity and reliability through statistically significant item correlations, strong coefficients (.71–.88) from an exploratory factor analysis, and a reliability analysis with all items having a Cronbach's alpha above .80 (Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al., 2011). The 12 items on the BCSQ-12 were anchored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Totally Disagree" to "Totally Agree" with a middle anchor of "Unsure."

The second instrument we utilized in this study was the Thriving Quotient (TQ), which was originally developed as a 198-item instrument derived from various existing instruments or scales (Schreiner, McIntosh, et al., 2009). After a 2008 pilot study of students from 13 institutions, the authors condensed and shortened their instrument. After conducting an exploratory factor analysis (to determine structure), focus groups on five campuses, and item rewording and restructuring, Schreiner, McIntosh, et al. (2009) facilitated a national study at 27 public and private colleges across the United States with a refined, 32-item instrument (internal reliability of α = .91). Later revision yielded a 25-item instrument that kept the five-factor structure through another confirmatory factor analysis with demonstrated reliability of α = .89. Ongoing revisions have transpired since its inception in 2008 to improve measurement reliability and psychometric properties.

The TQ instrument (2018 version) we used for this study was a 24-item measure with strong internal reliability (α = .89). Reliability estimates for each factor scale on the 2018 TQ ranged from .78 to .87. Items were anchored on a 6-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to measure student responses.

Finally, we used a demographic questionnaire to describe the data (labeled "Personal Characteristics"), including RLC participation, Race, Gender, Classification, and anticipated GPA. The nominal data were included to describe the data and were coded as follows: RLC Participation (RLC = 1, Non-RLC = 2); Race (American Indian / Alaska Native / Native Hawaiian = 1, Asian / Asian American / Pacific Islander/ South Asian = 2, Black / African American = 3, Hispanic / Latino(a)(x) = 4, Multiracial / Multiethnic = 5, White / Caucasian / European American = 6); Gender (Female = 1, Male = 2, Transgender Female = 3, Transgender Male = 4, Gender Variant / Non-Conforming = 5, Not Listed = 6); Classification (First-Year = 1, Sophomore = 2, Junior = 3, Senior = 4, Graduate-level = 5). Anticipated GPA was collected due to the known positive relationship between RLC participation and GPA (Brower & Inkelas, 2010) and is a self-reported response to the question "What is your anticipated cumulative GPA at the

end of this semester?".

Results

Descriptive Analysis

The initial sample size was 364 cases (30.6% response rate). After initial review, the sample was reduced due to nonresponse issues (i.e., no questions were answered after opening the survey). Additional cases were also removed because respondents did not answer enough items to warrant inclusion, and their inclusion would introduce an inappropriate amount of bias. The remaining sample used in statistical analyses was 240 (20.2%). Any variations in reported n values were due to missing data excluded using pairwise parameters in each statistical test (Peugh & Enders, 2004).

Descriptive statistics revealed that over half of the sample was enrolled in an RLC (55.4%, n = 112). A majority of participants identified as White (66.5%, n = 127), Female (84.3%, n = 161), and First-Year classification (80.0%, n = 152). While the first-year classification was more descriptive of the sample, the other characteristics represented the larger population (i.e., on-campus residential students). The mean self-report anticipated cumulative GPA was 3.53. See Table 1 for the full report of descriptive statistics.

Instrument Reliability and Consistency

Cronbach alpha procedure was employed to determine the internal reliability of the subscales within the overall instrument. A subscale was considered to be internally consistent if the alpha level exceeded 0.7 (DeVillis, 2003; Kline, 2005). Each dimension of academic burnout was determined to be consistent: Overload (α = .85, n = 4), Lack of Development (α = .80, n = 4), and Neglect (α = .89, n = 4). Additionally, all thriving subscales were determined to be internally consistent: Engaged Learning (α = .89, n = 4), Academic Determination (α = .83, n = 6), Social Connectedness (α = .88, n = 6), Diverse Citizenship (α = .79, n = 6), and Positive Perspective (α = .84, n = 2).

RLC Participation Differences

Independent samples t-tests were conducted comparing RLC and non-RLC participant scores in all study variable scores. The study variables fell into two categories: Academic Burnout dimensions (Overload, Lack of Development, and Neglect) and Thriving Quotient factors (Engaged Learning, Academic Determination, Social Connectedness, Diverse Citizenship, and Positive Perspective). The full statistics are reported in Table 2.

Academic Burnout

The results revealed no significant difference between RLC and non-RLC participants in the Academic Burnout components Overload, Neglect, and Lack of Development: $t(200)$ = -1.319, p = .189, Cohen's d = .185; $t(200)$ = -0.779, p = .437, Cohen's d = .109; and, $t(200)$ = .278, p = .781, Cohen's d = .039, respectively.

Thriving Quotient

Of the five components evaluated in the Thriving Quotient questionnaire, only two revealed statistically significant differences between RLC and Non-RLC participants. RLC participants reported higher Engaged Learning scores, $t(200)$ = 2.107, p < .05, Cohen's d = .297, and non-RLC participants reported higher Positive Perspective scores, $t(200)$ = -2.130, p < .05, Cohen's d =.301.

No statistically significant differences were found in the remaining three Thriving Quotient components: Academic Determination, $t(200)$ = 1.305, p = .193, Cohen's d = .184; Diverse Citizenship $t(200)$ = 0.378, p = .706, Cohen's d = .054; and, Social Connectedness, $t(200)$ = -1.514, p = .132, Cohen's d = .215.

Predicting Academic Burnout

Three separate sequential multiple regression analyses were run to determine if the addition of Thriving Quotient factors improved the prediction of each Academic Burnout dimension (Overload, Lack of Development, and Neglect) over and above personal characteristics (gender, race, RLC

participation, anticipated GPA). Linearity was established for each model by visual inspection of a scatterplot of each dimension of Academic Burnout against Thriving Quotient components. For each model, variance inflation factors (VIF) were examined to test the multicollinearity of the independent variables. All VIF values were below 1.7, indicating the levels of correlation were acceptable (Allison, 1999). The Durbin-Watson test statistics indicated the assumption of independency of residuals for all three models was satisfied as the values were close to 2.0, which suggests the residuals were uncorrelated (Durbin & Watson, 1951). Table 3 displays all statistics for each regression model.

Personal Characteristics Predicting Academic Burnout

The initial model had RLC status, race, gender, and classification as variables predicting each academic burnout dimension: Overload, Lack of Development, and Neglect. The model predicting Overload was determined to not be a good fit, $F(5, 154) = 1.182$, $p = .321$), with none of the variables substantively contributing to the model. However, the initial models for both Lack of Development and Neglect were determined to be good fits for the data: $F(5,154) = 2.456$, $p < .05$ and $F(5, 154) = 4.957$, $p < .001$, respectively. Within each model, only anticipated GPA was found to be a meaningful contributor for Lack of Development ($\beta = -0.215$, $p < .01$) and Neglect ($\beta = -0.350$, $p < .001$). The amount of variance in Lack of Development explained by personal characteristics was 7.4%, while the amount of variance in Neglect explained by personal characteristics was 13.9%.

Thriving Quotient Predicting Academic Burnout

The second model for each dimension of Academic Burnout added the five Thriving factors as predictor variables. The Overload model became a good fit for the data with the inclusion of Thriving factors, $F(10,149) = 2.382$, $p < .05$. Statistically significant predictor variables included Academic Determination ($\beta = -0.204$, $p < .05$), Social Connectedness ($\beta = -0.191$, $p < .05$), and Diverse Citizenship ($\beta = 0.239$, $p < .05$). The amount of variance explained by the final Overload model was 13.8%.

The Lack of Development model remained a good fit for the data by including Thriving factors, $F(10, 149) = 4.871$, $p < .001$. Within the final model, anticipated GPA ceased to be a statistically significant predictor variable ($\beta = -0.059$, $p = .481$), while Engaged Learning ($\beta = -0.294$, $p < .01$), Academic Determination ($\beta = -0.234$, $p < .05$), and Social Connectedness ($\beta = -0.206$, $p < .01$) were revealed to be substantive predictor variables. The amount of variance explained in Lack of Development by including Thriving factors increased from 7.4% to 19.6%.

The Neglect model also remained a good fit for the data by including Thriving factors, $F(10, 149) = 9.306$, $p < .001$. Within the final model, anticipated GPA ceased to be a predictor variable ($\beta = -0.087$, $p = 0.251$), while Academic Determination ($\beta = -0.398$, $p < .001$) and Social Connectedness ($\beta = -0.148$, $p < .05$) were both revealed to be meaningful predictor variables. By including Thriving factors in the final model, the amount of variance explained in Neglect increased substantially from 13.9% to 38.4%.

Limitations

This study was limited in multiple ways. First, being a single-institution study, the results may not be generalizable across all institutional types. Second, as convenience sampling procedures can introduce nonresponse bias, there is a possibility that students who chose not to respond to the survey – yet participated in the RLC programs – experienced high levels of burnout. Further studies employing a true experimental approach with a randomized sample would help alleviate this nonresponse bias from possibly influencing the analysis. Third, terminology for gender and sex were

used interchangeably in the demographic data collection processes. Respondents were asked, "What is your gender?" and response options such as female, male, transgender female, etc. (i.e., descriptors of physical sex) should have instead been listed as woman, man, transgender woman, etc. (i.e., descriptors of gender). Such a limitation can erroneously skew gender representation in a final sample. Finally, the end sample lacked diversity with a majority of participants reporting their identities as White women. Therefore, the experiences of identities underrepresented in the study's sample may differ in unique ways from the majority identity.

Discussion

Given the intensified focus on academics to create a seamless experience in RLCs, the current study explored if there was any potential drawback to student participation in the form of burnout. Our results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between RLC and non-RLC students regarding their experiences of academic burnout. This was a promising finding because such differences could imply that over-exposure to academic programming in a cocurricular space means that RLCs may play a role in escalating academic burnout for participating students. Previous research has shown that burnout for students living independently, such as in a residence hall, can have a substantive effect on students' well-being (Lin & Huang, 2014; Stoner, 2017). By observing thriving scores between the RLC and non-RLC groups in the current study, we found there was a statistically significant difference in certain success factors, including Engaged Learning and Positive Perspective. These results reinforce previous scholarship promoting the value of RLCs regarding holistic success and specifically student thriving (Eidum et al., 2020). Our findings collectively allowed us to see what contributes to burnout and thriving for college students in the sample in both RLC and non-RLC environments.

Though RLCs do not produce more academic burnout, the ways in which RLC students experience certain elements of success (e.g., Engaged Learning and Positive Perspective) is, in fact, different than their non-RLC peers. It was clear in the results that thriving factors help moderate burnout scores, meaning that where certain thriving factors increased in positive ways, academic burnout was reduced in other specific ways, with some factors being more substantial than others. This essentially demonstrates that by understanding their success via thriving factors, researchers and practitioners can better understand students' experiences with burnout, as demonstrated in our study's models.

The models created in this study also demonstrated how thriving served as a proxy for the opposite of burnout with students. From this perspective, we were able to connect burnout to the theoretical construct of languishing. This is important in consideration of student success measures that take a more holistic approach, such as thriving. Schreiner, McIntosh, et al. (2009) emphasized that academic measures cannot on their own differentiate between languishing and flourishing. In the absence of positive relationships and a healthy community, academic success "may not lead to student persistence or the longer-term goals of higher education to develop contributing citizens who have a positive influence on the world" (Schreiner, McIntosh, et al., 2009, p. 5). This statement is reinforced by our findings, given that GPA was not a strong predictor in the final full regression models of burnout factors, but numerous thriving factors had an inverse relationship to academic burnout. In short, when students are operating from optimal levels in key areas that contribute to student success, they are more likely to not only succeed academically, but also socially and emotionally. One of the central elements of thriving is how it defines success through both behavioral and psychological domains.

Aside from the academic thriving variables in the final regression models for each burnout factor, manifestations of students' burnout were

observable through direct academic measures. With a focus on personal characteristics in the first step of each model, GPA was able to predict some factors of burnout, such as Neglect and Lack of Development. These relationships were inverse, meaning students who experienced reduced academic burnout represented higher GPA scores in the sample. This finding may seem intuitive, but it further validates Montero-Marin, Monticelli, et al.'s (2011) research on augmenting the BCSQ-12 for student use. Further, these findings underscore Neumann et al.'s (1990) research emphasizing how "students' burnout may be the key for understanding a wide range of students' behaviors during their college years," such as "academic performance," as well as their "future relationships to their college" (p. 20). It is clear that academic burnout, even while focused on specific *academic* influences, can also manifest through behavioral and psychological aspects of a student's experience.

With variance better explained by including thriving scores in each of our final burnout regression models, it is telling that when we study how students experience burnout in a model that includes how they succeed, we get a clearer picture of their holistic experience. It is one thing to see how students thrive and another to see how they burn out in college. Observing these constructs together and seeing how they interact through various models gives us a better understanding of a holistic college experience from which to craft interventions, in this case for both RLC and non-RLC communities.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have important implications for practice. For those on campus who might express concerns that integrating academics into residential communities is "too much," this study provides evidence that such concerns are unfounded. There may be other drawbacks to residential learning communities that were outside of the scope of this study, but this research shows that academic burnout is not increased when campus leaders integrate curricular and co-curricular programming.

Another important implication of this study pertains to how we define and measure student success. Outcomes such as academic GPA and student persistence are important for any campus. The limitation of these outcomes is that they focus too much on ends and not enough on means. In other words, knowing the GPA and retentions status of students does little for practically intervening to improve these outcomes. Therefore, scholars need to focus more attention on intermediary outcomes that could meaningfully influence GPA and student persistence. In this study, we argue that studying both burnout and thriving are important intermediary indicators that could allow higher education administrators to intervene before it is too late.

An important finding from this study for practice is the powerful influence RLCs have on improving the Engaged Learning of students. The Engaged Learning of RLC students was notably higher than non-RLC students. Students who are engaged in their learning believe what they are learning in class is worthwhile. They apply what they are learning in class to other aspects of their lives. They think about what they are learning in class even when outside of class. These students feel energized by the ideas they learn in their classes. These are all outcomes that every higher education administrator desires for students. These are also outcomes that can directly lead to higher GPA and student persistence. Although quality teaching matters for engaged learning, this study demonstrates that administrators can also influence Engaged Learning by creating residential programs that intentionally integrate the curricular and co-curricular aspects of students' lives.

Non-RLC students had higher Positive Perspective scores than RLC students, and this finding was also statistically significant with a mean-

ingful effect size. Positive Perspective pertains to optimism, with students seeing life as "half full" rather than "half empty." These students look for the best in uncertain and difficult circumstances. It may appear difficult to explain why RLC students have lower Positive Perspective without this finding also leading to higher academic burnout. But the subsequent regression analyses showed that positive perspective was the only thriving variable that did not have a statistically significant influence on any of the three components of academic burnout. Nevertheless, administrators involved in RLCs should consider how they can help to foster more optimism in their students through programmatic offerings.

There are important implications for administrators from this study regarding how different factors of thriving helpfully reduce the three components of academic burnout in students. Overload occurs when a student sacrifices personal needs and personal health in the pursuit of good academic results. Both Academic Determination and Social Connectedness had large effects on reducing feelings of Overload in students. Academic Determination involves not only working hard to achieve academic goals, but also knowing how to handle competing demands. Helping students increase their Academic Determination through study strategies and time management techniques may help them prevent overload. Additionally, teaching students the importance of friendships and helping to facilitate social connections also meaningfully prevents Overload. Diverse Citizenship, on the other hand, increases Overload. Diverse Citizenship involves trying to make a difference in other people's lives and learning from people who have different perspectives and backgrounds. On top of academic pursuits, Diverse Citizenship can add to the overload students feel. Administrators can help students who desire to make a difference by emphasizing the importance of self-care and having a long-term goal of contributing to society.

Lack of Development stems from students experiencing an absence of personal growth and the need to look elsewhere for development opportunities. Feelings of Lack of Development are reduced when Academic Determination, Social Connectedness, and Engaged Learning increase. Engaged Learning involves feeling like classroom learning is relevant to the student's life and educational pursuits. Teaching quality can certainly improve Engaged Learning, but administrators can also increase this variable through academic advising and helping students choose majors that align with their strengths and long-term goals.

Neglect occurs when students adopt passive and inefficient strategies to cope with obstacles. Ultimately, Neglect leads to resignation when facing obstacles and challenges. Once again, Academic Determination and Social Connectedness show strong influence on reducing Neglect. These two variables help to reduce all three components of Overload. Therefore, administrators may perhaps make the largest impact on reducing Overload by helping students with strategies to handle multiple demands and emphasizing connectedness among students. RLCs are ideal programs because Academic Determination and Social Connectedness are two primary goals of these initiatives.

Implications for Future Research

The current study lays a groundwork for future research. Academic burnout is understudied in college students, and this paucity of research is a concern considering the increase stress college students report on campuses. As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health is a primary concern for campus leaders, and this concern needs scholarship to better understand how to help students succeed.

With this study occurring on a single campus, future research can replicate this study on other campuses with other groups of students. In addition, future research can help identify how programs such as RLCs help or hurt academic burnout. Beyond RLCs, the influences of thriving upon academic burnout is a meaningful contribution of

this study and needs further investigation. Qualitative research may also help to illuminate the consequences of Overload, Lack of Development, and Neglect while also exploring how students overcome academic burnout.

Conclusion

The present study analyzed academic burnout in students participating in RLCs and those outside of RLCs. No statistically significant differences were found in academic burnout between the groups, but RLC students reported notably higher engaged learning scores, which meaningfully reduces feelings of lack of development in college students. In addition, academic determination and social connectedness meaningfully reduced all three components of academic burnout. Diverse Citizenship, on the other hand, increased overload in students. Generally, these findings show that increasing thriving is a tangible and measurable way for campus leaders to help reduce academic burnout in college students. Administrators should also be aware that students, in their desire to make a difference in others and for society (Diverse Citizenship), may consequently experience more overload. Campus leaders can combat such overload by helping students learn time management strategies and the importance of self-care, and to help students adopt long term goals with their desire to make the world a better place.

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Table 1

Personal characteristics descriptive statistics

Variable	*n*	Percent
RLC Participation	**202**	**-**
RLC	112	55.4
Non-RLC	90	44.6
Gender	**191**	**-**
Female	161	84.3
Male	26	13.6
Transgender Female	0	0.0
Transgender Male	0	0.0
Gender Variant / Non Conforming	2	1.0
Not Listed	2	1.0
Race	**188**	**-**
American Indian / Alaska Native / Native Hawaiian	1	0.5
Asian /Asian American / Pacific Islander / South Asian	9	4.8
Black / African American	9	4.8
Hispanic / Latino(a)(x)	18	9.6
Multiracial / Multiethnic	24	12.8
White / Caucasian / European American	127	67.6
Classification	**190**	**-**
First-Year	152	80.0
Sophomore	28	14.7
Junior	6	3.2
Senior	2	1.1
Grad	2	1.1

Note. Variations in variable *n* are a result of missing data of participants choosing "Prefer not to answer". Response option percentages were calculated based on completed responses for each variable and not the overall sample size.

Table 2

Independent sample t-test statistics

	RLC			Non-RLC					
Academic Burnout Dimension	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	Cohen's *d*	95% CI
Overload	112	15.27	4.389	90	16.16	5.171	-1.319	.185	[-2.214, 0.439]
Lack of Development	112	12.71	4.416	90	12.54	4.184	0.278	.039	[-1.035, 1.374]
Neglect	112	10.76	3.783	90	11.24	5.073	-0.755	.109	[1.756, 0.785]
Thriving Quotient Component	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*		95% CI
Engaged Learning	112	17.4	4.282	90	16.09	4.534	2.107*	.297	[0.084, 2.541]
Academic Determination	112	28.23	4.452	90	27.37	4.959	1.305	.184	[-0.442, 2.173]
Social Connectedness	112	22.13	7.584	90	23.7	7.045	-1.514	.215	[-3.626, 0.476]
Diverse Citizenship	112	29.28	4.619	90	29.03	4.466	0.378	.054	[-1.027, 1.514]
Positive Perspective	112	8.45	2.257	90	9.13	2.304	-2.13*	.301	[-1.323, -0.051]

*$p < .05$

Table 3

Sequential multiple regression statistics

	Overload				Lack of Development				Neglect			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	***β***	**SE**	***β***	**SE**	***β***	**SE**	***β***	**SE**	***β***	**SE**	***β***	**SE**
Step 1: Personal Characteristics												
RLC	0.081	0.794	0.122	0.794	-0.029	0.726	-0.058	0.692	-0.032	0.698	-0.03	0.623
Race	-0.126	0.334	-0.104	0.324	-0.06	0.305	-0.0143	0.282	0.091	0.294	0.135	0.254
Gender	-0.038	0.571	0.031	0.608	0.101	0.522	0.101	0.53	-0.005	0.502	-0.055	0.478
Classification	0.107	0.521	0.069	0.510	0.124	0.477	0.124	0.444	0.141	0.458	0.108	0.4
Anticipated GPA	-0.084	0.775	-0.024	0.859	-0.215**	0.709	-0.215	0.749	-0.350***	0.681	-0.087	0.675
Step 2: Thriving Quotient Components												
Engaged Learning			0.074	0.097			-0.294**	0.085			-0.145	0.076
Academic Determination			-0.204*	0.102			-0.234*	0.089			-0.398***	0.08
Social Connectedness			-0.191*	0.053			-0.206**	0.047			-0.148*	0.042
Diverse Citizenship			0.239*	0.095			0.159	0.083			-0.036	0.075
Positive Perspective			0.016	0.177			0.125	0.154			-0.05	0.139
R^2	0.037		0.138		0.044		0.196		0.139		0.384	
F	1.182		2.382**		2.456*		4.871***		4.957***		9.306***	
ΔR^2	-		0.101		-		0.152		-		0.245	
ΔF	-		1.200		-		2.415		-		4.349	

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$