Teaching the millennial student redux: A discussion on connecting with generation me

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Session 7 **2:00 PM - 3:15 PM** **Abstract 1**

A 2006 NASSM roundtable focused on the Millennial sport management student by sharing pedagogical ideas to better engage students in their own learning. That session highlighted classroom, on-line, and field-based teaching, and outlined active learning strategies as well as engagement opportunities that had been successful in motivating Millennial-era students (1982-2002). To complement that session on pedagogical designs, this 2008 NASSM roundtable centers on the unique characteristics of the Millennials themselves by addressing techniques for connecting with current students, all of who are part of what the Time Magazine Person of the Year: You! (2006) issue called the "generation weaned on self-esteem."

As students, the Millennials are a bimodal cohort -- a unique group with two distinct clusters. Educators have found that one cluster of Millennial students exhibits confidence, feels pressured to perform well in both academic and life situations, remains focused on achievement, and actively participates in campus and community service (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000). However, many college faculty are discouraged with the other cluster of Millennial students who view themselves as consumers rather than learners (Hersh & Merrow, 2005), yet believe they can be or do anything if they set their minds to it (Twenge, 2006). Professors at every level of higher education are finding that many of their Millennial-era students do not read assignments (Declining By Degrees, 2005), have a passion for partying and favor campus culture to academics (Hersh & Merrow, 2005), construct class schedules based on meeting times rather than requisites (Nathan, 2005), expect lavish amounts of praise (Zaslow, 2007), and solicit special teaching and advising services that have, to date, not been part of the traditional college professor's purview (Hersh & Merrow, 2005). Furthermore, Millennial students who have achieved academic success in high school with relatively little effort may have unrealistic expectations about what is necessary to be academically successful in college (Sax, 2003). In addition, students' confidence regarding the Internet can be problematic in the academic setting, leading them to believe that Web-based sources (e.g., Wikipedia, Google) are trustworthy. Further, their dependence on connected technologies (e.g., computers, cell phones, pagers, instant messaging) engenders an expectation of "instant feedback" and some researchers have expressed concern that this dependence on communication technologies may have shortened their collective attention span (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007).

Finally, more and more college professors must also deal with Millennial parents, who assume participatory roles in their children's educational pursuits (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Murray, 1997). Viewed as overprotective advocates of their children's success, parents of Millennials have been characterized as "helicopter parents" (Strauss, 2006) who hover over their trophy children and swoop in to manage problems, "Black Hawk Helicopter parents" (Colavecchio-Van Sickler, 2006) who either check-over or actually complete students' coursework for them, or "kamikaze parents" (Shellenbarger, 2006) who conquer the collegiate campus then move with their graduates into first-time job negotiations. Parental involvement is so pervasive on college campuses that the College Board developed an essay entitled How Not To Be A Helicopter Parent (2007), and makes it available on their Web site at no cost.

This roundtable will focus at length on the characteristics of Millennial sport management students, and address ways to connect with them within academe. For instance, Beck & Wade (2004) suggest that Millennial students prefer (a) informal instruction, (b) applied rather than conceptual assignments; (c) small amounts of information that they can process at their own pace, (d) trial and error academic exercises that allow them to take risks in a safe environment, (e) group work that they can complete with peer assistance in an authority-free environment, and (f) unlimited opportunities to re-do their work. Bain's (2004) longitudinal study of college teachers indicated that successful professors have a great command of their subject matter, and they use their expertise to challenge and engage students in order to pique students' passions. Audience members are encouraged to contribute their own narratives on post-modern sport management students -- and parents -- and further suggest ways to connect with students in the classroom, field, and on-line settings while upholding strong academic standards and preserving program quality.