2005

Serving the Millennial Generation

Todd S. Voss
Indiana Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/acsd_growth

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/acsd_growth/vol5/iss5/12

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Association of Christians in Student Development at Pillars at Taylor University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development by an authorized editor of Pillars at Taylor University. For more information, please contact pillars@taylor.edu.
Serving the Millennial Generation

M. D. Coomes and R. DeBard

A Review Essay by Todd S. Voss, Ph.D.

Todd S. Voss Ph.D., is the Vice President for Student Development at Indiana Wesleyan University.

We have been waiting. Those of us in Student Development who have intently immersed ourselves in the Millennial Generation research (and warnings) of Schneider and Stevenson (1999), Martin (2001), Lancaster (2002), Sax (2003) and Howe and Strauss (1991, 2000, 2003) over the past several years have experienced the void between research and thoughtful analysis, between explanation and application. We have been waiting with others, who for the purposes of practicality have been holding out for a “three hour tour” of this generation now entering the gates of higher education. But now the waiting may be over. Thanks to the contributions of a variety of authors, “New Directions for Student Services” (2004) has come to the rescue presenting seven brief but substantive chapters that offer more than the previous “analysis” approach to serving this exciting generation.

Before declaring this the Holy Grail however, three points of caution are suggested at the outset: While the editors of this series, Michael Coomes and Robert DeBard, effectively weave together several practical components of serving this new generation, it should be noted that six of the seven chapter authors hail from the same Midwest public institution. Consequently, the reader needs to realize the depth of the ideas expressed. Secondly, since there is admittedly a dearth of research regarding Millennials, Howe and Strauss are referenced ad nauseum throughout this series. Finally, it is important to note that the entire work is only ninety-nine pages, hence the reader looking for richer insight into its demise, training our replacements, and setting the course for the future of higher education.

We have been waiting. Those of us in Student Development who have intently immersed ourselves in the Millennial Generation research (and warnings) of Schneider and Stevenson (1999), Martin (2001), Lancaster (2002), Sax (2003) and Howe and Strauss (1991, 2000, 2003) over the past several years have experienced the void between research and thoughtful analysis, between explanation and application. We have been waiting with others, who for the purposes of practicality have been holding out for a “three hour tour” of this generation now entering the gates of higher education. But now the waiting may be over. Thanks to the contributions of a variety of authors, “New Directions for Student Services” (2004) has come to the rescue presenting seven brief but substantive chapters that offer more than the previous “analysis” approach to serving this exciting generation.

Before declaring this the Holy Grail however, three points of caution are suggested at the outset: While the editors of this series, Michael Coomes and Robert DeBard, effectively weave together several practical components of serving this new generation, it should be noted that six of the seven chapter authors hail from the same Midwest public institution. Consequently, the reader needs to realize the depth of the ideas expressed. Secondly, since there is admittedly a dearth of research regarding Millennials, Howe and Strauss are referenced ad nauseum throughout this series. Finally, it is important to note that the entire work is only ninety-nine pages, hence the reader looking for richer insight into its demise, training our replacements, and setting the course for the future of higher education.

The fourth chapter seamlessly moves the reader into a conversation about the current models of Student Development and the intriguing implications of the Millennial generation on these models. The author suggests several challenges this new generation may provide on commonly accepted assumptions regarding how students develop and mature and outlines their new requirement for connectedness and the ubiquitous parental influence perhaps impeding their growth. Chapter five drills deeper into the classroom learning experience as the author uses the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering and Gamson, 1987) as a foundation for enhancing student learning. Each of the seven principles are clearly discussed and then several applications regarding Millennials in the classroom are provided including dealing with high expectations for success (it is suggested that Millennials who have achieved academic success have done so with very little effort), parental involvement, technology, and disabilities (possibly the largest generation with identified learning issues). Chapter six initially discusses the changing demographics of Millennials including racial and ethnic diversity especially in the Asian and Hispanic student populations and the expected increase within the category of students struggling with sexual identity issues. The author of this chapter then carefully outlines the changes most campuses are already experiencing regarding student attitudes toward diversity and social issues such as the mixed messages of racism, gender and sexism, sexual orientation, political polarization and social justice choices. Implications for college administrators are then discussed to help institutions build on the strengths and challenges of this generation. Obviously, for those of us employed in Christian colleges, the implications and responses associated with diversity issues including sexual orientation will need additional campus culture research, alignment and development that goes beyond the scope of this book.

John Lowery connects the concepts together in the final chapter of “Serving the Millennial Generation” by employing the seven key characteristics previously suggested by Howe and Strauss (2000) to organize a brief discussion of fresh student affairs delivery systems. Helpful insights regarding parental involvement, gearing up for greater counseling center support, educating students and parents regarding appropriate avenues for resolving conflict, using the welcomed and expected advantages of technology and utilizing team approaches are a few of the best. One final observation from this author deserves additional attention. A side comment on page eighty-nine may provide significant hope for Christian colleges in particular. The author suggests a renewed interest in the concept of “in loco parentis” among the very parents who helped usher in its demise, and their students who are much more accepting of institutional involvement and direction. What this suggests is a greater increase in interest for Christian colleges among the Millennial generation and their parents who are seeking a stronger institutional mission and a more appropriately balanced campus.

The potential for positive transformation within colleges and universities in the next decade is truly amazing. Strauss suggests that if “done right, we could see a new golden age of campuses.” (in Lowery, 2001, p.11) But with that possibility, comes a great obligation: to deliver higher education in a way that not only meets the demands of this new generation of students, but one that understands how the resources, delivery methods, mission and spiritual development need to come together in new ways. The role of Christian colleges in this task has never been more acute. More than ever, we are training our replacements, and setting the course for the future of higher education.
References


Building Partnerships for Service-Learning

Barbara Jacoby and Associates

A Review Essay by Jeffrey P. Bouman, Ph.D.

Jeffrey P. Bouman Ph.D., is the Director of the Service-Learning Center at Calvin College.

In publishing their 2003 Building Partnerships for Service-Learning, Barbara Jacoby and Associates have produced a fitting follow up work to her 1996 Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices. In order for the pedagogy and philosophy of a meaningful service-learning program to work, a campus must carefully attend to its partnership connections, both internal and external. Building on her earlier case that service-learning as experiential education effectively promotes student learning and development by addressing human and community needs in a context of reflection and reciprocity, Jacoby adds to the formula the necessity of meaningful partnerships.

Borrowing from the health professions’ 2001 statement on partnership, Jacoby defines a partnership as “a close mutual cooperation between parties having common interests, responsibilities, privileges and power” (p. 7). More than simply an exchange of resources, a true partnership builds on a ‘partnership synergy’ to create something new that is beyond simply the sum of its parts. Staff and faculty on Christian college and university campuses would do well to ponder this notion of synergy, and ask how the Biblical imagery of a body with many parts might inform a less egocentric view of the world for institutions with a purportedly Christian bent. As in much of what is labeled “Christian” in contemporary American society, Christian higher education must continue to ask what defines an institution as such, and how the counter-cultural values of Christianity can inform a bureaucracy such as a college or university.

Practitioners and researchers at Christian colleges and universities have been surprisingly slow to engage in the rapidly expanding service-learning movement for a variety of reasons, not least of which are dominant perceptions regarding the limited good service-learning programs provide students and community. By containing the value of excellent service-learning pedagogy to student learning, student development, and civic renewal, Jacoby has left aside the larger benefits of enabling students to connect their intellectual passions, the skill of their hands, and their more comprehensive faith commitments in a unified loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength. What sets Christian colleges apart ought to be their insistence that their core mission amounts to nothing less than a total pursuit of biblical Shalom. Lest this high standard be misunderstood, I’ll quickly point out that Christian colleges and universities have a long way to go toward even adopting many available sound principles of service-learning and civic engagement from the larger higher education community, much less becoming leaders as institutions and individuals. While there is clearly much room for improvement, what better ground to stand on in approaching