Meaningful Advising and Millennials: Knowing Our Students as a Foundation for Connection

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Meaningful Advising: Connecting Learning with Identity and Career Exploration

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“Each generation brings its own set of values, beliefs, life experiences, and attitudes.... Different generations won’t become more alike with age. They will carry their ‘generational personalities’ with them throughout their lives.”

“When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work.”
Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman
COMMON PERCEPTIONS OF MILLENNIALS

- Optimistic
- Socially conscious
- Multi-taskers
- Tenacious
- Nurtured
- Pragmatic
- Value diversity
- Street smart
- Civic minded
- Overachievers
- Powerhouses
- Confident
- Do-ers
- Need instant gratification
- Fear boredom
- Value education
- Team-oriented
- Accustomed to structure and order
- Innovators
- Social
- Well educated
- Politically active
- Technologically adept
COMMON PERCEPTIONS OF MILLENNIALS
THE “BABY ON BOARD” GENERATION

- Born: 1982-2002
- ~1.17 billion Millennials alive around the world
- Racially and ethnically more diverse than any previous generation
  - 43% of Millennial adults in United States are non-white
    (Pew Research Center, 2014)
• Initial Millennials raised by Boomers/Latter Millennials Raised by Generation X-ers
• More “premium” on importance of family and focus on children
• Nurtured and protected to be kept from harm
• Pressured to achieve and highly programmed
• Very tech-oriented
• College attendance continues to rise
THE “BABY ON BOARD” GENERATION

Millennials Are Much Better Educated than Earlier Generations of Young Adults

2012: Millennials (ages 18-31)
- Less than high school: 15%
- High school: 27%
- Some college: 37%
- Bachelor's degree+: 21%

1968: Ages 18-31
- Less than high school: 27%
- High school: 44%
- Some college: 19%
- Bachelor's degree+: 10%

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
1) The Hovered Generation?
2) Generation $R_x$?
3) The Celebrated Generation?
4) The Programmed Generation?
5) Generation Optimistic?
6) Generation 2.0?
Millennials and mental health

- Emotional and psychiatric issues are rising in importance
  - Data is consistent across many samples of different ages and nationalities in showing birth cohort increases in anxiety, neuroticism, and other measures of poor mental health

Emotional and psychiatric issues are rising in importance

Five times as many students in 2007 “surpassed thresholds” in one or more mental health categories compared with students in 1938.

Number of high school and college students scoring very high on the MMPI depression scale increased from one percent to eight percent.

Two categories—“hypomania” (“anxiety and unrealistic optimism”) and depression—grew at an even higher rate, with six times as many students scoring high.

“Birth cohort increases in psychopathology among young Americans, 1938–2007: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of the MMPI”; Clinical Psychology Review
"The mental health of students attending college is increasingly becoming a cause for concern, in both the US and Canada. The number of students who seek and need mental health services is only likely to rise. Increased awareness and decreased stigmatization for treatment contribute to this trend, but don’t explain it all."

Biennial report on “Trends to Watch in Higher Education”
- Considered mental health as demographic issue
- Cited rise in mental health concerns amongst college students as the number one issue related to changing demographics
“I do believe that I have more personal issues and emotional concerns that are brought to work. I’m not always prepared for certain situations and I find myself getting stressed out easily and sometimes my anxiety gets so bad that I break down in front of my co-workers. On more than one occasion I’ve cried at work, which in retrospect is really embarrassing. It’s funny because on a few different occasions, when I’m in the midst of having a bad day, I’ve actually called my family from my desk at work to vent. I do believe that my Millennial peers and I need more guidance on how to deal with stressful workplace issues.” A Millennial working in Human Resources
Millennials and Technology
“Major aspects of their lives – social interactions, friendships, civic activities – are mediated by digital technologies. ... Most notable, however, is the way the digital era has transformed how people live their lives and relate to one another and the world around them.”

John Palfrey and Urs Gasser,

Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives
Millennials are the first generation to have grown up with computers and the Internet

- They have an intricate and intimate understanding of user experience
- They bring expertise and ease
- They expect technology that isn’t clunky or outdated
• The price of multi-tasking?
  • Cognitive processing skills
  • Management of working memory
  • Ability to shift from task to task
  • Dealing with uncertainty
  • Reflection
  • Patience

“Cognitive Control in Media Multitaskers,” Eyal Ophir, Clifford Nass, and Anthony D. Wagner (2009)
KNOWING OUR MILLENNIAL STUDENTS: TECHNOLOGY

- Technology drives desire for customized “service”
  - Tailored products
  - Tailored academic programs and leadership opportunities
    - Designing courseload and curriculum
    - Smaller class sizes
    - High-touch approach
    - Creative programming, including career development
    - Unique academic experiences
    - Active learning opportunities
    - Appeal to their values and priorities
"Yes, mother, I told you, I’m doing fine on my own at college... hey, could you log on and find my schedule, order my books and call me when it’s time for class?"
KNOWING OUR MILLENNIAL STUDENTS: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
“I was recently at a seminar with 200 college recruiters. When asked if they had spoken with a parent in the actual recruiting process, at least 100 hands went up.”

Susan Kennedy, Job Coach, Career Trekking
“Parents are anxious and hyper-attentive to their kids, reacting to every little blip of their child’s day, eager to solve every problem for their child – and believe that’s good parenting.”

Hara Estroff Marano, A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting (2008)
KNOWING OUR MILLENNIAL STUDENTS:
DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EFFICACY

People

Controversy

A Gold Star For Good Attendance? No. A New Car!

Mustangs, iPods and laptops—schools are rolling out the perks to get students to show up and earn high marks. But are they teaching the right lesson?

In her four years at Oldham County High School in Crestwood, Ky., Krystal Brooks missed only five days of classes and earned report cards swimming with A's and B's. "I've always tried," says Brooks, "and it paid off."

And how. At her school's all-night graduation party last year, Brooks won a bright-yellow 40th-anniversary-edition Ford Mustang with a sticker price of $21,000. Like other students with good grades or attendance, she was allowed to enter a raffle sponsored by a local car dealership. In fact Brooks's standout record allowed her to enter her name 36 times. "Winning was a shock," says Brooks, now 18; especially since going to school is something she has always looked forward to. "It just kind of came naturally to me," she says.

If the gesture seems a bit grandiose, Brooks's school is in good company.
Success is increasingly valued
The trophy kid...
Resentful when their hard work and confidence don’t readily evidence themselves in the desired results

40% believe that they should be promoted every two years regardless of performance
• Lack of time for and emphasis on contemplation
  • Have we become a results-driven society where if we can’t put it on a resume, we don’t see the value

• Childhood stress shown to be a significant factor in young-adult depression
  • “Kids can’t find the time, both literal and psychological, to linger in internal exploration; a necessary precursor to a well-developed sense of self.” Madeline Levine, Ph.D., The Price of Privilege
“Many in this generation are known for being well-educated, entrepreneurial, tech savvy and idealistic. They take risks, are bold and want to change the world. Unlike past generations, they want to make their passions, inspirations and desire to do good part of their identity — and part of their work. The lines between personal passions and professional engagements are already rapidly disappearing. As a result, this commitment to doing good in the workplace is quickly becoming the new norm that will define the generation. In other words, Millennials are driving a fundamental change the way we think about corporate culture and what we see as the potential for impact in the social sector by both companies and employees.”

“My issue with the advising system is a difficult one. I don't think my advisor tries to build a relationship with me and I don't feel like my advisor is very helpful. But, I understand this is because the school is so large that diverting so much attention to so many students is difficult.” FY

“It would be nice to develop a more personal, one-on-one, relationship with an advisor to help me through some of the questions I had about my future and planning. I am graduating in the Spring and it definitely would have helped to have someone helping along the way and giving advice.” SR
National Study of Student Engagement 2014

“My biggest complaint about BU is that professors don't have time to be mentors.” SR

“I would have liked to see more professors and faculty, aside from 2 or 3 I had, get more involved with students by email or phone or in class.” SR

“Assigned Advisors throughout the entire four-year experience would be extremely helpful and make the meetings more meaningful.” SR

“Advisors need to be integrated more within student life, and more personable relationships made.” SR
At tables there are questions for discussion
Please discuss for 15 minutes
We will follow with report outs and larger group discussion
Report Out: Question One

Are Millennial students intentionally using their college years and experiences to prepare for a life of independence (social, emotional, financial) as well as a time to identify their guiding motivation and passion for life long learning? How do we, as advisors, assist students in this process knowing we may have conflicting definitions of independence and expectations of success?
Social status for this generation is largely linked to knowing what is “trending” and is related to student use of technology. Consider these two perspectives for the role of technology:

• How can students successfully manage technology (Instagram, FB, etc.) and how can we help students create the necessary space for critical problem solving skills to develop? Is there a balance that we can promote?

• How does your office work to engage with students more or more deeply using technology? What should you be doing that you are not? What skills do we need to develop? What should the University provide training for?
We all know from our own experiences, more and more students are coming to campus with serious mental health concerns. This is a trend everywhere in higher education and it's important to note that many students and their families are open about the situation and often disclose their specific issue early on with BU – even through the admissions process. They do this because there is an expectation that this information should be disclosed and, in fact, a campus's capacity to serve these students is often a factor in deciding which college to attend.

What does this mean for advising? How does a student's mental health factor into our roles whether it's a "preexisting condition" or something that comes on after enrollment? The following scenario is presented for discussion:

Joe Doe has been enrolled for three semesters and has yet to perform to his potential. In fact, his grades have dropped every semester with the last two well below minimum standards, which makes Joe eligible for dismissal. His advisor has worked with him closely and knows that he has been getting help from Behavioral Medicine. His advisor also made a number of recommendations, including a strong suggestion to drop a course before the deadline, which Joe did not heed. Joe has appealed his dismissal citing the fact that he just recently made a breakthrough with his therapist and finally has a plan in place to address his mental health concerns. His therapist has provided a letter of support confirming that they have made significant progress recently and added the fact that she did not think that Joe would have access to adequate mental health services in his home town which is where he would be headed if his appeal is not successful. Thoughts?
Many Millennials report that they have extremely close relationships with their parents, and seek their parents’ input on decisions ranging from everyday minutiae to major life choices. Navigating the landmine of parental involvement in a student’s college career is a challenge that every advisor faces. Interacting with parents requires a delicate touch – especially as more students waive their FERPA rights, but even more so when they do not. Have you experienced the “snowplow parent” phenomena? How does it impact your advising relationship with a student? Is it our responsibility to push back on an over-involved parent to further a student’s ownership of their college experience? If so, how can we do this while still empathizing with parents whose over-involvement may be an expression of their anxiety about having their “baby” off on his/her own for the first time? If not, how do you handle a situation where the parental involvement would actually be helpful, in the case where a student isn’t motivated to complete the necessary tasks on his/her own?
What does it mean to a Millennial to have a global education, and to be a global citizen? Is it different than previous generations? Are our students prepared to be engaged citizens, both socially and fiscally? How do we help to facilitate that desire?
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