



MISSION TRANSFORM MEDICINE

A KERN NATIONAL NETWORK CONVENING

Quantifying the Qualitative: How Can We Measure Flourishing in Medicine?

In March 2022, the KNN convened a group of healthcare stakeholders—learners, practitioners, medical educators, scholars and more—for the second session of Mission: TransformMedicine. Driven by participant interest, the session explored possibilities for gauging flourishing at the organizational level to identify progress, recognize successes and direct ongoing improvement efforts.

In today's healthcare environment, flourishing requires organizations that create the conditions of possibility for those within to thrive. It also necessitates a way to gauge flourishing at the organizational level: indicators that reveal the extent to which an institution's environment promotes thriving and that identify opportunities for improvement and progress toward goals. At the same time, various time pressures and competing priorities heighten the need to leverage existing tools or metrics where possible to keep efforts more manageable.

To inspire a robust discussion, **Regina Russell, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Medical Education and Administration at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and **Valerie Dandar**, Director of Medical School Operations Research and StandPoint Surveys Program at the Association of American Medical College, delivered an [introductory presentation](#) on these themes. Each shared their experiences with how data can help understand and enhance levels of flourishing within organizations.



Grounding Principles for Measurement

At Vanderbilt, a Learning Environment Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) Committee produces an annual interprofessional clinical learning environment report card, which helps show how conducive the learning environment is to flourishing. Russell shared four main principles for the model:

- **Collaborate.** Vanderbilt convened leaders responsible for different areas of the learning environment who were already tracking specific items to develop a unified approach for identifying and sharing important data.
- **Focus.** A framework of shared priorities makes it possible to focus on the most meaningful metrics. Vanderbilt chose learner development, patient care and professionalism as its domains.
- **Measure.** Vanderbilt prioritized data streams with longitudinal and national comparative data. New methods may still be necessary where data does not exist; at Vanderbilt, nursing now runs an internal survey that matches information gathered from medical students.
- **Respond.** It is critical to have a response model for sharing findings and making recommendations at the institutional level in addition to departmental review and action plans. Although directed remediation may be necessary in some cases, rewarding excellence and innovation can lead to more powerful change.

Collaborate

Learning environments are shared spaces

Focus

Frameworks identify shared priorities

Measure

Consider existing data before creating new

Respond

Role model, review data, reward

Dandar's presentation further reinforced the importance of acting on data and used the AAMC StandPoint Survey to illustrate the connection between employee engagement and flourishing. Among others, key points included the:

- **Bidirectional Relationship Between Engagement and Human Flourishing.** Research from Wiedemann, VanderWeele and Lee suggests a workplace environment and its policies affects one's sense of purpose, meaning and flourishing. In turn, flourishing can influence engagement, productivity and retention.
- **Potential of StandPoint Survey Measures.** Dandar [shared example measures](#) within the StandPoint Survey that could help gauge character, caring and flourishing within an organization's environment.
- **Motivation for Working in Academic Medicine and Impact on Flourishing.** Alignment between an individual's underlying work values and the importance their organization places on them can contribute to or detract from flourishing. Currently, the AAMC and a specific school of medicine are exploring the reasons individuals work in academic medicine and tying that to how their time is actually allocated and the perception of how the organization values the mission area(s).

Elements of a Flourishing Healthcare/Work Environment

After the presentation, *Mission: Transform Medicine* participants broke into small groups. Before delving into flourishing measurement, the groups considered how they would recognize a flourishing healthcare or work environment. In general, participants described a highly intentional organization design, one where the culture and curriculum reflect values aligned with flourishing. With such values at the core, individuals would better understand their purpose and impact. Strong, positive interpersonal relationships emerged as another major theme. Some described a place where people can be "their authentic selves." Yet being authentic did not mean unchanging: Participants envisioned an environment where individuals could grow and be challenged in a positive manner built on principles of mutual respect. As the small groups described, interpersonal connection would create an environment that allows for forgiveness, joy, generosity and collaboration. Finally, some also pointed out that a flourishing environment would be something felt not only by those working with it—as visitors would feel welcome and comfortable as well.

Incorporating Existing Measures

Throughout the event, participants referenced numerous existing measures that could be used, with permission, as part of gauging flourishing (see list of examples participants mentioned at right). Beyond identifying relevant measures, small groups discussed ways in which those measures could be incorporated. In general, the route of selecting multiple existing measures to create a type of index for organizational flourishing captured attention because flourishing is such a multidimensional concept. Additionally, participants proposed incorporating items into the organization's value measures and/or well-being champion programs. Another possibility highlighted was providing students with their individual data from the Harvard human

Existing Measurements/Tools That Address Elements of Flourishing

- ACP Microlearning (In Rapid Prototype Testing):
 - [Applying Psychological Safety](#)
 - [Being an Upstander](#)
 - [Circles of Control & Influence](#)
- [C3 Instrument for Hidden Curriculum](#)
- Call-Out Data from Organization
- [Gallup Employee Engagement Survey](#)
- [Harvard Human Flourishing Index](#)
- [Mini Z Burnout Survey](#)
- [Matriculating Student Questionnaire \(MSQ\)](#)
- [Tolerance for Ambiguity](#)
- Turnover Rate at Organization
- Well-Being Measures Listed in [AAMC Report](#) Appendix
- [Wonder Scale](#)

flourishing index, empathy assessment and/or tolerance for ambiguity to help them recognize opportunities and see their own growth over time.

Aspects Missing from Existing Measures

Along with discussing where existing measures hold promise for creating a future benchmark, the small groups identified areas in which they thought existing measures were not fully capturing dimensions of flourishing. These areas included:

- **Process Data.** For instance, how do clinical units deal with failure? Do support programs exist to help practitioners after challenging situations?
- **Circle of Influence or Control.** Do organization members feel empowered to effect change or adjust factors that influence levels of flourishing?
- **Hidden Curriculum and Culture.** Do those in the environment feel a sense of psychological safety? How comfortable are constituents with raising problems or questions with leaders? Does the culture encourage and value intellectual humility and empathy?

Implementation Success Factors

Recognizing cultural and intellectual humility as a foundational value also came up as the group discussed what would need to be in place to adopt a measure of organizational flourishing. Throughout, participants expressed that leadership support and a commitment to acting on data—not just surveying annually—would be essential. Finally, a number referenced the need to resource this effort and keep it feasible; for instance, hiring an outside organization to collect and analyze data or identifying small, targeted interventions for improvement opportunities.

Ultimately, as organizations strive to capture current levels of flourishing, these efforts will also reveal opportunities to enhance the organizational culture. Accordingly, the *Mission: TransformMedicine* discussion will continue in a May session focused on culture change. Interested in getting involved? Contact us at knn@mcw.edu to learn more. ■