Remaking College

Innovation and the Liberal Arts

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The Liberal Arts College Takes Advantage of Change

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The “distinctively American” tradition of residential liberal arts colleges rests on the foundation of an early social charter between American higher education and democratic society. Simply put, the story goes like this: Sixteen years after the Pilgrims landed on the shore of Plymouth Harbor, Harvard was founded. As the frontier of the rapidly expanding United States moved west, new communities organized colleges as soon as they were able. In the 1860s, the great land-grant universities emerged with an even stronger focus on meeting the needs of individuals and communities. With each wave of development, higher education evolved to serve one great mission: educating leaders and citizens to realize their individual potential and build their capacity to serve in a democratic society. These dual goals—supporting the development of the individual and cultivating the common good—are inextricably linked through the belief in and practices of freedom. In the American narrative, freedom combines the pursuit of individual passion or fulfillment with service to the common good. Individuals are free to be themselves, but this freedom, as expressed in a wide variety of ways, is for, not from, service to the common good. Over time, the main components of this historical narrative became consolidated into three primary principles that form the foundation of what we know as residential liberal arts education: critical thinking, moral and civil character, and using knowledge to improve the world.

First, critical thinking, rather than mastery of technical or codified knowledge, is the heart and soul of a liberal arts education. Our tradition requires that we encourage students to refine their capacity for analytic thinking; ask difficult questions and formulate responses; evaluate, interpret, and synthesize evidence; make clear, well-reasoned arguments; and develop intellectual agility. It is both “art” and “science” in that students are educated not only to master knowledge
but to create new modes of performance, production, or design and find connections and discover new ideas and perspectives. Critical thinking helps students learn how to learn, preparing them for a lifetime of work, service, and well-being, no matter what professions, vocations, and lifestyles they choose. Society is served by the ongoing expansion of intellectual capital that is both self-critical and innovative within personal, cultural, economic, and political realms but that also advances the common good.

Second, residential liberal arts colleges cultivate a moral and civic character in students in terms of both their individual choices and their contribution to the common good. Moral character does not mean mastery of a defined code of ethics but rather the cultivation of habits and characteristics that reinforce moral behavior individually as well as communally. Athletics, arts, as well as political, activist, and cultural groups on campus have a powerful impact on students and serve as vehicles for individual and communal development. Many of these colleges offer special leadership development programs, and nearly all would cite a history and goal of educating individuals who contribute to their fields and their communities. The cultivation of character, combined with the development of critical thinking, creates capacities in the individual for what John Dewey liked to call "associative living." An education that cultivates the responsible expression of individual freedoms in the context of nurturing the common good is essential to strengthening democratic communities.

Third, using knowledge and virtue to improve the world is the ultimate aim of an education that serves individual and communal freedom. Liberal arts education is renowned for educating people to serve the world in multiple expressions, styles, and practices, whether through theater or the arts, economic analysis, scientific discovery, creative writing, the development of social policy, or historical interpretation. While the area of focus may be very limited and precise, the whole point of critical thinking and of cultivating moral character is to live well and to serve the common good. This twofold "ultimate" mission is the raison d'être of liberal arts education that, as William Sullivan has noted, expresses the best of the Western tradition: "The whole classical notion of a common paideia, or moral-civic cultivation, rested on the assertion that growth and transformation of the self toward responsible mutual concern is the realistic concern of public life" (emphasis mine). In this tradition, individual flourishing is defined both as the pursuit of one's passions and as service to others, and this capacity to fulfill the self by fulfilling one's obligations to the common good requires intellectual and moral formation in the context of a community. In this tradition public service
includes those who serve directly in fields such as public policy, education, non-profit work, or health care as well as those who contribute to a robust culture through business or the arts, research in basic sciences that one day might benefit others, or volunteer leadership in their communities.

Although new chapters in the history of liberal arts education unfold and the plot thickens, through the centuries the same anchors—of academic quality, community, and using knowledge to improve the world—propel our colleges forward. The great narrators of education have envisioned this social charter time and time again, underscoring the point made so well by Thomas Jefferson: “I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue, and advancing the happiness of man.”

Each small liberal arts college is a distinct expression of this social compact, and the resulting tapestry of knowledge and social responsibility for the development of the individual and the cultivation of the common good supports, promotes, and expands freedom in its many expressions in this country. Through the willingness to encourage critical and creative thinkers—those who can combine self-reflection, disciplined action, and community building—we advance freedom of thought and expression as well as personal and social responsibility. As historian William Cronon notes, the act of making us free also binds us to the communities that gave us our freedom in the first place and, significantly, makes us responsible to those communities in ways that limit our freedom. In the end, it turns out that liberty is not about thinking or saying or doing whatever we want. It is about exercising our freedom in such a way as to make a difference in the world—and make a difference for more than just ourselves.5

Three Critiques of the Liberal Arts

For nearly as long as liberal arts colleges have existed, its critics have announced that this type of education fails to relate to the contemporary world. Today’s critics cite a long list of issues and pressures facing education, including technological innovation, globalism, the traditional structure of academic disciplines, environmental and financial sustainability, and changing demographics. From these pressing issues, some critics have concluded that the very sustainability of the liberal arts is at stake and predict the demise of this type of education is around the next technological, financial, or demographic corner.

These dire warnings tend to fall into three categories. The first asserts that education should be focused on job training, job procurement, and long-term financial security for students. Indeed, since the mid-1980s, most parents and prospec-
tive students indicate that the main purpose of education is to find a high-paying job and enjoy financial stability. Once the quest for a certain salary becomes the paramount and sometimes the only reason to go to college, education becomes job training in its mission and practices.

The second critique follows from the first and asserts that liberal arts education is a hopelessly romantic endeavor designed to give privileged students cultivated tastes for an outdated, elite life under the guise of leadership. Rather than seeing education in terms of human development that appreciates and sustains human culture as well as supports the common good, education is seen as a leisurely commodity for individuals who, by virtue of family or business connections, are already assured of a high station in life. In this view of what it means to be human, young adults are not cultivated so much as prepped and pampered, and the common good is seen not primarily as the arena of culture in which arts and politics flourish but one in which a social and economic order must be sustained.

The third category weaves through the former two, suggesting that liberal arts education is, plainly speaking, too expensive in terms of both cost and the experience it provides. In evaluating whether college is worth the cost, skeptics conclude that the sticker price is not justified because the relative "returns" do not directly translate into specific training or expertise. In other words, the value of developing the individual and contributing to the common good does not balance the sheer cost of the "product."

Critics offer this argument routinely despite overwhelming evidence that college graduates attain, on average, higher incomes over the course of their careers and have more rather than fewer career options. That data, coming from U.S. Treasury Department’s “The Economic Case for Higher Education” (2012), reports on the income level of graduates of all colleges and universities, not just liberal arts colleges. When surveyed, employers indicate that the top skills they want in new employees include critical thinking, the ability to innovate, and the ability to work on teams with members of diverse groups.

Alumni of, admittedly, top liberal arts colleges offer other evidence that contradicts the critics' claim. A study by Hardwick Day notes that alumni of colleges belonging to the Annapolis Group (130 selective, independent liberal arts colleges in the United States) are more likely than any other group to have graduated in four years or less, giving them a head start on their careers. More than any other group, these alumni are more likely to rate their undergraduate experience as "excellent" and to give higher overall satisfaction ratings. They credit their undergraduate experience with helping them develop a broad range of important life
skills (problem solving, making effective decisions, thinking analytically, writing effectively, speaking effectively, working as part of a team, and leadership abilities). They rate their college as highly effective in helping them obtain their first job or gain admission to graduate school and report that their education continues to help them with career changes or advancement. Crediting the overall quality and breadth of their academic preparation more frequently, they believe they are better prepared than graduates of other institutions they’ve encountered since college.9

**Being Proactive about the Liberal Arts**

In response to these critiques, defenders of the liberal arts have been increasingly vocal, offering eloquent apologies, or philosophical and historical defenses, against the critics. Andrew Delbanco’s book *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* addresses issues and pressures on liberal education but also defends its importance for economic prosperity for the individual and the country and for an inclusive democratic citizenship, as well as to create capacity for what Jefferson called “the pursuit of happiness.” In *Cultivating Humanity* and *Not for Profit*, Martha Nussbaum argues for the importance of the tradition of the liberal arts to prepare “world citizens” who think critically, at least in part, through their ability to cultivate the capacity for empathy developed through humanities and the arts.10

I applaud the eloquent apologies based on our proud tradition, a tradition that is not only alive but also evolving. But to make the case for liberal arts, we need to assert a more proactive claim about our special relevance for linking knowledge, community, and freedom in the future. Although the critics’ conclusions may be reductionist, we are not excused from the task of making a case for the liberal arts as a leader of change for education.

Our response to our critics and to the public in general should be not only about the history and philosophy of the liberal arts but also about its relevance in the twenty-first century for the United States and the world. The case we must make for liberal arts education is that the residential educational setting serves as an incubator for intellectual agility and supports the creation of new models of engagement to help both individuals and communities survive and flourish in this century. These principles stand as fresh reinterpretations of our tradition and enable us to impress upon our students that they have an obligation to use their talents to improve the world. The importance of this type of education rests on its long and unique tradition and on what it can offer in a world in which learning to navigate the new may be far more important than the ability to master the old.
While our current liberal arts residential colleges do live up to the apologies so eloquently offered about them, it is nonetheless the case that colleges also express an incredible degree of evolutionary, and even revolutionary, change in how knowledge is produced, interpreted, transmitted, taught, learned, and lived. Contemporary residential liberal arts colleges not only offer "community" as the environment for learning, but they do so by creating bold cultural experiments, some utopian in nature, of how to live out democracy and educate leaders. Our liberal arts residential communities serve as incubators or pilots of new ways to link knowledge, freedom, and democracy on a global stage. These colleges express the tradition of residential education through the ongoing reinterpretation of critical thinking, community living, and working to improve the world. And it is this current expression of the tradition, as much as the history and the philosophy, that we must use to make our case for the liberal arts.

This story of transformation and paradigm change deserves a powerful voice. If representatives of liberal arts colleges could write a joint case statement, it would emphasize the value of what we have always done well and would continue to guide this evolution through naturally occurring changes in structures, cultures, and practices. I suggest that we begin by reinterpreting the social charter that makes up the twin components of the liberal arts:

- First, we must expand our definition of what critical thinking is and how it is nurtured and learned and redefine how students and faculty engage one another in knowledge design through the dynamic interactions of teaching, learning, and scholarship.
- Second, we must extend the distinct role our campuses play as intentional communities within the broader public, especially as we focus on educating students in the practical virtues of building inclusive, sustainable, and civil democratic communities and on cultivating the next generation of ethical leaders.

**Imagining the Future of Knowledge**

As roads once paved the way to great centers of learning that were concentrated in distant corners of the world, so now do new forms of social organization and technology. In Thomas Friedman's image, technology has flattened the globe, making it possible for anyone with a laptop and a Wi-Fi connection to have access to the world's most brilliant minds.¹¹ We might summarize the current period as a shift from a bounded bureaucracy in which knowledge was divided into fixed disciplines
to a porous network in which knowledge is fluid and collaborative. A byproduct of this shift is that individuals are finding new ways to organize and form community as well as to teach and learn. We are beginning to call this social learning.

Social learning does not rely on linear knowledge transfer. Rather, it is based on the premise that, as Brown and Adler put it, we “understand content through conversation and grounded interaction around problems or actions.” Twenty-first century social learning goes well beyond traditional modes of participation to include the ways professors show students how to “be” a physicist, for example, as they are learning the content of that field. In the past, students might have spent years accumulating substantive knowledge before they were qualified to join a “community of practice,” but now they are invited in at the outset.\textsuperscript{12}

The current generation of students is ready for this form of engagement. They live in a world with few boundaries and compartments, where they multitask and tweet throughout the day and night. Partly because of this open access and wide range of interactions, they want more and better forms of problem-centered, real-world-based, digitally informed learning. Our faculty members want to work with students on projects and programs that welcome new, often interdisciplinary ways to organize knowledge and develop deeper connections between theory and practice. It is exciting to watch the myriad ways that this transformation is taking place in and out of the classroom.

Our students and faculty are not waiting for institutions to act. They are already participating in knowledge design, a concept aimed at placing creativity and agility at the heart of learning and scholarship by embracing new learning platforms and recognizing the power of visualization and the remixing of knowledge. Many of our most energized and passionate faculty members and students are involved in knowledge design now, either in small projects or programs or in large-scale institutes or centers. For example, at Swarthmore College a faculty member has used a specific problem faced by a nonprofit group to teach statistics to math-resistant students, and a philosopher and biologist have partnered to teach an introductory environmental course on “nature” in the field rather than in the classroom or lab.

To encourage these exciting possibilities, we will have to develop creative ways to structure old and new forms of faculty work while also making it easier for students to integrate many forms of learning and navigate the curriculum. We will have to reinvent the structures and cultures of education to match the forms of social and participatory learning, teaching, and knowledge creation that will dominate the twenty-first century. We are beginning to support new
models of teaching and learning to help our students innovate, work in teams across many fields, and “design” as well as master ideas, solutions, products, and performances. In short, we are combining the discipline of critical thinking with the more organic processes of creative activity.

One step in this evolving process would be to frame critical thinking as knowledge design. In this reality, students would experience college as an engagement that takes them from the world in which they live, embeds them in communities of practice, and moves them from being consumers of knowledge to being co-creators of knowledge with faculty.

How do we frame and claim the expansion of knowledge design that is already in our midst? An experience at my institution made me keenly aware of these possibilities. Recently, Swarthmore finished a fifteen-month strategic-planning process, an experience that included an audit of globalization activities across the campus. We found, to our surprise, that we have lots of global connections that had never been gathered together, seen, or appreciated as a whole. As we explored what we should be doing globally, we discovered that we were already doing it! In other areas, Swarthmore has enjoyed an incredible expansion of practices in teaching, research, and learning among our faculty, students, staff, and alumni. We found many dots to connect and many emerging trends to support among both old and new ways of creating knowledge and using knowledge to improve the world.

During this process, I shifted my own framework from simply thinking that we are honing the skill of critical thinking to realizing that we are, at least in part, expanding how we understand critical thinking as it relates to the process of designing knowledge. Can we imagine our institutions as design studios—places where knowledge is invented, remixed, and performed? Places where critical and innovative thinking are constantly colliding and blending? Would recognizing our institutions as incubators of knowledge shift the way we think about departments and programs, about requirements and majors? Can we excite the public with the news that although liberal arts schools are few in number, we serve a critical function in a democracy as places that sustain and strengthen knowledge?

There is no logical or practical need to assert that we provide the only type of education that does this. Indeed, all types of education, including the type provided by community colleges and research universities, must contribute to this goal. Our claim is not that we are the only ones capable of designing knowledge, but that we do so in a distinct fashion and with great effectiveness.

Even as the design of knowledge changes, we need to maintain key traditions in scholarship, teaching, and learning. Faculty members help students pick fo-
cused areas of study that shape their progress through structured semesters and well-defined academic years. Students attend classes face to face with their fellow students and teachers. They drop by their professors’ offices to discuss complex problems. We need to support transformative changes even as we encourage traditional practices. We need to talk about knowledge in ways that are anchored in tradition even as we fuel emerging change.

Cultivating the Moral Individual and the Common Good

The second component of any compelling narrative needs to include a strong claim about residential community. The liberal arts derive uniqueness and strength from the intense coexistence, collision, and even conningling of curricula and extracurricular aspects to create an experience that is about the formation of individuals within community. We who live in these institutions understand that this form of education transforms students through their engagement in the academic enterprise and also in an intense and stimulating life outside the classroom 24/7.

This reality offers an immense opportunity for our students, faculty, and staff—one that very few other institutions can meet. Our country is in desperate need of what the liberal arts can offer. A serious crisis deeply linked to the failure of individuals in democratic communities to find common ground is leading many citizens to lose faith in their leaders, in their democratic institutions, in their communities that are increasingly polarized, and in a long-held sense of the common good. Current practices of democratic community such as tolerance, respect for others, and open debate are becoming anemic and are unable to provide the robust support that a thriving society needs. Just as knowledge must be free to shift to a participatory model, freedom in the social and moral sphere must shift from the unintentional consumer to the intentional community.

As liberal arts colleges become more agile, we must also imagine new models of community life, build their prototypes, and train students to convey them into the future. By offering what I call intentional community, we can frame our liberal arts narrative to create new models of engagement for the twenty-first century. Institutions that support intentional community would teach and promote civil discourse, civic virtues, inclusiveness, and a sustainable life together as well as the development of a fuller life for each individual. One outcome for colleges and universities would be to supplant the overarching focus on a consumer model that is so prevalent on campuses today.

At Swarthmore College we have identified three arenas in which to model our own intentional community: expanding our concept of diversity to become a
more inclusive community; shaping our culture as a space of civility and civil discourse across and beyond our own various interest groups and ideologies; and living, as much as possible, as a community that promotes sustainable living both environmentally and fiscally. If the new narrative of education is to find a home in the evolving structures of knowledge design, we have to recognize that our unique opportunity to design a residential experience is critical to our entire educational program. In fact, our residential communities are nothing less than a way to offer new models of community for the twenty-first century. Why does this particular kind of residential incubator work so well? How might we claim its full value and go on to imagine it working even more effectively in order to model it in communities around the country and world?

Despite the challenges we all experience, especially in the economic realm, there are emerging trends and creative practices on which to build. Many liberal arts colleges are renewing efforts to engage students in practices of civility. Efforts at diversity are expanding from an exclusive focus only on minority students and are calling upon all students, staff, and faculty to build upon a more diverse population and experiment with inclusive community models. And sustainability is becoming more widely interpreted to include not only environmental protection but also economic efficiency and the cultural practices of new generations of students and staff who support a variety of sustainable practices.

Using Knowledge to Improve the World

It is the unique combination of developing the individual and cultivating the common good that allows residential liberal arts colleges to incubate the future, to show us what is possible, to create trajectories of new ways of being and doing in the world. Yet, as already stated, while these colleges have a special role within higher education, they are certainly not the ultimate or only type of higher education needed. Certain students, given their talents and passion, will flourish in this environment, and others will not.

My argument is that residential liberal arts colleges—as bold experiments in knowledge design and intentional community—have much to contribute to making the world a better place. By developing models of intentional community around some of our most difficult issues, for example, they will advance the common good. Other types of institutions will contribute to individual flourishing and further the common good in other ways.

My argument includes, inevitably, a type of meritocratic stance, since these schools are small and, despite the generous amounts of financial aid provided by
many of them, not always affordable. Over the years, liberal arts colleges have worked hard, and largely succeeded, at becoming more diverse and inclusive not only to extend opportunities to those once excluded but also to provide the most robust residential community for all students. But given the relatively small populations that attend—3 to 6 percent of all students, depending on how one counts—we are limited to graduating a small, diverse group of students despite the great resources invested. These students, of course, have an obligation to use their talents to flourish as individuals and in serving the common good, just as educators have a responsibility to infuse them with a moral understanding of freedom and democracy.

Some might wonder why one would choose this type of education. Does one really wish to rely on a type of incubator for common good as the starting point of a lifelong educational process? Students who will benefit most from this type of education are those who embrace the boundless nature of acquiring and creating knowledge and welcome the challenge of living intentionally. So if this type of education is a fit for a particular student's talents, desires, and character, then it is more than worthwhile. Indeed, for some students it is the most fruitful environment for education.

Renewing the Mission of the Residential Liberal Arts College

The task of renewing our devotion to the common good and teaching the art and science of community building is, in my judgment, one of the most critical goals for higher education and one of the hardest to achieve in the years ahead. To achieve this goal, we need to understand that our mission is to support both the development of the self and the development of community. We must invent or reinvent educational practices that embrace virtue and practical wisdom as well as intellect and aesthetics; we must affirm the right of education to set standards for behavior, expectations of values, and commitment to the common good.

We also need to encourage individuals to exercise their freedom to enhance current models of values and community, a charge that will simultaneously foster community and innovation. To become an intentional community, one that portrays a new vision of the beloved community for the United States as well as for the world, we need to demand more of our students, faculty, and staff to make a commitment to life together, and we must set high standards for behavior inside and outside of the classroom.

Ultimately, the future of the residential liberal arts college rests on both its traditions and its relevance to the twenty-first century. Simply put, the relevance
rests on the bold experiment that continually underpins the design of knowledge and life together in intentional community. Liberal arts colleges, in this way, provide a hopeful future, developing the leaders who will aspire to bring all that they have learned about how to think, create, and live into practice throughout their personal, professional, and civic lives.

NOTES

1. The term "distinctively American" is borrowed from the title of the volume Distinctively American: The Residential Liberal Arts College, ed. Steven Koblik and Stephen R. Graubard (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000). Interestingly, the residential liberal arts college is now being emulated in countries such as Ghana, France, England, and China.

2. Women, slaves, and certain groups of immigrants were not counted as individual citizens at the founding of the country. The principles identified as the foundation of the social charter—critical thinking, the formation of moral and civic character, and using knowledge to improve the world—allowed the ongoing redefinition of freedom, democracy, and the common good. This work continues today.


**THEY’VE NEVER TAKEN A SWIM AND THOUGHT ABOUT JAWS:**
**UNDERSTANDING THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION**

By Alicia Moore

They were born at the same time as Macs and PCs. Starbucks, voice mail, Bill Gates and AIDS have always been a part of their lives. They use the lights from their cell phones at rock concerts, not lighters or matches. They’ve never heard Howard Cosell call a game on ABC, Elton John has always been on easy listening stations and Kurt Cobain’s death was the day the music died. And the best part? Kermit the Frog is older than most of their parents.

Welcome to the Millennial Generation, those students who are entering the doors of higher education as we speak (and as you’ll read later, their parents are not far behind). Through the coming decade, this generation will transform colleges and universities as much as, if not more than, the Baby Boomers did, and will do so in very different ways. Some colleges and universities will figure out this generation, respond, and “rise in reputation.” Others will not. Some will tailor their services to meet the needs of this generation, and will build lifelong connections to their alumni; others will not. Some will change their marketing approach to cater to this new generation; others will not (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Bottom line: some will succeed; others will not. What will your institution do?

**Generational Theory**

Before reviewing who the Millennials are and how colleges and universities can respond, it’s important to review the basic precepts of generational theory.

Generational research started with the Puritan generation that founded the nation – and since a generation comprises more or less 20 years, Gen X is known as the 13th generation.

Basic to generational theory is that each generation is shaped by its own biography, where the biography is comprised of a series of events that people with common birth years relate to and develop common beliefs and behaviors around. These commonly held beliefs and behaviors then form the personality of that generation (Strauss and Howe, 1991; Coomes and DeBard, 2004). For example, ask any Silent Generation member where they were when Roosevelt died and most can tell you, and most will share common perspectives about that event; same for the Baby Boomers in regard to when Kennedy was shot and Generation X in regard to the Challenger Disaster.

Feeding into the formation of different generations is the concept that the personality of a generation is cyclical. With that, approximately every third generation will closely emulate the values and beliefs of three generations prior:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation Birth Years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silent Generation (current elder generation)</strong> Born 1925 – 1942, currently ages 64 – 81</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Baby Boomers (current midlife generation)</strong> Born 1943 – 1960, currently ages 46 – 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation X/13th Generation</strong> Born 1961 – 1981, currently ages 25 – 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Millennial Generation</strong> Born since 1982, currently ages 24 and younger (Strauss 2005)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
1. Each generation breaks with the generation nearest in age to them, whose style no longer functions well in the new era (for example, Millennials prefer to work in teams whereas Gen Xers are very independent);

2. Each generation wants to correct what it perceives as the excesses of the current midlife generation (e.g., Boomers were active protesters, while many Millennials are not politically active, nor expressing a propensity to do so in the future); and

3. Each generation fills the social role being vacated by the departing elder generation (the Millennials have a strong connection to the Silent Generation’s upbeat and trusting attitude) (Coomes and DeBard, 2004).

And hence, a generation is born.

A Word of Caution

Generational theory implies that everyone who is part of a generation holds the same beliefs, values and attitudes. This concept is good in theory; however, one must be cautious when putting services in place to not assume that all members fit the mold. Rather, generational theory states that the generational characteristics are generalizations by which one can draw broad conclusions about the collective group, but not necessarily of the individuals. For instance, if there is a large age gap between siblings—one that crosses generations—the younger sibling may relate with many of the events and values of their older brother or sister. Additionally, Coomes and DeBard (2004) conclude that “the big picture seldom contains images of marginalized groups”.

The Basics about the Millennials

**The Millennial Generation**
- Diverse
- Pressured to Perform
- Ambitious/Achievers
- Team-Oriented
- Connected
- Service-Oriented
- Excellent Time Managers
- Structured
- Protected

Higher education is on the cusp of an enrollment boom, with enrollment expected to peak at an estimated 15.8 million students by the year 2012, an increase of 12 percent more than current levels. More importantly, the Millennials are the largest generation to date, with over 80 million born since 1980. Add in immigration, and this generation is nearly 90 million strong. With this, Millennials will make up 75 percent of all higher education enrollment by the year 2012 (Coomes and DeBard, 2004, citing Center for Educational Statistics, 2002).

The numbers paint a basic picture, but understanding the characteristics of this generation will help campuses develop strong services and optimal learning environments for the Millennial generation. It is only with an understanding of this generation’s personality that campuses can begin to respond.

Diverse

In the summer 2004 “New Directions for Student Services” series, Robert DeBard states:
The first truth to acknowledge in trying to encapsulate the characteristics of Millennial students who are trying to matriculate through collegiate programs is they are the most racially and ethnically diverse in this nation’s history.

This cannot be a more true statement. The numbers alone tell a compelling story:

- Enrollment of women increased by nearly 5 percent, bringing female enrollment to more than 56 percent of all those enrolled in higher education;
- Since 1980, Asian American students grew by 33 percent, whereas overall enrollment grew by only 22 percent (DeBard, 2004 citing National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000);
- One in five Millennials are children of immigrants (Howe & Strauss, 2003) and the number of children speaking a language other than English at home has doubled since 1979 (Broido, 2004); and
- Hispanic students will represent the largest predicted future growth, representing 10.6 percent of 1995 undergraduates to an estimated 15.4 percent in 2015.

But diversity is not just represented among race and gender. This generation also has been raised in an era of wealth, more so than other generations, due in part to either having two working parents or couples waiting longer to have children (Atkinson, 2004). Even more striking is that it is increasingly rare to have more than one child per family. And while many children are raised in a two-parent household, 25 percent of children born in the ’80s and beyond will live with a step parents before they reach adulthood (Broido, 2004 citing Mason and Moulden, 1996).

And finally, this is a generation that has experienced discussions about sexuality at almost all levels: in schools, in the courts, in the military, on TV and in the movies. These conversations are no longer taboo, as they were and still are for many older generations, but ones that today’s students are used to hearing. As a result, this generation is expressing an increasing level of support for gays and lesbians (Broido, 2004 citing Sax and others, 2001) and is more comfortable with talking about sex than all other current generations.

Pressure to Perform

Howe and Strauss (2003) summarize the “pressure to perform” trait better than anyone:

There’s a new “arms race” among today’s teens and it’s called: “Getting Into College.” According to recent surveys, the two items that worry teenagers the most these days are grades and college admissions. (Twenty-five years ago, the most worrisome items in a teen’s world were threats of a nuclear war; a decade ago, they were AIDS and violent crime).

The Millennials feel pressure to perform in all they do: work, volunteer activities, school activities, sports, grades and more. This is a generation that has adopted five- and ten-year plans by the time they’ve reached middle school. More and more are required to have portfolio work to graduate from high school, not to mention individual state educational reform efforts that require different certifications and/or testing for high school graduates. Employers are asking to see grades (and in some cases, attendance records), homework levels are ever on the rise, class periods are lengthening, and
private tutors are more in demand than ever before (Howe and Strauss, 2003). Why? Because Millennials have been taught that what they do now pays off later in life, whether it’s in the college admissions process or in future employment opportunities.

It’s important to note that this cohort is also the video game generation, with members who peak at 10,000+ hours by the time they reach college. And all avid video game fans know that to reach the next level, you’ll likely lose at the first one. By losing, you repeat the process until you master one level and move on to the next. So while performance is key to success, so is trying, as trying eventually represents winning.

**Ambitious/Achievers**

Not surprisingly, the pressure to perform has led to a generation of achievers. More than 75 percent of college freshmen indicated plans to pursue a graduate degree, as compared 66 percent five years prior (DeBard, 2004 citing Sax and others, 2002). Almost half of teenagers indicate that they plan to pursue a degree that exceeds the credentials needed for their desired field or occupation (DeBard, 2004 citing Schneider and Stevenson, 1999), average SAT scores are the highest they’ve ever been in over 30 years and more students are taking AP classes than ever before (Strauss, 2005).

Many worry that this high level of ambition will make this generation competitive, non-team players. But not to worry. First, this is a generation that always has been given trophies for participation, as well as for victory. And more importantly, parental involvement and societal influence created a generation of team players, a concept explored later in this paper.

**Confident, Optimistic**

So if this generation has been pressured to perform, and have not only been rewarded for winning but for the mere effort of trying, then they naturally have become a confident, optimistic generation. And why shouldn’t they be? This is the era of the loved and protected child who has been encouraged to believe in themselves in all that they do (DeBard, 2004); the era that sees new inventions in science, medicine and technology every day, inventions that are improving our lives and making us healthier; and the era in which it’s considered cool to be smart. Let’s look at the facts:

- More inventions have been created in this generation’s childhood than any generation before (Oblinger, 2003);
- While cures to diseases such as AIDS still plague researches, cures to many forms of cancer and polio have long since been found;
- Technology is constantly improving our lives, albeit for a home computer or government defense systems;
- Violent crime by teens, alcohol, drug, suicide rate and teen pregnancy are all down for the first time in decades, with teen pregnancy and alcohol/drug rates among 8th, 10th and 12th grades falling to all-time lows (Strauss, 2005).

Ultimately, it’s getting easier to be a kid. Accepting the premise that generations are cyclical in nature, then this generation is clearly echoes the hopeful, optimistic attitude of the Silent Generation.

**Team Oriented, Connected Generation**

From Lilo & Stitch to Black Hawk Down, this is the “leave no one behind” generation. Millennials have learned the importance of a team process on the soccer fields, in the classrooms and at home. “Students learn in groups, deliver presentations in groups and get graded in groups; they review each other’s homework and supervise each other’s behavior,” say Howe and Strauss in their 2004 book *Millennials*
Go to College. More children are involved in family meetings and have input on decisions ranging from what new car to buy to whether or not the family should relocate to a new town.

In addition to being team-oriented, this is a very connected generation; in fact, friends, family and others are considered part of the individual Millennial member’s team. Howe and Strauss continue to say, “Before morning classes, Millennials can be seen on cell phones, keeping in close touch with friends on campus or back home. At the end of the school day, Millennials use the Internet to stay in constant contact with a larger circle of friends” and family (2004). A 2003 Educause report states that 70 percent of Millennials use instant messaging to keep in touch with friends; 41 percent use email to connect with teachers and classmates; and 81 percent use email to stay in touch with friends and family (Oblinger, 2003). While this is not the traditional form of connection experienced—or even understood—by previous generations, it is still a connection, a connection that is rated as one of the most important priorities to this generation (Howe and Strauss, 2004).

Service Oriented
Service has a two-fold definition for the Millennial generation. First, it means giving to others in the form of volunteer or community service. And important to businesses everywhere—including higher education—service is defined as strong customer service expectations.

It goes without saying that the rise in the number of middle and high schools requiring a service-learning component has helped create a service-oriented generation. However, many posit that the emphasis on taking care of others and supporting the team effort would have shaped a generation of volunteers, regardless of school requirements. The data varies, but most reports state that somewhere between 65 and 86 percent of teens have participated in volunteer activities by the time they enter the doors of academia.

For this generation, customer service is an expectation, not an exception. They expect immediacy in all that they do; they want accurate information on their accounts, class schedules and grades in real-time, much like what they receive from Amazon.com or other online stores (Strauss, 2005; Oblinger 2003). More importantly, if they can’t get what they want from one retailer, they can easily go online and get it from someone else, 24/7. Besides every day types of purchases, it also applies to higher education, both in the classroom and student services setting.

In the classroom, Millennials expect to buy “what, where and how they learn” (Carlson, 2005). While all research shows that online learning is not taking off to levels previously anticipated, most studies indicate that on-campus students will readily and easily supplement class schedules with online classes as needed to meet schedule or degree requirements (as Boomers and Xers did with evening classes). And when it comes to student services, especially in recruiting and admissions, the immediacy of a response is crucial, so much so that many campuses are utilizing software systems to provide real-time service and response, 24 hour a day on everything from interactive question and answer systems, online degree audits, academic advising and tutoring services.

Time Managers, Structured
Soccer and piano on Monday, tutoring and church youth group on Tuesday, soccer and volunteering at the community center on Wednesday, tutoring and volunteering at the Humane Society on Thursday, soccer on Friday, two games and a recital on... well, you get the picture. The Millennial generation is one of the most scheduled—and perhaps overcommitted—of any generation. Between being pressured to succeed and being a high achieving generation, this generation fills their discretionary time with numerous activities. In order to manage this hectic schedule, Millennial youth have been encouraged to follow the rules and “have come to expect the rules to be clearly communicated and enforced with due process” (DeBard, 2004 citing Martin and Tulgan, 2001). Additionally, parents of Millennials have organized their children’s lives to provide a safe and predictable structure. As a result, Millennials “have come both to trust authority and count on authority.” This need for structure and constant activity is carrying over to college campuses: participation in campus activities is on the rise, and students are constantly reading the fine points of policies and syllabi in order to better understand their environment.

Protected

If Generation X was the “This is Your Brain on Drugs” generation, the Millennials are the “Baby on Board” generation, the generation where children are protected at every turn. This is enforced via numerous child safety measures, zero tolerance policies in schools, educational reform acts, community resource officers in the schools and more. After all, their parents witnessed events such as the Columbine shootings and the Oklahoma City Bombing. The differences between this protected generation and generations prior is striking:

“According to today’s regulators and bureaucrats, those of who were kids in the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s probably shouldn’t have survived. Our baby cribs were covered with bright colored lead-based paint. We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets; and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets. As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts. We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. The Horrors! We ate cupcakes, bread and butter and drank soda pop with sugar in it but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing. (Original Source Unavailable).”

Because their parents play such an active role in their lives, Millennial generation students have come to trust their parents. In fact, some studies state that over 85 percent of Millennials trust their parents, with most considering their parents heroes; contrast that to Baby Boomers, 40 percent of whom thought they’d be better off without their parents (Strauss, 2005).

The Millennial Generation On Campus: How Colleges Can Succeed

“I had to walk two miles, uphill, in the snow, both ways to school every day.”

How many times has this adage been uttered in the history of this country? And how many times do we not change systems and services simply because “we had to go through it, so you do too”? If colleges and universities wish to effectively recruit students, create optimal learning environments, and build lifelong connections with alumni, then colleges and universities must incorporate new strategies at every possible level.

Admissions and Marketing

Throw out the viewbooks with the hip, edgy look that appealed to the grunge Xers and by all means, get rid of any VCR tapes. This is a new generation, a generation that is looking for colleges and universities to tell them that great things will happen if they choose a campus, how they’ll be safe and how they’ll
stay connected with friends and family. If anything, the new message must be one of positive reinforcement (Howe & Strauss, 2003).

If colleges and universities are to be successful in recruiting this new generation, then old approaches to recruiting must go out the door. New marketing strategies must appeal to the characteristics of this generation in all publications, newsletters, mailings, campus tours, campus visit programs and phone campaigns:

- As Millennial students start to make decisions around higher education options, most will not do it without support from his or her parent, which means that colleges are not only recruiting students, they are recruiting parents. And because this is the era of the overprotective parent, all messages must overtly address safety on campus.

- Marketing campaigns must appeal to a more traditional set of values and must appeal to the parents need for protecting their student in this new environment. This generation has already resurrected some of the “corny” traditions of their grandparents’ era at the high school levels (e.g., pep rallies and bon fires), and are predicated to do the same at colleges and universities. As such, marketing materials must show the traditions and history of the institution.

- Millennials are team- and tradition-oriented. Photographs and videos (on DVDs, not VCR tapes) must appeal to these core traits by showing pictures of “energized teams engaging in campus-wide activities” (Howe and Strauss, 2003) and not of a lone student studying peacefully on the campus green.

- As a connected generation, this generation makes decisions based on their parents’ perspective, but also by what their peers are doing. Have prospective students, or recent admits, refer their friends. The recruitment of one well-known student could easily have a ripple effect on others from the same high school (Howe and Strauss, 2003).

- Stay in front of the prospective Millennial student as much as you can. One statistic states that Millennials see an average of 300+ ads per week. If your college or university is not part of that constant advertising, Millennials may be easily led elsewhere.

- Be tech-saavy, but don’t fake it. I recently met with a group of local high school students about this issue and when asked about which forms of communication worked best, they had this to share: They realize that most college administrators and faculty are not from a generation that is competent in all forms of technology, and they can be forgiving of that. “However, if a college slaps together something just for the sake of having it on the Web or having it ‘techni-fied,’ the lack of expertise will show through and you will lose me. If you’re going to do it, do it well; otherwise, don’t bother” (Anonymous Focus Group, Bend Senior High School, 2004).

While the above strategies focus on recruiting and marketing, it’s important to not overlook the impact on admissions policies. Having a generation of achievers means that more and more students will be applying who are essentially over-prepared based on present admissions standards (so much that many merit scholarship programs report difficulty in meeting the high volume of honors students). Many institutions will clamor to raise their admission standards to simply best their closest rivals. However,
institutions must be cautious in doing so. Millennials are high achievers who connect achievement with future success, but they are also very focused on participating in an active and diverse campus and community life. They expect to have peers with a wide variety of skills and lifestyles and they have a strong need to live this diverse lifestyle while in college. Therefore, admissions programs and policies must not only be based on academic achievement, but must also address the non-academic concerns that are core values of this generation.

The Classroom

A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* regarding Millennial students states “A new generation of students has arrived -- and sorry, but they might not want to hear you lecture for an hour” (Carlson, 2005). This is probably the most honest assessment of the impact of Millennial students on the classroom that I’ve read to date. Let’s face it: the Millennial generation’s learning style is often not addressed by current teaching practices. With this in mind, colleges and universities need to adjust their teaching methods, something that will be difficult for the “do as we say, not as we did” Baby Boomer and independent minded Generation X instructors:

- This generation grew up working in and playing on teams and as such, gone are the days where lectures, multiple choice quizzes and memorization equates to knowledge and learning. Rather, group assignments, interactive lectures enhanced by technology, study groups and learning partners are key to the success of this generation. In fact, this generation will thrive on problem-solving, life-applicable simulations. Cress and Sax (in Wilson, 2004) posit that this type of active learning is the most effective form of learning. If so, Millennials’ need for collaborative, interactive learning will allow them thrive in the classroom that is structured with these principles in mind.

- This generation trusts their parents and better yet, their parents trust them. They expect the same level of respect-and same level of responsibility—in the classroom. As such, group projects, assisting faculty with research projects, peer grading/evaluation and related activities make the Millennial generation feel as if they matter. And if they feel like they matter, their performance will exceed that of prior generations (Wilson, 2004 citing Kuh, 2003).

- Staying connected and communicating with faculty is integral to this generation; the traditional handful of in-person weekly office hours won’t cut it anymore. They would rather communicate with faculty via email, instant messaging and chat groups, so much so that several campuses now require faculty to respond to all student emails within 24 hours, while others are offering virtual office hours.

- This generation likes constant feedback as to their progress toward success. Instead of the traditional mid-term and final paper or exam, regular, weekly quizzes worth smaller values, online access to grades and course progress and final interactive group projects are important to this generation. Some colleges and universities have implemented online quizzes that
immediately notifies students of errors and directs them to resources to help re-learn the correct information (Wilson, 2004).

- This generation’s propensity for filling their schedules with so many activities has forced them to be a very structured generation. In order to manage the overabundance of activities, the rules around their participation in such activities have always been very clear. Couple this with the desire to be a high-achieving generation, and faculty will need to provide clear expectations in syllabi regarding time commitments, grading policies and homework assignments (Wilson, 2004).

- Teach them the basics. As an overcommitted generation, they may not be realistic about the time needed to be successful in college. In addition, this tech-savvy generation has never experienced life without the Internet. Therefore, they don’t always know how to evaluate the credibility of resources. On top of this, many students are so used to the Internet, that they oftentimes overlook valuable and timely printed resources; some faculty may consider requiring a minimum number of non-Internet based sources for research papers and projects (Wilson, 2004).

- The independent Baby Boomer and Generation X faculty were raised in an era where they had to fight for rights for themselves and for others, and they were very comfortable doing so. The Millennial generation, however, was raised in an environment where their parents advocated for them every step of the way. And with being a generation of achievers, they may be hesitant to appear unintelligent in front of their peers or faculty, “thus hampering their participation” (Wilson, 2004). To combat this, instructors may have to provide opportunities for students to connect with other students in the classroom, as well as do more outreach to individual students outside of the classroom.

On Campus
We’ve recruited a different student. We’ve adjusted teaching styles and expanded access to faculty. But what about the rest of the campus? What tangible, responsive changes must take place to meet the needs of this generation? The opportunities to create out-of-class environments to help this generation succeed are nearly endless; some suggestions include:

- This is a service-oriented generation. Does your campus have an active AmeriCorp program? Do you allow students opportunities to volunteer during their winter, spring and summer breaks? Better yet, how are those volunteer activities tied to their particular major and/or degree requirements?

- This is a generation that has the largest amount of discretionary time than any generation prior. Fill it! Campuses must provide a wide array of diverse activities; however, activities must appeal to this generation’s unique personality: Instead of having a book signing on campus, host a chat group with the author; instead of bringing in the latest pop band to perform an on-campus concert, this generation’s more traditional mindset may prefer the return on corny “rah-rah” types of traditions (Howe and Strauss, 2003); and instead of the traditional “food, festivals, fashion and fun” activities that are intended to celebrate the diversity of those around us, this generation’s inherent appreciation for differences must be refocused to learn about the less tangible issues of of power, privilege and social class (Broido, 2004).

- Time to upgrade the traditional hallway-styled residence halls. Why? Because more than any generation prior, this generation is simply not used to sharing a room with others (in fact, one
survey found that over 75 percent of incoming freshman have never shared a room with someone, even a sibling) (Howe & Strauss, 2003). The most popular housing style is the shared apartment or mini-suite style housing that allows for shared group space, as well as individual private space.

- Change the traditional food service program and allow students access to meals at a wide range of times. Because this generation has always been on-the-go, they are not used to a sit-down meal at the same time every day. Rather, they may need more "grab and go" types of food available 24/7 to meet their busy schedules.

**24 x 7 Service**

This 24/7 generation also expects some services to be provided 24/7, so much so that one campus instituted a 24-hour beep-a-tutor program (Oblinger, 2003).

- The possibility of burnout for Millennial students is strong. Colleges and universities must prepare for this by expanding personal counseling services, offering time and stress management workshops (with the lecture piece online, and the tangible interactive elements in person, of course), providing specialized training for on-campus student staff and developing "stress-free 'chill zones' on campus—quiet out of the way places where students can gather to play high-tech video games, or low-tech ping pong, or just suit on cushy couches" to study in small groups (Howe and Strauss, 2003).

- On most campuses, the largest percentage of distance learners are those already taking classes on campus. While some might call this unconventional learning (prior generations referred to evening classes in the same way), Millennials view this as practical: they can learn the material in the fastest way possible, with the least amount of hassle. Moving services such as financial aid, registration and tuition payment online are expected, but what other services can also happen online for students? Examples include library services (checking out books, both on-campus books and those through interlibrary loan programs); buying textbooks, classroom supplies and campus apparel; academic advising; career services; and tutoring.

**Services for Parents**

"I heard a classic Millennial parents story about a kid who was being interviewed by an admissions officer. The admissions officer said something, and the kid pulled out a cell phone, dialed up his mom and said, ‘Here, can you repeat that to my mom?’" (Lowery, 2001).

Surprised? Remember, this generation trusts their parents to a very high degree. Parents aren’t used to just dropping off their student; instead, they are used to staying at the game and cheering them on. Obviously, this won’t work on a college campus (although many parents may try!), but whether campus administrators like it or not, parents will be part of campus life (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Many campuses provide parent orientation days that parallel the traditional new student orientation programs. However, how many campuses remain connected with the parent throughout the student’s stay on campus? Those that do are succeeding and have found a tremendous partnership for student support through the parent involvement. Examples of ongoing parent programs include monthly parent newsletters focusing on current student issues and deadlines; joint student-parent service programs during student breaks; parent pages on college Web sites; and online classes for parents that use many of the same topics and materials as used in their students’ classrooms.
In Conclusion

Each fall, Beloit College (Beloit, Wisconsin) publishes a “Mindset List,” a listing of activities and events unique to that year’s traditional-aged incoming freshman class. The list is very telling:

The people starting college this fall across the nation were born in 1987. For this generation,

- There have always been red M & Ms, and blue ones are not new. What do you mean there used to be beige ones?
- “The Tonight Show” has always been with Jay Leno.
- They have no idea that Americans were ever held hostage in Iran.
- Condoms have always been advertised on television.
- They never took a swim and thought about Jaws.
- Their lifetime has always included AIDS.
- American Motors has never existed.
- Garrison Keillor has always been live on public radio and Lawrence Welk has always been dead on public television (excerpts taken from various Beloit College Mindset Lists, Class of 2003 – 2009).

To be sure, there are endless changes campuses can implement to provide a healthy, productive learning environments for the Millennial Generation; the ideas expressed throughout this article are by no means complete. At the very least, campuses must make some changes in order to provide opportunities for the Millennials to succeed. After all, this is a very promising generation: they want to learn; they accept and appreciate diversity; they are team-oriented; they are confident in who they are; they believe in giving to others; and they believe that life is always improving. All of these characteristics set the landscape for a very positive future. However, educators should not pursue campus change just for the sake of changing, but rather to continue to build the next great generation. What will your campus do?

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About the Author
Alicia Moore is the Director of Admissions/Registrar at Central Oregon Community College. Her research around generational differences began with a journal article during her graduate program at Colorado State University, and expanded to include the Millennial generation for a presentation at the 2003 PACRAO annual conference. She has held various leadership positions within Oregon ACRAO and PACRAO, including OrACRAO President in 2003 – 04. She enjoys running, mountain biking, skiing and an occasional ride on a mechanical bull.
Association of American Colleges and Universities

It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success: Overview and Key Findings

A National Survey of Business and Non Profit Leaders

Especially since the recent economic downturn and in light of the increasingly competitive global economy, employers express concerns about whether the U.S. is producing enough college graduates and whether they have the skills, knowledge, and personal responsibility to contribute to a changing workplace and help companies and organizations succeed and grow. This report provides a detailed analysis of employers’ priorities for the kinds of learning today’s college students need to succeed in this innovation-fueled economy. It also reports on changes in educational and assessment practices that employers recommend.

This report is part of a series on surveys and focus groups that the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has commissioned since 2005, when it began its national initiative, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP). These employer and civic leader studies have informed the work of hundreds of colleges and universities and state systems as they seek to develop strong curricula and educational practices that will better prepare today’s students for success as workers and citizens in the 21st century.

Innovation a Priority

- Nearly all employers surveyed (95 percent) say they give hiring preference to college graduates with skills that will enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace.
- 92 percent agree that "innovation is essential" to their organization’s continued success.

Cross-Cutting Capacities vs. Choice of Undergraduate Major

- Nearly all those surveyed (93 percent) say that “a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate’s] undergraduate major.”
• More than 9 in 10 of those surveyed say it is important that those they hire demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity; intercultural skills; and the capacity for continued new learning.
• More than 75% of employers say they want more emphasis on 5 key areas including: critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.
• Employers endorse several educational practices as potentially helpful in preparing college students for workplace success. These include practices that require students to a) conduct research and use evidence-based analysis; b) gain in-depth knowledge in the major and analytic, problem solving and communication skills; and c) apply their learning in real-world settings.

Continued Importance of Liberal Education and the Liberal Arts

• The majority of employers agree that having both field-specific knowledge and skills and a broad range of skills and knowledge is most important for recent college graduates to achieve long-term career success. Few think that having field-specific knowledge and skills alone is what is most needed for individuals’ career success.
• 80 percent of employers agree that, regardless of their major, all college students should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences.
• When read a description of a 21st-century liberal education*, a large majority of employers recognize its importance; 74 percent would recommend this kind of education to a young person they know as the best way to prepare for success in today’s global economy.

Assessment of Preparation for Entry-Level Positions and for Advancement

• A majority of employers (56 percent) express satisfaction with the job colleges and universities are doing to prepare graduates for success in the workplace, but more than two in five indicate room for improvement.
• Two in three employers believe most college graduates have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in entry-level positions, but only 44 percent believe they have what is required for advancement and promotion to higher levels.

A Blended Model of Liberal and Applied Learning

• Across many areas tested, employers strongly endorse educational practices that involve students in active, effortful work—practices including collaborative problem-solving, internships, senior projects, and community engagements. Employers consistently rank outcomes and practices that involve application of skills over acquisition of discrete bodies of knowledge. Employers also strongly endorse practices that require students to demonstrate both acquisition of knowledge and its application.
E-portfolios and Partnerships to Ensure College Graduates’ Successful Transition to the Workplace

- In addition to a resume or college transcript, more than 4 in 5 employers say an electronic portfolio would be useful to them in ensuring that job applicants have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their company or organization.
- Business and non-profit leaders are highly interested in partnering with colleges and universities to provide more hands-on learning opportunities and to help college students successfully make the transition from college into the workplace.

*Definition of liberal education provided in this survey: “This approach to a college education provides both broad knowledge in a variety of areas of study and knowledge in a specific major or field of interest. It also helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as intellectual and practical skills that span all areas of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.*

Methodology

From January 9 to 13, 2013, Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey among 318 employers whose organizations have at least 25 employees and report that 25% or more of their new hires hold either an associate degree from a two-year college or a bachelor’s degree from a four-year college. Respondents are executives at private sector and nonprofit organizations, including owners, CEOs, presidents, C-suite level executives, and vice presidents.

GENERATION Z
MARKETING'S NEXT BIG AUDIENCE

Millennials (born 1976–1994) have enjoyed their recent time in the spotlight, as marketers evolved to reach the most researched generation in history. But it's time to get to know the next generation of buyers: Generation Z. They might not be buying your products yet, but their consumption patterns and behaviors will soon inspire big changes in your marketing.

Get ahead of the curve, and meet Generation Z.

MORE THAN A QUARTER
OF THE U.S. POPULATION BELONGS TO GEN Z

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PART 1
ENTERING “Z” TERRITORY

ADEPT RESEARCHERS
Gen Z knows how to self-educate and find information.

Growing up in a time of uncertainty (the post-9/11 world, economic recession) and changing norms (increased racial diversity, shifting gender roles), Gen Z is mature, self-directed, and resourceful.
33% Watch lessons online.
20% Read textbooks on tablets.
32% Work with classmates online.

52% Use YouTube or social media for typical research assignments.

+50% Increase since 2000 in youth population who identify as multiracial.

**Driven Workers**

A DIY culture and access to crowdsourcing shape Gen Z's goals for work and self-employment.

76% wish their hobbies would turn into full-time jobs (compared to 50% of millennials).

80% of high school students believe they are more driven than their peers.

72% of high school students want to start their own businesses someday.

**Do-Gooders**

Gen Z wants to make a difference in the world.

60% want their jobs to impact the world.

26% of 16-to-19-year-olds currently volunteer.

76% are concerned about humanity's impact on the planet.

Where is Gen Z?
FAST-MOVERS

The average American attention span is short, and Gen Z is no exception. Accustomed to auto-correct and emoticons, Gen Z prefers visuals to text.

8 SECONDS: AVERAGE AMERICAN'S ATTENTION SPAN

5: PREFERRED NUMBER OF SCREENS FOR MULTITASKING (TV, PHONE, LAPTOP, DESKTOP, IPOD, OR OTHER PORTABLE MUSIC PLAYER)

ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

FACEBOOK

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INSTAGRAM

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PRIVACY, PLEASE.

Gen Z prefers incognito media platforms (Snapchat, Secret, Whisper).

25% of 13- to 17-year-olds left Facebook in 2014.

DON'T MISTAKE THEM FOR MILLENNIALS

GENERATION Z

- 5 screens
- Communicate with images
- Create things
- Future-focused
- Realists
- Want to work for success

MILLENNIAL

- 2 screens
- Communicate with text
- Share things
- Focused on the present
- Optimists
- Want to be discovered

PART II:

REACHING GEN Z: THE FUTURE OF MARKETING

This generation knows the ins and outs of the internet, shops online, and is ambitious about work. Your future business depends on understanding how to market to them.

$16.90

41% of Gen Z spends 3+ hours a day on computers for non-school work-related activities.

Gen Z's average weekly allowance, collectively amounting to $44B a year.

**MARKETING BEYOND MILLENNIALS:**

**NO. 1** Communicate visually to a diverse audience across screens.

**NO. 2** Keep it short (think "snackable content").

**NO. 3** Feed curiosity. Tap into an entrepreneurial spirit.

**NO. 4** Empower users with control over preference settings.

**NO. 5** Connect viewers with collaboration and live-streaming technology.

**NO. 6** Inspire audiences with social causes to rally behind.

**NO. 7** Educate and build expertise.

**SOURCE:**
Meet Generation Z: Forget Everything You Learned About Millennials, by Sparks & Honey

**PHOTOGRAPHY FROM CREATIVE COMMONS:**
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Meet Generation Z

At a Glance
- Gen Zs were born in the early to mid 1990s though 2010.
- The Internet, technology, war, terrorism, the recession, and social media shape their lives.
- Gen Zs are tech savvy.
- Social media has connected them globally to their peers.
- The internet has connected them globally to knowledge.
- They are bright, and their IQ scores are higher than previous generations.
- They are flexible in nature and expect flexibility from institutions.
- They are accepting of diverse populations.

Social Media
- Gen Zs are always connected in a seamless cloud-based world of friends, data, and entertainment.
- Social media and instant contact is very important to them.
- Waiting for emails has never been part of the Gen Z world.
- Social media has made it easy for them to take up social causes. They look for careers that will help the world.
- Social media has led to a sense of social justice, especially when they are bombarded with images and news of war, recession, and climate change.
- They love to "crowd source" for solutions on social media.

Gadgets and Tools
- Gen Z has become a generation of content creators and producers with today's web apps and digital tools.
- They consume most of their media on mobile devices.
- Gen Zs prefer media that they can interact with as opposed to passive TV or print texts.
- They want gadgets that are multi-functional (take video, reach the internet, play music).
- They prefer websites, apps, and social media outlets that let multiple features like posting pictures, videos, text, comments, rate things, etc.

In the World of Commerce
- Gen Zs are not brand loyal. They will mix and match everything from clothes brands to philosophies.
- Gen Z teens and preteens have the biggest impact on the economy for that age group ever. Their social media "likes," product ratings, forum feedback has companies and marketers scrambling.
• They have spent more on the economy than any generation before them at their age. This is driven by gift cards like iTunes cards that are spent online.
• They look for alternative ways to enter their professions as college costs soar.
• Gen Zs are more concerned about purchasing environmentally safe products than the generations before them.

Socialization
• Gen Zs are always connected in a near seamless cloud-based world of friends, data, and entertainment.
• Gen Zs expect to be able to work, learn, and study wherever and whenever they want.
• Their day is filled with images and news from around the world, often describing terrorism, the world recession, and climate change.
• Due to the access to a constant barrage of global news, Gen Zs are more socially responsible than the generations before them.
• They will take their gaming lifestyle with them into adulthood.
• They are described as growing up too fast, and also not at all! They grow up fast because of their exposure to so much disturbing news, but they will remain gamers for a long time and want school and work to be fun.
• Gen Zs are closer to their parents than the previous generation because they watch the same TV shows, listen to the same music, and play the same video games.
• They have less need for direction because they have access to all the answers, especially for things they are passionate about.
• Parents tend to build too much easy-to-get self-esteem in their Gen Z kids.
• High self-esteem plus easy-to-use digital tools lead the Gen Zs to think they can do anything.
• Gen Zs completely take for granted the amount of data that they have access to and the speed in which they can access it. It's a natural part of their lives.
• Gen Zs are the most home-schooled generation in the modern public school era. Home schooling has made this group closer to their families.
• Gen Zs have become emotionally attached to their digital habits, which keep them online even longer. (Internet addiction will be classified as a disorder by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 2013.)

Future Professionals
• 65% of grade school students will work in jobs that don't exist today.
• The biggest concern that Gen Zs voice (nearly 80%) is if they will have a job when they graduate.
• Gen Zs want to enter the professional and technical ''idea economy'' while the largest growth is in the service economy.
• They will be a different kind of professional, not a 40-hour week cube worker, but freelance contractors who solves problems with a particular expertise.
• They are wary of long-term plans. They are not planning on 30 year careers at one place.
- Gen Zs have the personalities of workers who back their bosses, but they will look for jobs where bosses "have their backs."
- Flexibility is important to them. Employers worry that they are so flexible that retention may be an issue.
- Gen Zs will not be as loyal to companies as generations before them. They've witnessed the lack of corporate loyalty when their own parents and older siblings lost their jobs during the recession.
- They expect quick results (promotions), and will keep their resumes handy and up-to-date.
- The recession will have them competing for jobs at all levels with much older adults.
- The Internet economy, cloud tools, and crowd-sourced funding have allowed Gen Zs to become successful online entrepreneurs, from selling their original music, video, and text content to establishing startups like www.dispatch.io

The Generation Z Learner
- Because Gen Z is from the digital generation, many teachers incorrectly assume that ALL are "digital citizens" and are aware of online hazards, managing personal information online, guarding intellectual property, tech savvy, and so on.
- Their brains are wired for the fast delivery of content, data, and images from computers, videogames, and the Internet.
- Educators are increasingly bringing game design and game theory into education with continuous grading, continuous feedback, clear goals, rewards, challenges, etc.
- Gen Zs are driven by graphics in learning. The comprehend complex graphics better than previous generations.
- They very much dislike lecture-test classroom.
- Gen Zs are constant multi-taskers.
- They like to have have random access to information, love to explore using their own routes, need graphics, want it fun, and instant feedback.
- Their digital world can be customized. They want their education customized, too.
- Researchers says Gen Zs are smart kids and will be smart adults who can deal with a lot of data and make decisions.
- The classroom challenge is that students are digital and many teachers are analog.
- Old school teachers tend to not appreciate Gen Z digital skills or how their brains are wired.
- Old school teachers are not prepared to teach the "future content" that Gen Zs love. Future content includes software, hardware, digital, technological, social media.
- Teachers are at a disadvantage because they aren't as comfortable with technology as their students are.
- Access to so much data makes Gen Zs go for the quick answer rather than longer problem solving.
- Gen Zs often do not take the time to determine the reliability of information.
- They must be taught to discover, curate, and manage information. This will be essential in the "idea economy" of the knowledge era.
- Fluid Intelligence (problem solving) on IQ scores has been on the rise since the 90s. Game designers like to take credit because their multi-player, problem-based games went viral at the same time.
- Creating “cheats” and hacking games are a sign of brilliance in the Gen Z world. This doesn’t reconcile with their education world. Teachers don’t reward short cuts.
- Gen Zs become incredibly more knowledgeable about their passions than the generations before them because they have access to so much more information, and they can network with peers across the globe who have the same interests.
- 43% prefer the digital learning and find it easiest to learn from the Internet.
- Parents are taking more responsibility in their children’s education, and they want options and choices.
- The gap between what schools are teaching and the needed skills of the future is widening.
- The Gen Z world is increasing collaborative, and their school projects need to reflect that.
- Gen Z students need to be challenged with project-based, active learning to meet the demands of the future.

Dangers for the Gen Zs
- Recession, war, energy crisis, and climate change leave them in a world filled with uncertainties.
- Gen Zs are described as too dependent on technology.
- Cyber crimes like bullying, identity theft, intellectual property theft are a dangerous frontier that are still not policed or regulated very well.
- The cost of higher education is becoming prohibitive.
- Gen Zs need niche skills, but one-size-fits-all education is slow to catch up.
- Some Gen Zs are do NOT have access to the digital world. Socioeconomic position and ZIP code play a large part in this.
- Gen Zs face health problems associated with sedentary lifestyles.
- Other generations must deal with Gen Z’s’ changing (or lack of) interpersonal skills that are driven by advancing technologies.

Resources
The NMC Horizon Report: K-12 Edition

Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser

Getting Smart: How Digital Learning Is Changing the World by Tom Vander Ark

Gen Z: Digital in Their DNA from JWT Intelligence
Consumers of Tomorrow: Insights and Observations About Generation Z from Grail Research

Employees 3.0: Managing Generation Z from Edge Online

Seven Skills Needed for the Future featuring Dr. Tony Wagner

Gen Z & What It Means in Your Classroom by Sarah Fudin

Gen Z: The Age of the Curator featuring Katherine Savitt

Z Future Is Here! by Adam Renfro

The Children of Cyberspace: Old Fogies by Their 20s by Brad Stone

Generation Z: The Biggest Cheaters Since Homer by Adam Renfro

Internet 2011 in Numbers by Pingdom

A Day in the Internet Infographic

Children of the Tech Revolution by Lucinda Schmidt and Peter Hawkins

What Do Teens Think of Emails Infographic

Generation Text: Teens and Their Texting Habits Infographic

Teens Cruel World of Social Networking Infographic

How American Teens Communicate Infographic

Born Into Tech: Generation Z Infographic