Generation NeXt:
Today's Postmodern Student—Meeting, Teaching, and Serving

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Introduction

Generation NeXt, the current cohort of traditionally aged college students, brings educational and social characteristics to campus that are challenging educators. The product of a very different social reality than the members of the generational cohorts who predominate in college faculties and staff, their postmodern sensibilities and consumer approach to education may be a remarkably poor fit with what schools traditionally offer (Sacks 1996). This presentation overviews the characteristics of Generation NeXt and presents suggestions for helping its members be successful in postsecondary education.

Millennials or Generation NeXt?

As an introductory caveat, it should be stressed that making generalizations about generations is a slippery prospect at best, especially about a group as diverse as Generation NeXt. The concept of modal personality from sociology and anthropology has long been used to describe the central tendencies of the personality characteristics found in a given group or population (Howard 1996). If it is remembered that there is great variation within any group, and if the modal tendencies are not held to rigidly as stereotypes, some generalizations can help in understanding generational groups.

The description of generations has been popular in the academic and popular press, especially descriptions of the post-baby-boom generations—people generally identified as having been born after around 1965 (Howe and Strauss 1993, 2000, 2003; Lancaster and Stillman 2002; Levine and Cureton 1998; Losyk 1997; Martin and Tulgan 2001; Raines 1997; Sacks 1996; Smith and Cluman 1997; Strauss and Howe 1991; Tulgan 1997; Young 2003). While the traits of earlier generational cohorts are described more or less consistently, there is much disagreement about the status of and prospects for today's cohort of traditionally aged students.

Most active in the popular press, Neil Howe and William Strauss have named today's young people the "Millennials" (1993, 2003). They have called the Millennials "the next great generation," harkening back to the GI or "greatest generation" of 1901–1924 (Brokow 1998). However, many in higher education are not seeing the described characteristics in their students, especially not in significant numbers and not at less-restrictive, open-admission, and two-year schools. Among other characteristics, Millennials have been described by Howe and Strauss as

- "Extremely focused on grades and performance." Rather than being focused on grades and performance as Howe and Strauss describe, this may in fact be the least studious cohort of students ever (Astin et al. 2002). They are the most academically disengaged or even compliant college students, with all-time low measures for time spent studying and all-time high measures for boredom and tardiness, high school grade inflation not withstanding (Astin et al. 2002; Sax et al. 2002).

- "Respectful of norms and institutions." Rather than demonstrating good citizenship, as Howe and Strauss suggest, the incivility of today's young people, and of society in general, is legendary and well documented (Amada 1992; Morrissette 2001; Sacks 1996). Record lows for measures of civic activity point to poor citizenship, poor inculcation of socially considerate behavioral standards, and weak attachment to traditional social structures (Galston 2001).

- "Very busy in extracurricular activities" and "eager for community activities." While levels of activity are high for high school students, they drop precipitously when students enter college, indicating that high school students may be participating in programmed activities or meeting high school community service requirements.

- "More interested in math and science, and less interested in the humanities." Astin and others at the Higher Education Research Institute (2002) indicate that members of this cohort, the least academically engaged ever, are not particularly interested in math, science, or the humanities.

- "Demanding of a secure, regulated environment." Though students are stressed, face more environmental pressure, and feel overwhelmed at times (Kadison and DiGeronimo 2004), few in higher education would report that students are seeking more secure or regulated environments, especially as security measures and regulations might impact their personal behavior and individual choices.

Some Millennial characteristics described by Howe and Strauss might be both accurate and apparent for significant numbers of students, including being close to their parents, talented in technology, ethnically diverse, and majority female. These might have less overall educational impact than the bulleted points above, and they might not play out in the educational environment in ways that facilitate learning and developmental goals, as will be discussed later. In sum, this is not primarily a cohort of Millennials. The students who may look like Millennials in this current group of college students are not in the majority and are probably concentrated at elite institutions. The vast majority of students might be a less counterintuitive reflection of their influences and the more logical result of their socialization and postmodern times.

Postmodern Generations

Generations NeXt is the product of changing social influences that have been described as postmodern. Opinion and consumer interest have tended to have more impact on value formation and day-to-day decision making than traditional values, including religious values and science (Lyotard 1988; McAllister 1999; Sacks 1996; Taylor 2002). According to Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, "We live in the Postmodern world, where everything is possible and almost nothing is certain" (Havel 1992). Most higher education is based on modern values, with its roots in the Enlightenment and the values of optimism, discoverable truth, reason, and science. Postmodernism tends to be more pessimistic, sees "truth" as individually created, values opinion and preference over truth and experience over science or reason, and fosters a delegitimation of authority (Anderson 1990; Lyotard 1988; Sacks 1996).

One profound cultural change has been in the structure of the family. As family structure changed, so did socialization patterns, agents of socialization, and interpersonal bonding dynamics. Where 75 percent of families in the 1960s looked like the *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* families of working father, stay-at-home mom, and at least one child, by 1997 only three in a hundred families fit that picture (Raines 1997). That is the greatest change in the family since the Industrial Revolution, when fathers left the farm to work in industry. The great out-migration of mothers into the workforce and the escalation in divorce rates have led these children to have historically unique formative experiences, at least for the United States. The rise of day care made children consumers at a very early age, especially children in increasingly prevalent single-parent families. Day care subjects children to as many socialization, parenting, or supervision models as there are caretakers. With day care staff among the least trained and lowest paid workers in our society, socialization for and enculturation of these children has been uneven at best. Many were latchkey children, expected to fend for themselves after school from an early age, turning to television (which had become increasingly violent and sexual) for companionship and guidance. These multiple and fragmented socialization influences can be expected to have an impact on their expectations of higher education.

Generation NeXt Model Traits

Rather than expecting to see our entering students reflecting Howe and Strauss's glowing predictions of a new great generation, it might be more effective and practical to accept that Generation NeXt is the predictable product of our consumer-driven postmodern society, describe their model traits accordingly, and develop plans to work with them effectively. Given their influences, individual students and Generation NeXt as a cohort might be expected to show many of the following characteristics.

Consumer Orientation

Consumerism and freedom in personal choice have risen in importance since the end of World War II and might be considered among America's core values. While premodern influences of religion and traditional beliefs and the modern values of science and reason coexist in the culture with postmodern influences, there is ample evidence of the power of the postmodern, especially as manifested in extreme consumerism. In educational settings, as in every other area of life, the producer-to-consumer model has become most important, both in student goals and in the student's relationship with the school. As with most producer-to-consumer relationships today, students seek instant gratification, look for the best deal, want to negotiate, and might become litigious if disappointed. While many schools have adopted customer service models, there are problems with an "I paid tuition, now provide me with knowledge (or a grade)" approach (Raines 1997; Sacks 1996; Taylor 2002).

Entertainment Orientation

Starting with *Sesame Street*, Generation NeXt has been led to believe that education is supposed to be entertaining, easy, and fun. NeXters may, in fact, expect everything they do to be entertaining, easy, and fun. This does not mesh well with the studious behaviors and protracted effort required to achieve a meaningful postsecondary education, or the lecture-based instructional methods of many instructors. Many, if not most, educators, grounded in the scientific method of the modern era, are increasingly at a loss to engage postmodern students effectively. Instructors complain of expectations for good grades with little effort, expectations by students and administrators for grade inflation, lower academic standards, and lack of self-direction in learning (Levine and Cureton 1998; Sacks 1996).

Entitlement

It is fundamental to the consumer model that you get what you pay for. NeXter students might feel that they deserve to receive the product (course credit) or even a certain grade simply for having paid for a class. They might even expect to define the structure and nature of their educational experience for themselves—to the product delivered to them in their desired way. Record high levels of grade inflation in high schools exacerbate these expectations for academic success in the form of high grades with little academic effort.

Negotiation

Negotiation is another facet of the consumer orientation. If nothing is absolute in the postmodern world, then everything is negotiable. Starting with recruitment, when tuition is negotiated through aid and scholarship packages, students come to expect that they will be able to bargain in academics, conduct, and finances. Many students view the syllabus much like the sticker price on a new car. The syllabus may not represent a contract but a starting place for bargaining academic expectations. Ironically, this seems most prevalent in upper-level and graduate students, whom we hope would have been enculturated to academic expectations.

Value-Free

In our postmodern culture, the traditional models of premodern religion and modern science/reason must compete with postmodern consumerism/entertainment and hedonism/immediate needs gratification on a playing field that is level at best. In fact, today's young people might be tolerant of everything except people who believe in the hegemony of their chosen model. This is especially problematic for premodern religion and for academic moderns who promote science and reason. NeXters' freedom from guilt-based bonds might be liberating, but it might also make it difficult for young people to evaluate the propriety or impacts of their behavior on themselves and others. It might be noted that, especially post–September 11, some students seem to be seeking more conservative values models.

Instant Gratification

Our postmodern culture tends to place great importance on personal needs. If you feel a need, you ought to meet it, and the environment should make needs-meeting opportunities available. Young people see many daily examples of and encouragement for the immediate gratification of needs. There is very little perceived value in the traditional value of delay of gratification. This is especially problematic given the protracted effort required to obtain a degree. Poor inculcation of the kinds of social values that encourage a delay of gratification by many NeXters, and certainly by many of their role models, means that there may be fewer limits on the needs they gratify and how they meet those needs.

Short Event Horizon

Related to the instant gratification orientation, many in generation NeXt have notoriously poor critical-thinking, problem-solving, and long-term planning skills. If instant gratification represents a lack of behavioral moderation based on premodern values, short event horizon might be viewed as the failure to be fully inculcated into the modern values of reason, logic, and planning.

Adaptability and Pragmatism

Having learned to meet the varied expectations of many caretakers from a very early age, and having been introduced to so many different lifestyles and choices through the media and multicultural society, Generation NeXt is adept at adjusting to various situations and expectations. With less traditional ideology, either internalized or apparently shared in the culture, they might also be more open and pragmatic in their problem solving, doing whatever works in each situation.

Excellence

Howe and Strauss (2003) describe these students' experience of being "special"; a sense that they are vital to the nation as a group and to their parents' sense of purpose in life as individuals. While the parent issues might be accurate, the sense of being a vital group is a more questionable assertion. Many, if not most, might see themselves as special stars. They have played on teams and in leagues where everyone gets a trophy, even the same size trophy. Adults referencing one child as being "better" or more talented than another at anything, or making any value-based differentiation, might be frowned upon as being judgmental and not recognizing each child's unique gifts. Elementary and secondary schools find themselves valuing effort over excellence in an effort to promote self-esteem and initiative. High school grade inflation in the face of low academic achievement leads many students to come to college expecting academic success with little effort. Many experience culture shock when faced with the academic expectations and challenges of college. Some colleges, including the famous effort at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, are experimenting with grading students' effort as well as academic achievement.

Self-Interested

Many of today's students expect to take care of themselves, having done so in day care from an early age, and so look independent and self-interested. Though their occasionally demanding behavior might look dependent, they are actually assertively meeting their own needs by utilizing available resources. Many have been intrusively taken care of by parents, which also leads to a high level of self-interest and self-importance.

Skepticism

Many factors have contributed to a delegitimation of authority and traditional sources of knowledge, a core feature of postmodernism (Lyotard 1988). This leads students to question the veracity of information they are given and to place greater importance on subjective and personal experience, obviously problematic in higher education that remains largely didactic and content-based.

Cynicism

For many Americans, trust in the social institutions of government, the media, religion, and business/economy are at an all-time low, and many from Generation NeXt view these institutions as corrupt and untrustworthy (Galston 2001; McAllister 1999). Well-publicized lying governmental officials, reporters who make up stories, pedophile priests, and corrupt business executives support the assumption that people say and do whatever furthers their own agendas, regardless of the consequences to others. Right and wrong seem less important than the ability to spin the message or impose an agenda on others. Legitimate questions might be, why should they trust higher education when no other institution has proven trustworthy, and how can higher education earn student trust?

Safety Issues

Generation NeXt has learned that the world is a dangerous place filled with students who shoot other students and teachers, high-profile pedophiles, child kidnappers, terrorists, and even violent and murderous parents. Protective and overprotective parents, as well as in-school programs, have taught children to be wary and cautious for their own protection. There is also evidence of increases in bullying and hazing from peers. We can not assume that these students will automatically view the campus as a safe place nor, unfortunately, that they will take responsibility for their own safety.

Stressed

NeXters may mask it, but they tend to be a stressed cohort, partially as a natural consequence of these safety issues. The pressures on today's students of work, money, and debt as well as the academic stressors of college can become overwhelming. The vast majority of college students report having felt overwhelmed (Kadison and DiGeronimo 2004). It could easily be argued that few young people today have adequate skills or sufficient links to the traditional sources of social institutional refuge (peers, family, neighborhood, church) to handle the stressful expectations placed on them.

Civility and Caring Issues

Many of today's young people, like society in general, are famously uncivil. Incivility is frequently rewarded, while civility is not—the "squeaky wheel" motif. In contrast to the serious Greatest and Silent generations and emotive boomers, these young people may believe that it is not cool to look like you care, and they have been described as aggressively unsentimental. They may appear emotionally repressed, especially as compared to other generational cohorts, and difficult to engage.

Intellectually Disengaged

As discussed earlier, this may be the least studious cohort of students ever. They are the most academically disengaged or even compliant college students with all-time low measures for time spent studying and all-time high measures for boredom and tardiness. Knowledge is not major goal for many students, and information that directly relates to their earning goals is seen as the only thing worth learning. This is particularly troubling for faculty in general education core classes, especially the humanities and core algebra and science. This is certainly a generation with much more information available, but woefully little ability to separate the meaningful from the meaningless. They do show a distinct interest in exactly what they will be graded on and what will be necessary to achieve their specific grade goals.

Reduced Self-Efficacy

Their worlds are, and have always been, so complex, information-rich, and demanding that many have opted for a willful naiveté, accepting that they can not know all they need to know or to meaningfully control their lives. Many seem to believe that fate or coincidence has more impact on their lives than their own efforts so appear disengaged. Neither naiveté or a belief in luck is a positive contributor to academic success.

Selective Risk Taking

The combination of NeXters' short event horizons, many extreme models for everything from sports to sexuality, and lack of traditional internalized or social limits is a formula for risk taking and "bad" choices; from ski acrobatics to facial tattoos. Actually, fear might be interpreted by NeXters not as a warning of danger, but as a sign to move forward and through. Ironically, they do not seem particularly adventurous academically and prefer to work "in the box."

Relationships

Given their experience with the impermanence of and lack of traditional definitions of many of their formative relationships, it is not surprising that many NeXters show much relationship experimentation. Hazing and bullying can make their peer groups less-than-safe refuges, so some may resort to more manageable online and virtual relationships. Combined with their interest in immediate gratification and consumerism, they might have difficulty with long-term intimacy development.

Parent Issues

If one characteristic seems to separate Generation NeXt from the previous Generation X, it is increases in parental involvement. Parents are more involved and are "doing for" their children like never before. The "helicopter parent" makes application, negotiates scholarships, helps with registration, and intervenes throughout the educational process. A grossly oversimplified explanation for this is that Generation X was the "baby bust," when having children was a low priority for many adults who were still trying to find and develop themselves, while generation NeXt is the "baby boom echo" of wanted, precious children of boomers and Xers who see their children as their greatest achievement and as prized possessions. This parental hovering tends to run through the competence continuum, from parents with children who need lots of help to the parents of the highest-achieving students who are making sure their kids get the best opportunities. It raises questions about who we are serving, since many parents have no qualms about calling the president directly if their consumer expectations are not met, and our FERPA obligations.

Diversity Issues

NeXters tend to be more comfortable with cultural, racial, and sexual orientation diversity than any other generational cohort, and they are a more diverse group themselves. However, while stratification based on race or ethnicity may be waning, separation of the classes may be increasing.

Technoliterate

As a generation wired since birth, NeXters tend to be very comfortable with technology, but impatient with a lack of technological sophistication in others. Instructors, service areas, and campuses that do not keep up can expect to have problems meeting student expectations for techno-currency and access.

Postmodern Education for Generation NeXt

For educational and service delivery systems to be effective, especially with Generation NeXt, they will need to recognize and respond to a variety of influences and student characteristics outside the preparation and experience of many educators. Academics, especially in public institutions, tend to be rooted in the modem and based on science as a method for uncovering and demonstrating "truth" and as a body of knowledge in many fields as developed through its methods. The postmodern tendencies of students to reject both facts and authority might be in conflict with these basic premises of higher education, as well as of the expectations that students work for an education and good grades.

Pedagogy is the study of teaching methods and activities, especially those that contribute to improvement in student learning. Few graduate programs in fields outside education address pedagogy in meaningful ways, and they certainly don't prepare instructors to meet generation NeXt in the classroom; to hold their interest, or to provide the entertainment they expect (Sacks 1996). Rising incivility and the inability of many faculty members to manage uncivil behavior make many classrooms ineffective, chaotic, and often frightening (Amada 1992; Morrissette 2001).

What is required to effectively educate Generation NeXt with appreciation for their times and special needs might include the following.

- **Establish clear expectations, and communicate these expectations early and often.** Generation NeXt has been required to adapt to a wide variety of circumstances and environments. Many, if not most, of these environments have not provided clear expectations for desired outcomes or behavioral expectations. Their adaptability might be one of their greatest strengths. The goal on campus might be to exploit the adaptability of Generation NeXt by giving its members clear expectations to adapt to. Increasing consistency across the campus will also increase effectiveness, as will engaging students in the establishment of community standards and expectations.

- **Be consistent.** Whether the expectations are for class attendance and timeliness, or for the quality of written work, good instructors, like good parents, will communicate and hold students to consistent behavioral expectations. Increasing consistency across the campus will also increase effectiveness, as will engaging students in the establishment of community standards and expectations. Campus rules and regulations should be clear and universally enforced. If one part of the code of conduct is not enforced, NeXters will recognize the capriciousness in the code and may well expect the other parts to be ignored or negotiable as well.

- **Articulate all desired outcomes.** Learning outcomes for students, beyond grade attainment, should be clearly and operationally stated. Outcomes should relate to student competencies and change. If colleges are interested in developing behavioral, personal, community, and citizenship competencies, as well as academic competencies, these should be spelled out and quantified with codes of conduct and transcripting of community service, student leadership, and civic activities.

- **Develop meaningful citizenship and character development goals and activities.** Many schools, especially public colleges and universities, fail to adequately articulate meaningful personal, community, citizenship, or character development goals for students beyond general notions in the mission statements or rules for conduct in the student handbook. In a culture that frequently rewards incivility over civility, it is increasingly difficult to relate student behavior, especially acting out or academic dishonesty, to any larger system of morality past the school's internal policy. Even with the separation of church and state, it would seem possible to agree on standards of civic behavior that would undergird school's rules and codes and so increase students' personal and civic development. If the modern model of agreeing on a shared set of social values, like civility and appreciation for diversity, can't be applied, then a postmodern model of helping students discover and select values for themselves might be adopted.

- **Stress the role of the scientific method in understanding, as well as the potential abuses of science and data.** If science is to be viewed realistically as a set of tools for understanding, the limitations and need to critically examine data must be stressed, along with traditional education about the scientific method. For this very subjectively oriented group, the methods and importance of structured problem solving must be stressed.

- **Move to a learning-centered academic paradigm.** Much has been written about maximizing undergraduate learning and developing learning-centered environments and experiences (Astin 1993; Chickering and Reiser 1993; Fink 2003; O'Banion 1999; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991). In spite of this vast literature on the value of learning-centered models over teaching-centered models, many schools continue to treat teaching as the constant and learning as the variable, rather the focusing on student learning outcomes and exploring the most appropriate instructional method to reach these goals. The basic learning principles of a focus on reaching student learning outcomes instead of a focus on teaching activities, offering a variety of learning options, a focus on objectively quantifying student change, and helping students establish meaning for learning (the "whys") should be applied to all educational activities. Active learning methods mesh especially well with the importance of subjective experience to Generation NeXt. These students are less likely to believe or appreciate if told, so they might better be served by being helped to discover for themselves (to paraphrase Galileo).

- **Use active and creative methods to facilitate significant learning experiences.** Generation NeXt has little patience for educational methods it sees as outdated, such as unidirectional lecture to rows of passive listeners. Most graduate programs, while providing excellent foundations in a discipline's knowledge and theory, do little to prepare graduates in methods of effective pedagogy. Faculty development in active methods for creating significant learning experiences is needed on all campuses for full-time and part-time instructors (Fink 2003).

- **Teach "up" educational taxonomies** (Bloom et al. 1956; Fink 2003). Generation NeXt is probably even less inspired than earlier cohorts of students by the expectation that they memorize and regurgitate unapplied knowledge-level factoids, and they may actively rebel against doing so. This is especially true in a wired age, when most "facts" are readily retrievable online from any cell phone. The ability to reason with abstractions and to enjoy high-level mental stimulation are learned skills that NeXter students may need help learning to appreciate. Unfortunately, many educational and some accountability efforts that rely on standardized tests tend to perpetuate low-level learning (Tagg, 2004). Incorporating facts into theory, applying theory to real life, and demonstrating the worth of information can contribute to student learning at process, not just content, levels, and can improve critical, creative, and practical thinking (Fink 2003).

- **Provide meaning through real-life application.** Each instructor must be challenged to articulate a rationale for the necessity of his or her subject based on some real-world application. Any topic, class, or field that cannot demonstrate its utility and meaning to each student will be suspect. "You have to know this because it will be on the test" or "you must take this class because it is part of the core" is guaranteed to discredit both the information and the instructor as it tends to show there is no other use for the information than to meet meaningless requirements, without concern or connection to student need.

- **Avoid the expectation of blind acceptance of academic authority.** For a cohort that so values subjective experience and is more likely to view a professor as a provider than as a expert, the "whys" for everything from test content and class assignments to fees and parking regulations must be articulated nondefensively. Faculty and staff perks, like preferential parking, will be especially suspect.

- **Maintain technological sophistication.** Hard-wired youth have little patience for educational methods they see as outdated, like unidirectional lectures to rows of passive listeners. It might be easy for these students to assume that an instructor who is not aware of modern technological trends might be equally unaware of current issues in his or her own field.

- **Expand the parameters for class projects from the traditional paper to other types of demonstrations of research and learning.** For this technologically advanced cohort, assignments should appreciate their current skills and abilities, rather than faculty preference for form and style. With respect for writing across the curriculum, expanded choices might increase student ownership of the processes and outcomes.

- **Offer many opportunities for interpersonal involvement.** These should include active interaction in classes, informal interaction with instructors available during regular office hours and at other campus locations, active and intrusive developmental advising, and an array of other student services, including active and involving clubs and organizations. Involvement increases students' connections to the campus and so their retention, learning, and development.

- **Appreciate diverse viewpoints.** Multicultural, paranormal/religious, and antique (even racist and sexist) perspectives must be given air space in classrooms to allow for each to be dispassionately examined for accuracy, veracity, and utility. Protective speech policies or the knee-jerk reactions by some boomer instructors of discredited or politically incorrect opinions does not promote this necessary analysis, which offers students tools to make their own evaluations in the future. Protective and safe speech policies can even make the "protected" parties feel patronized.

- **Increase flexibility in course schedules, semesters, and in entry and exit.** The old semester model has the power of decades of tradition and offers administrative convenience, but it might not best meet the needs of all students who are juggling other responsibilities and are learning at different paces. If all the course outcomes are truly important, then allowing students to exit before they have true mastery is counterintuitive, as is keeping students after they have demonstrated mastery.

- **Recognize trust and safety issues.** For any learning or development to take place, students need to feel that they are in a safe environment and in the care of trustworthy people, especially on residential campuses. Visitation rules in residence halls, campus events and visitors, and standards for appropriate behavior should be assessed with safety as a primary concern.

- **Moderate a customer-based service model.** Some of the quality service initiatives have helped shift the perspective from faculty and staff convenience to student service (Tschohl 1993). If a student customer model is adopted, it should be stressed that no rational customer expects to "get something for nothing" and that the customer is not always right.

- **Develop student services and programming based on institutional and student needs.** Residential faith-based colleges have different missions and so should have different services and programming than publicly funded and open-admission schools. All types of schools are struggling with the consumer-based issues of the postmodern student; from the most elite, whose students expect and demand levels of service commensurate with their qualifications and expenditures, to low-cost, open-admission community colleges, where education may be viewed as an entitlement. Schools must recognize the necessity of niche programming to meet the special needs of subgroups of students. Listening to students' requests for programs and services might lead to the most well-received programming.

- **Lighten up.** It is a difficult life for most NeXters, who frequently have numerous life issues and stressors, especially students who are dependent on financial aid, are working, and have families and other responsibilities. Statistically, student success is fragile at most schools, and a failure by instructors to appreciate other life priorities is an additional stressor. While stimulation and excitement might be appropriate in the classroom, the old fear-based learning model of "you had better learn this…or else" is rarely, if ever, called for.

- **Expect their best.** NeXters are adaptable and do have significant educational and social development needs. It is incumbent on us in higher education to engage them in ways that will significantly promote their development and meet these educational needs. College may be the last coordinated hope for the cohort of Generation NeXt to make significant personal development and to make plans for lifelong learning and a meaningful, contributing life.

Conclusion

Generation NeXt is coming to college with special expectations and needs, having been raised under unique conditions in these postmodern times. If its members are to successfully matriculate with sufficient intellectual and social skills to function in the workforce and in our increasingly complex society, we of the other generational cohorts must appreciate these special influences and needs and reexamine the climate, processes, and content of higher education to maximize their chances for success.

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