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WHAT SETS COLLEGE THRIVERS AND DIVERS APART? A CONTRAST IN STUDY HABITS, ATTITUDES, AND MENTAL HEALTH

ABSTRACT

Using a mandatory survey with open-ended questions asking students about their first-year university experience, we explore what particular behaviors, study habits and overall experiences early in college distinguish students who do very well in college (Thrivers) from those who struggle greatly (Divers). We find that poor time management and very little time spent studying are most associated with poor academic performance. Divers also report feeling more depressed and unhappy with their lives. Both Thrivers and Divers arrive with high aspirations, but Divers consistently fall short of their own study expectations. These patterns suggest that very poor performing college students are not happily trading off academic performance for more preferable activities, and that increasing the amount of time students spend trying to learn may be an important necessary condition for improving achievement. (C) 2018 Published by Elsevier B.V.

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