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Introduction

A New Generation Goes to College

A new generational wave has been breaking across campuses in America.

Dating back to their first births in the early 1980s, you could see this Millennial Generation coming. Everywhere they've been, from bulging nurseries to the new "Baby on Board" minivans, from kindergarten to high school to college, they have changed the face of youth-and transformed every institution they've touched.

Since infancy, this generation has been the object of intense parental and societal attention, in forms as diverse as "zero tolerance" drug rules, a powerful school reform movement, and whole new areas of pro-child health, safety, and "values education" initiatives. Largely as a result of that attention, this generation is marked by character traits that separate it from Generation X. Many of these traits are extremely positive. These young people are confident and optimistic, they are team- and rule-oriented, and they work very hard. Rates of tobacco and alcohol use, violent crime, pregnancy, and suicide are all way down among today's teenagers, while SAT and ACT scores have been rising.

In the fall of 2000, the first Millennials came to college. College officials began noticing surprising new trends—from the frenetic competition over college admissions to the hovering "helicopter" moms to the many young people who are careful long-term planners to the rising media attention on all aspects of college life. The larger 1990's-born cohorts of this generation are now arriving on America's campuses, and will continue to transform the university world.

Colleges and universities that figure out this new generation, tailor tuition and budget decisions to their needs and tastes, and market intelligently to today's youth, will be able to "re-brand" their reputations, leapfrog rivals-and, perhaps, join the top echelons of academe. In this coming era of accountability, those that fail to do so could fall in reputation, or worse.

The key to getting Millennials right lies in their core traits.

Seven Core Traits

Every generation contains all kinds of people. But each generation has a persona, with core traits. Not all members of that generation will share those traits, and some

may personally resist them, but they will substantially define the world inhabited by every member of a generation.

The following are the seven core traits of the Millennial Generation:

Millennial Traits

| TRAIT | DESCRIPTION |
|----------------------|--|
| Special | From precious-baby movies of the mid-'80s to the media glare surrounding the high school Class of 2000, older generations have inculcated in Millennials the sense that they are, collectively, vital to the nation and to their parents' sense of purpose. |
| Sheltered | From the surge in child-safety rules and devices to the post-Columbine lockdown of public schools to the hotel-style security of today's college dorm rooms, Millennials have been the focus of the most sweeping youth protection movement in American history. |
| Confident | With high levels of trust and optimism—and a newly felt connection to parents and future—Millennials are equating good news for themselves with good news for their country. |
| Team-Oriented | From Barney and team sports to collaborative learning and community service, Millennials have developed strong team instincts and tight peer bonds. |
| Conventional | Taking pride in their improving behavior and comfortable with their parents' values, Millennials provide a modern twist to the traditional belief that social rules and standards can make life easier. |
| Pressured | Pushed to study hard, avoid personal risks, and take full advantage of the collective opportunities adults are offering them, Millennials feel a "trophy kid" pressure to excel. |
| Achieving | As accountability and higher school standards have risen to the top of America's political agenda, Millennials have become a generation focused on achievement—and are on track to becoming the smartest, best-educated young adults in U.S. history. |

The Parent Transition: From Boom to X

The arrival of Millennials on campus has been marked by “helicopter parents”—Boomer parents of Millennials who are sometimes helpful, sometimes annoying as they hover. Gone are the days of students and professors sequestered in ivy-covered buildings while parents attend to their own lives. Today's protective, ultra-attached parents make their presence and their agendas felt in every corner of college life.

The rise of helicopter parents came as a surprise to college officials earlier this decade. However, the trend was foreseeable to anyone who had been paying attention to trends among parents of preschoolers in the '80s, elementary students in the early '90s, and high schoolers in the late '90s.

Today another breaking wave is approaching: Gen-X “stealth-fighter” parents—even more protective, digitally keyed-in for constant surveillance, sharp eyes on the target, and ready to strike at a moment’s notice to defend their children’s interests.

Gen Xers (born 1961 to 1981) will bring a range of new tactics to college parenting. Even more fiercely protective than Boomers, they will apply to every facet of college life the same rigorous evaluation that they have applied to K-12 education, putting new emphasis on standards, data, transparency, real-time results, accountability, and cash value.

Between now and 2012, Gen-X parents will grow from a minority to a majority of collegiate parents. In time, they are likely to transform everything from the way classes are taught to the way college presidents think about the value of higher education.

The Chartwells and Datatel 2006 Surveys

In *Millennials Go to College Second Edition*, Neil Howe and William Strauss explain the Millennial trends at today’s colleges, how these trends are intensifying as the later-born members generation begin entering college, and the upcoming shift from Boomer to Gen-X collegiate parents. The book discusses how and why these generational changes occur, their implications for today’s colleges, and what colleges can do to prepare.

When Strauss and Howe first began researching parent and student attitudes by generation, they found very little data on this topic. While a great deal of data already exists on today’s children and young adults, the authors found that a number of important topics have not been addressed—leaving many misconceptions about today’s youth and their attitudes toward college.

To correct this, LifeCourse Associates partnered with Crux Research to compile original research that complements the authors’ prior work. The resulting surveys inquire into the generational traits of Millennial collegians—what differentiates them from older generations at that age, what they want in a college, and how they feel about the cost of college and student debt. The surveys explore how today’s parents view their relationship with their collegiate children and spotlight the breaking wave of Gen-X parents soon to arrive in full force on America’s campuses.

This report provides the detailed findings of these polls, along with commentary from Howe and Strauss on the implications of these findings.