

Preface to the New Edition

Four years have elapsed since the publication of the First Edition of *Millennials Go to College*. In the 2002–03 academic year, colleges were startled by the arrival of a new generation of Millennials. Now, four years later, colleges are more likely to regard it as accomplished fact. Earlier this decade, so much was still breaking news—the “helicopter” moms, the over-programmed kids, the rising achievement of young women, the frenetic competition over college admissions, the vast numbers of young people who are careful and long-term planners, the rising media attention on all aspects of college life. Now, these have become familiar stories.

The greatest change over the last four years has been the intensification of the trends we identified in the First Edition, as later-born Millennial cohorts have been entering college. Back in 1990, when we published *Generations*, we envisioned that the Millennials would be a generation of trends that would accentuate with each passing cohort, and that the direction of these trends would often be the opposite of paths set by Boomers through the ‘60s and ‘70s. This is indeed occurring. It’s nothing new, in the cycle of generations.

Meanwhile, new issues have emerged, from the ongoing rise of tuition and student borrowing to worries over male retention rates to the growing class divide between students who are affluent and those who are not to new parent demands for standards and accountability. College officials are noting the unprecedented influence of published institutional rankings and a rising anxiety about institutional reputation. The media attention that has followed Millennials up the age ladder is now focusing on recent graduates and entrants into the work force.

In many ways, these new issues reflect the arrival on campus of Millennials born closer to the midpoint of their generation. They also reflect shifts in parental cohorts. In the late '90s, many of the parents of collegians had themselves been students in the 1960s. Time has marched on, and admissions officials are starting to see prospective students arriving for campus visits accompanied by parents who had been in college in the 1980s: Generation Xers. Over the next several years, these early-wave Gen Xers will become a familiar parental fixture on campus.

The arrival of this new generation of parents will have substantial—and broadly foreseeable—consequences for higher education. The calls for standards, data, accountability, and personalized service will increase. Brand position, reputation, and the workplace performance of an institution's recent graduates will come under increased scrutiny. The parental attitudes and political impetus that brought the *No Child Left Behind* law to K-12 will make itself felt in academe. Some will applaud and embrace these trends and others will denounce and resist them—but they will become a fact of life for the nation's colleges and graduate schools as the '90s-born Millennials, and their Gen-X parents, pass through higher education.

Colleges are familiar with what we described in the First Edition as the Boomer “helicopter” parent. Coming soon is the era of the Gen-X “stealth fighter” parent, who will view each college's brand in terms of personal needs, family budgets, and cash value performance. In the new “What Comes Next” section that we prepared for this edition, we offer a number of suggestions for how colleges can deal not only with new parental trends, but with postgraduate job placements, graduate schools, alumni relations, and other trends we anticipate through the 2010s.

Four years ago, when we first inquired into parent and student attitudes by generation, we found very little data on these topics. To correct this, we joined with Crux Research and two generous sponsors—Chartwells Higher Education Dining Services and Datatel Incorporated—to conduct an extensive survey of generational relationships on today's campuses. This survey has generated what many colleges may consider to be very significant findings, useful for recruitment, admissions, financial aid, curricula, housing and food, career

counseling, and other student services. We present summary findings of the Chartwells 2006 College Student Survey and the Datatel 2006 College Parent Survey in this edition. Information about how to acquire the full research report is available at *www.lifecourse.com*. In addition to the general research report, each of the study's sponsors provided Crux Research with a set of questions specific to their respective fields. More information on the analysis of these questions may be obtained from the contacts listed at that website.

In preparing this expanded Second Edition, we were immensely assisted by a number of very able and dedicated people. We thank Jim Graham, for his cover design and book layout, making the book an enjoyable read; Victoria Hays, for her help with countless details that go into tasks like these; Rick Delano, for his marketing acumen; John Geraci and his associates at Crux Research, for their path-breaking data collection and analysis; and, especially, Reena Nadler, our writing assistant, who has done so much to make the new edition larger and better. A true Millennial, and a recent graduate of Swarthmore College, Reena has not only helped with lively prose, perceptive data analysis, and careful editing, but has also lent an authentic been-there-done-that perspective to most of the topics we address.

As Reena (and the many other recent college graduates with whom we have spoken) are quick to point out, their generation has already made its mark on America's campuses. Yet the lasting imprint is still to come. Colleges that try to "ride out" the trends of the Millennial era as though they were still in the 1990s will run the risk of damaging their brands to the point where their reputations may take decades to repair. Worse, they could provide a disservice to the young people they are dedicated to educating. Conversely, colleges that see what's coming, and plan accordingly, will have an extraordinary opportunity not only to bolster their reputation, but also to provide an education that will be worthwhile to students, to America, and to history.

Much is now at stake. Between now and 2025, the reputation of even the nation's most famous colleges, including the Ivies, will be more at risk and subject to rapid fluctuation than at any time in living memory.

Dramatic changes in collegiate reputations and rankings have occurred before in American history. Back in 1893, *Baedeker's Handbook to the United*

States, a guide for British travelers, included what may have been the first ranking of American Universities, based purely on public reputation. Among the nine “best-known” colleges of that era were Hamilton, Lafayette, and Miami of Ohio. Among the top ten colleges in the 2007 *U.S. News* rankings (actually eleven, because of a tie), only Williams, Amherst, and Wellesley were cited by Baedeker. The other eight were not. His list of “great technical schools” of the 1890s included Stevens Institute of Technology (Hoboken, N.J.) and Rose Polytechnic (now the Rose-Hulman Institute of Terre Haute, Indiana), but not Cal Tech. And which schools were said to have the best football teams? Yale, Harvard, and Princeton.

Times, and institutional rankings, have changed in the 114 years since Baedeker lent an ear to the academic gossip. The era around World War II altered reputations considerably—as did, to a lesser degree, the turbulent campus era of the Consciousness Revolution. Now the currents of generational change, combined with other factors, appear powerful enough to change those rankings again.

Over the next two decades, large currents of history could sweep across our nation and the world. As we have written in *The Fourth Turning*, the graver the national challenge in the years ahead, the sharper the national focus will become on the young women and men of the rising generation—and on the educators who serve them.

The next twenty years will not be easy times for the nation’s colleges and universities. The public and private priorities of higher education could come into sharp relief—and conflict. In writing this Second Edition, it is our hope that our readers will manage their institutions wisely, thereby enhancing their legacies while empowering the young. Thus can American higher education continue to serve as the next generational link spanning the past, present, and future of our civilization.

William Strauss

Neil Howe

January, 2007

Preface to the Original Edition

The Millennial Generation has long interested us for personal as well as professional reasons. We are each the parent of two, in both cases a boy and girl.

We've been studying their generation since the days of its first preschoolers, back in the middle 1980s. When we wrote *Generations* over a dozen years ago, we described how the children then entering elementary school rode "a powerful crest of protective concern," how they were seen as "precious" by Boomer parents who wielded a "perfectionist approach to child nurture" in an adult world that was "rediscovering an affection and sense of responsibility for other people's children."

In 1990, when most youth assessments were downbeat, even grim, we forecast that as these new children passed through adolescence, "substance abuse, crime, suicide, unwed pregnancy will all decline."

When these trends all came to pass, we were not surprised. There are good reasons, rooted in how they were raised and in the rhythms of history, for why this occurred.

Again and again over the centuries, in America and elsewhere, new generations arise that both correct the trends set in motion by their parents and fill the role being vacated by their grandparents. It is happening again. That's what these leading-edge Millennials are doing with (and to) a "Boomer Generation" in midlife and a "G.I. Generation" deep in elderhood.

Two years ago, when we published *Millennials Rising*, we chose as a subtitle "The Next Great Generation"-partly because, as a group, they exhibit qualities not generally seen in American youth since today's "senior citizens"-who, as collegians, were confident, optimistic, team oriented, rule following, and eager to achieve. And just as today's elder Americans did in their own

youth, Millennials are growing up seeing their needs and dreams climb to the top of the national agenda.

We wrote *Millennials Go to College* at the urging of many college administrators, deans, registrars, admissions officers, and faculty members who, after having read our books or heard our lectures, agreed with us that Millennials are in fact arriving-and have asked us what they should do.

In Part One, we summarize the basic facts about today's new collegiate generation. We explain its location in history in relation to older generations. We describe the seven core Millennial traits: *special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving*.

In Part Two, we explain what each of these traits means for colleges and universities-for recruiting and admissions, campus life, and the classroom-and what awaits in the years ahead, in career counseling, graduate school, the alumni ranks, and the world at large.

By necessity, we can only cover so much ground here. For readers who wish to learn more, we recommend *Millennials Rising* (2000), which we published just as the much-celebrated high school "Class of 2000" was entering college.

If you would like to learn more about our historical method, to see what we've written about Millennials in earlier years, or to pursue your own research on generational topics, please see *Generations* (1991) and *The Fourth Turning* (1997). To learn what we wrote about Gen Xers when they were collegians and young adults, please see *13th-Gen* (1993), which we published when today's 30-year-olds were graduating from college.

We invite readers with comments or questions to contact us at authors@lifecourse.com.

When you study the students who pass through educational institutions as a succession of generations, you notice how each generation trains the next in skills and values-and, in so doing, each makes a profound contribution to the ongoing march of civilization. From the time when Benjamin Franklin's generation taught Thomas Jefferson's, through the time when Woodrow Wilson's taught Franklin Roosevelt's, on to our own childhood, when the best and brightest Rosie the Riveters taught us, we can see how tightly the chain of human progress is tied to the teaching and learning of the arts and sciences.

The questions, “Why do we teach? What is education for?” are best answered when you view the current generation of students as future parents, scientists, generals, playwrights, leaders, artists, historians-and teachers. When we describe Millennials as a “next great generation,” we speak not just of their ancestry but also of their destiny.

Whatever that destiny may be, these young people will someday look back and thank you, their educators, for the gifts you gave them that made it possible.

Neil Howe

William Strauss

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