Short-form email: What Millennials Report

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What Millennials Report

As the school year begins, many of us, particularly those participating in First-Year Experiences, will be encountering students who are stepping onto a college campus for the first time. Common conceptions of today’s students are often negative (e.g., the Millennials are entitled consumers), though few studies have sought the perspectives of the students themselves. One exception is Bowen et al.’s “Listening to the Voices of Today’s Undergraduates: Implications for Teaching and Learning” (2011). After conducting a series of focus groups that asked undergraduates about their college learning experiences, the researchers found that, among other results, students:

- prefer to be immersed in hands-on, active, experiential learning
- value student-faculty interactions outside of formal class time
- learn how to take responsibility based upon their experiences during college

There are also various methods for instructors themselves to collect information about their students. Here are a few easy ideas from Angelo and Cross’s Classroom Assessment Techniques (1993):

- **Background Knowledge Probes**
  The instructor prepares a short, simple questionnaire for use at the beginning of a course, at the start of a new unit or lesson, or prior to introducing an important new topic in order to gauge students’ current knowledge about the subject.

- **One-Minute Papers**
  The instructor stops class a few minutes early and asks students to respond to some variation of the following two questions: “What was the most important thing you learned during this class?” and “What important question remains unanswered?” Students write their responses and hand them in to the instructor.

- **Classroom Opinion Polls**
  The instructor discovers students’ opinions about special or controversial issues by asking them to raise their hands or use classroom response systems like clickers to indicate their agreement or disagreement.

- **Teacher-Designed Feedback Forms**
  The instructor collects specific information about a classroom activity or teaching in general by preparing short, simple, course-specific evaluation forms for students to fill out. This option is especially popular at the mid-semester point.

If you are interested, the Pew Research Center’s full report contains more in-depth information on "Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next" (2010).

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-Emily