

# ***The Toolbox***

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A Teaching and Learning Resource for the Faculty of Indiana Wesleyan University



## **Motivating Millennial Learners**

**W**ho are the “millennial” learners and what can I do as a teacher to help motivate them to learn? These are the questions we will attempt to answer in this edition of *The Toolbox*. Our focus will be directed toward identifying the learning characteristics of millennial students and how these may be translated into effective classroom motivational strategies.

In the classic book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (Howe & Strauss, 2000), the name “millennials” was coined as the result of a survey conducted by ABC News to refer to individuals born in or after 1982. Many articles and publications since that survey have attempted to describe and depict the learning and behavioral characteristics of what Howe and Strauss call “the next great generation.” According to Claire Raines Associates (see the website: <http://www.generationsatwork.com>), Millennials can be described as:

- **Confident** because they have been raised by parents who strongly believe in the importance of self-esteem,
- **Hopeful** as they are often optimistic and practical,
- **Goal and achievement oriented**,
- **Civic-minded** in thinking about the greater good, and
- **Inclusive** as they prefer to work in teams.

These observations are generalized considerations. They can also serve, however, as a starting point for identifying the best ways to design and implement effective classroom motivational strategies.

**“As a group, Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse.... Over the next decade, the Millennial Generation will entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged — with potentially seismic consequences for America.”**

(Howe & Strauss, 2000, p.4)



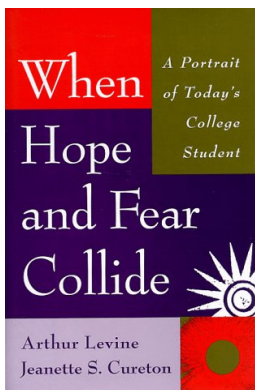
# Strategies for Motivating Millennials

**R** **relevant:** One of the key components of working effectively with millennial learners is to consistently create a bridge between instructional content and their lives and experiences — now and in the future. This provision can be met by sharing your own life experiences (particularly as it relates to workplace/career applications) and through the use of guest speakers who are actively working in your field of study.

**R** **relational** learning occurs from two perspectives: 1) The instructor's efforts to demonstrate care and establish relationships with students, and 2) Opportunities to learn and share with one another. Millennial learners love to learn in groups. Discussions, problem solving tasks, creative endeavors — these are the types of classroom experiences that appeal to the millennial learner. Take full advantage of these important advantages.

**R** **real:** Opportunities to move outside the classroom, work in real community settings, and do good for others are learning experiences that are valued by millennials. For the university teacher, this consideration can take the form of internships, community service projects, practicums, and field experiences. This group of learners love to see the real results of their efforts in the lives of people and the communities in which they live.

**R** **resourceful:** Millennials appreciate knowing that their teachers care enough to go the extra mile in regard to lesson preparation, the use of creative learning techniques, demonstrated awareness of the most current developments and research, and a high level of enthusiasm and energy about the subject matter.



“Naming generations is something we like to do in the United States. However, ‘generation’ is a rather slippery term and tends to be defined in two different ways. One is chronological, the group of people born at a common moment in time. The second is experiential, the group of people who live through common momentous events, including wars, political reigns, technological advances, disasters, and economic shifts.” (Levine & Cureton, 1998, p.2)

What are the events and experiences that bind together the group of students we have come to be known as “millennials?”

## Keeping Up With the Life Experiences of Your Students

On an annual basis, Beloit College publishes a “Mindset List” that provides a perspective on the life experiences of incoming first-year students. Check out the most recent mindset of your students at : <http://www.beloit.edu/mindset/> This data provides an interesting perspective on the chronological and experiential backgrounds of our students.



## The ToolBox

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