Integrating Millennials into Higher Education Administrative Culture

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Goals of Presentation

This session will provide participants with:

• An understanding of why millennial administrator participation is important for higher education

• An understanding of what motivates millennial administrators

• Strategies to help millennials integrate into campus administrative culture

• An understanding of what innovation and leadership look like for a 21st century higher education administrative team
Take a moment...
Contents

• Overview of the problem

• Why is Millennial participation so important?

• Millennial profile (misconceptions, characteristics, and motivation)

• Integrative strategies

• Implications for leadership and innovation
The Problem

- Boomer-generation retirement
- Record numbers of upper-level administration and leadership turnover
- Happening at a time when higher education enrollment is projected to increase 14% by 2024
- For millennials, educational institutions are considered among the least innovative and satisfying places to work
- Sixty-one percent of millennials currently employed in education report a lack of pathways to productive outcomes from innovative ideas
- Higher education has fairly low appeal among millennial workers due to perceived inflexible and outdated practices
Why is Millennial participation important?

• High replacement demand as leadership vacancies increase

• Demand for increased participation from Millennial administrators as enrollment increases

• Because of leadership demands, we need the best and brightest of ‘Gen-Y’ to stick around

• Not guaranteed!
Millennial Profile: Misconceptions

- **Millennials are lazy**: Millennials think about work and are more likely to forfeit vacation days more than any other group.

- **Millennials are entitled**: To give meaningful contributions to their institutions, Millennials will engage with anyone.

- **Millennials are “soft”**: Millennials value feedback, even if it is critical.

- **Millennials give up too easily**: Millennials bring an entirely new set of tools to the work world, and they know it. If they are unable to develop these tools, they will go elsewhere.
Millennial Profile: Who are they?

• Brash, tend to voice opinions at times when it neglects long-established institutional hierarchies

• Communicate real-time (they text, tweet, and make use of budding communication platforms more so than any other generation), and value ongoing conversations over sporadic email streams and sparse evaluations

• Value multi-media content, focus more on images, photos and videos

• Expect to have something like the latest technology at our disposal
Millennial Profile: Motivation

- Work-life balance, as well as physical, mental, and emotional well-being
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• Developing strengths as professionals, contribute to the overall mission of an institution

• Motivated by institutional mission, vision and culture more than with compensation

• Loyal to people and principles, not institutions
Integrative Strategies

• Be open about institutional practices, and be willing to discuss why things are done a certain way.

• Be a coach and a mentor, not a boss. Invest in Millennials’ personal and professional growth.

• Give Millennials some stake in office policy and procedure. Encourage critique of office practices.

• Examine organizational structure and culture.

• Be a context creator more than a solution provider.

• Encourage and reward self-directedness.

...and most importantly,
Integrative Strategies

...do not say, “we can’t do that.”
“Not long ago, the people in power might have resurrected the witch-burning laws had I pulled this thing out.”

-N.D. Tyson
Change is Inevitable

We’ve seen college classrooms transform from this... ...to this.
Implications for leadership & Innovation

**Leadership**
- ...will need to be about strengthening relationships, not completing tasks*
- ...will need to be more collaborative than hierarchical
- ...will invest in human capital (take a look at your job description)

**Innovation**
- ...will need to have a more holistic dimension (not all innovation is high-tech); e.g. block plans, flexible academic schedules, eliminating admissions applications, flex-time for staff, etc.
- ...will need to be proactive and not reactive
- ...will need to be the norm
Caveat

Millennial integration is a two-way street

- Millennials need to understand and acknowledge those who came before
- Millennials need to realize that perceived outdated practices were effective and likely necessary at one point
- They need to practice the kind of empathy that they are demanding from their older superordinates

Buy-in is better earned with an understanding of where they’ve been rather than just an idea of where you want to go.
Recap

- Higher Education will soon be dealing with record leadership turnover and increased enrollment

- We need Millennials to fill those leadership gaps

- Millennial long-term participation cannot be taken for granted

- If the best and brightest of Gen-Y is going to stick around, we need to better facilitate their integration into campus administrative culture.
References


