The Campus of Tomorrow

For today's Gen Z students

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In partnership with Ologie

Introduction

COVID-19 has changed the world - swiftly shifting how we learn, work, connect, and communicate. While these shifts may have originally been designed to be temporary detours from business as usual, we have the opportunity to look to a future that is not simply a return to a pre-pandemic way of doing things but instead a reimagination of tomorrow's higher education.

75%

of Gen Zers believe that college is not the only path towards a good education.

For Fall 2021, many institutions will be moving back to an in-person model, attempting to return to a "normal" campus experience.

Even before the pandemic, some practices within higher education didn't fully align with Generation Z's preferences, perspectives, and behaviors. In some ways, the pandemic further illuminated the misalignment in being able to effectively attract and engage Gen Z students. And this isn't just an issue facing one institution's recruitment practices; many in Generation Z have been questioning the value of college. A recent study found that 75 percent of Gen Z-ers believe that college is not the only path toward a good education.[1] And the common argument that a college education will lead to higher pay doesn't hold as much weight with this generation, as more than half of them report that they already have a source of income through side hustles such as freelancing, investing, or content creation.[2] As higher education moves closer to a post-pandemic campus experience, there is an opportunity for colleges and universities to examine prior practices (both pre-COVID and during COVID) and to refine areas of operations where they can better serve Gen Z students to facilitate a meaningful campus experience.

This report focuses on Generation Z's preferences in communication, motivation, and interpersonal dynamics, all of which warrant consideration in post-pandemic planning for student recruitment, engagement, and success. This report also explores recent trends related to mental and emotional wellbeing, social justice and social change, and learning, and highlights how these trends impact how Gen Z students navigate their collegiate lives.

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Communication

Understanding the communication styles of Generation Z is imperative, so that faculty and staff can effectively reach Gen Z students in the ways they prefer to communicate. Even before the pandemic, face-to-face communication, including video chat, was Generation Z's most preferred method of connecting with others.[3] While most Gen Z-ers are well-versed in and accustomed to communicating through a variety of mediums, the ability to read emotions and make human connections are some of the top reasons they cited as to why they prefer opportunities to connect face-to-face.

To effectively engage and support Gen Z students, colleges and universities must focus their attention on communication.
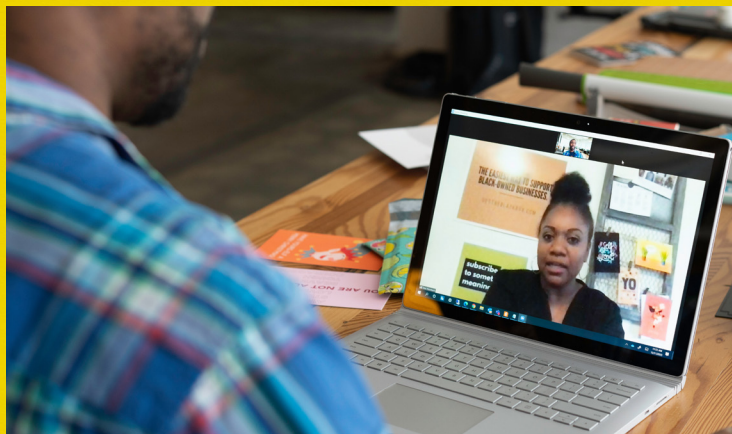
During the pandemic, many Gen Z students were able to quickly adjust to the technical components of online learning, while also leaning into their digital savviness to stay connected with their friends, especially as face-to-face interactions moved to video chats. Post-pandemic, though, many students will want the opportunity to communicate and connect face-to-face with peers, faculty, and staff members, perhaps more so than they did pre-pandemic. While video chats worked for these students, some will want to spend time in person together, go to places they enjoy, and engage in other interactions that they can't have online. But don't be surprised if many still want to continue communicating digitally, Zooming into meetings, and taking advantage of the flexibility of communicating at a distance. The key will be to help them find a balance between communicating in person and continuing to do so through digital channels, ensuring that there are opportunities to connect and communicate in a variety of ways.

COMMUNICATION | ## Recommendations

Discuss communication preferences openly

Understanding students' comfort level for communicating and connecting in person is critical for effectively engaging them. Some students may be hesitant to openly share that they're uncomfortable meeting in person. Providing proactive opportunities, such as a survey or form at the beginning of the semester, can allow students to state their comfort level and how they would prefer to interact with others. Doing so could facilitate more conscious relationships between students and educators, as well as increase the likelihood that students will stay engaged by communicating in ways they prefer.

Utilize face-to-face purposefully

Just because face-to-face interactions have been noted as a preference for Generation Z, it doesn't mean that the sole means of connecting should be in person. Working and attending school from home helped many people identify that there are numerous asynchronous ways to connect and collaborate; many also came to understand the power of video chats for exchanging the nonverbal cues that they enjoy about face-to-face communication. But be intentional about using real-time meetings or gatherings, whether in person or via video, to connect. Many students, staff, and faculty are coming off more than a year of feeling "Zoomed out," especially in receiving one-way communication. These sessions should aim to develop interpersonal skills or foster connections between students, and not just serve as an information dump. Be sure to state the purpose of a meeting or gathering, and then stick to that purpose, to keep Gen Z students committed and engaged.

Prioritize hybrid connection opportunities

While many students are eager to get back to in-person experiences and being around others, some may need more time to adjust and may prefer to connect through digital settings for a bit longer. Consider continuing to offer virtual and hybrid connection opportunities, especially for student organization meetings, engagement experiences, and campus events. This will allow those who wish to engage in person to do so, while also providing virtual experiences for those who still prefer to engage from afar.

Campus Spotlight
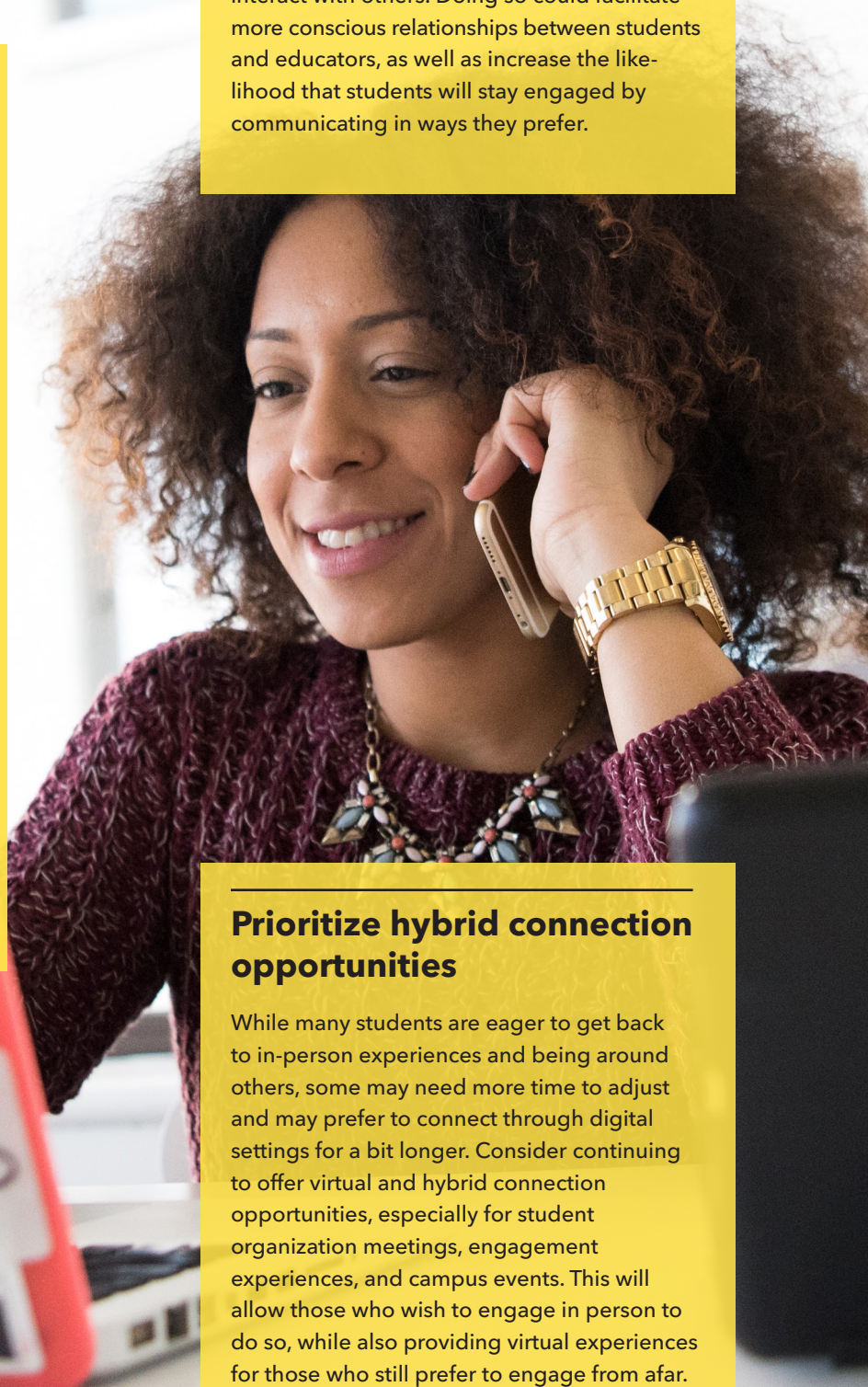
Iowa State University

Orientation is one of the first experiences many students have after enrolling. For new students, Iowa State University is using a hybrid model for orientation programming, which includes both required virtual sessions and an optional in-person experience.[4] This model ensures that all new students, regardless of location, can access the content needed to be successful, while also balancing the preferences of those who wish to visit campus and engage in person. The in-person offering, called "OnCyte Orientation," includes sessions focusing on various involvement opportunities, a campus tour, an overview of campus life, parent and family programming, and information about financial aid and billing. The in-person offerings are one-day programs and are expected to engage more than half of new students.

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Motivation

Research prior to the pandemic indicated that Generation Z is motivated by:

Relationships – not wanting to let others down and making a difference for others

Passions – advocating for a cause they care about

Achievement – receiving credit as well as opportunities for advancement [5]

The pandemic illuminated the extent to which relationships play an important role in how Gen Z students are motivated. The shift to distance learning, or at least to socially distanced campuses, affected how Gen Z students were able to interact with their college communities. Many found ways to stay connected with family and friends, with these relationships providing support and guidance for them to stay the course during a challenging time. They may continue to lean heavily on these relationships to motivate them to engage and persist as they move forward through their college experience.

Generation Z was also at the forefront of advocating for social issues throughout the pandemic, which perhaps has motivated them to be a part of larger movements, particularly around racial inequality and climate change. This desire to create change may be amplified from even pre-pandemic days, as students have seen the power of social movements persist even through a pandemic. Further, the pandemic provided Gen Z-ers more time to focus on developing professional and technical skills to support their future careers. Many did so by exploring new interests: more than three-quarters of them took on a new hobby during their time in quarantine.[6] Back on campus, they might be motivated to further pursue these new hobbies, not only out of sheer interest. In fact, since nearly half of those who took on new hobbies made money doing so,[7] many may be motivated to continue these entrepreneurial initiatives during college.

Throughout the pandemic, Generation Z's primary sources of motivation helped them stay connected and engaged while they developed themselves. It will be critical for colleges and universities to design learning and engagement experiences that align with the motivations of Generation Z, drawing on the desire for strong relationships, the ability to support social causes, and opportunities to build skills and connections that will support their future career advancement.

Whether through campus involvement opportunities or in classroom settings, motivation is a key component in promoting engagement.

MOTIVATION | **Recommendations**

More than three-quarters of Gen Zers took on a new hobby during quarantine.

3/4

Provide opportunities for interdisciplinary study

Even as they managed course demands, many in Generation Z explored new hobbies, passions, and interests during quarantine. Students will be excited to find ways to connect these interest areas in both their social and academic lives. Thus, the notion of interdisciplinary study may be perfectly aligned with them. Offering academic opportunities for students to study across disciplines, even just for a project, will allow them to connect their multiple interests in meaningful ways.

Engage the people that matter most

The time spent in the pandemic reframed the importance of close relationships for many. For Gen Z students, some were back living in their family's home, while others never left home to embark on their first year of residence hall living. This meant that many spent more time with family than they had expected. In other circumstances, though, Gen Z-ers were quarantined far from their families, with little ability to connect in person, spending far less time with family than they had anticipated. Both situations brought to light the importance of relationships to this generation, like those with family, friends, instructors, and advisors, and how those relationships are a source of motivation for them. Consider ways to involve parents and family members in the campus experience, even from a distance, such as encouraging them to send video messages from home, or livestreaming important events throughout the semester so that family members can tune in. And be sure to find ways for students to build and foster relationships with staff and faculty beyond day-to-day campus business, as these relationships matter a great deal to those in Generation Z.

Center relationship-building opportunities

Whether it's planning involvement experiences or classroom activities, framing opportunities to build relationships with others will help motivate Gen Z students to stay engaged and connected in college. Especially after more than a year of an atypical social environment, students are eager to build and foster relationships with others on campus, while still maintaining those external connections that motivated them to persist through the pandemic. Feeling connected to others and being a part of a meaningful group matters greatly to Generation Z.

Campus Spotlight

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Engaging parents and family members throughout the student experience can draw on Generation Z's relational motivation. Beyond livestreaming the commencement ceremony, the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Parent and Family Program provides opportunities for family members to share congratulatory videos with graduates.[8] Allowing families to be a part of graduation celebrations from near and far can help motivate those in Generation Z as they embark on the next part of their life journeys.

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Interpersonal Dynamics

The college campus experience presents many opportunities to interact socially and build important relationships. Not only are these opportunities important for fostering a sense of community and belonging, but they also serve as experiences for Gen Z-ers to learn and practice social skills.

A study by Echelon found that 32 percent of members of Generation Z believe that K-12 public schools are not effectively teaching social skills and how to interact with others.[9] Further, a significant number of Gen Z-ers feel that not having the right connections (35 percent) and not having been taught important life skills (29 percent) will present big problems for them in life.[10] Colleges and universities have ample opportunity to provide experiences to help Gen Z students develop the important social skills they believe are critical to their success.

For many, the pandemic presented a lonely and socially isolating experience. Before the pandemic, 77 percent of Gen Z students rated their social well-being as fair or excellent; during the pandemic, only 19 percent felt similarly.[11] While they were able to stay connected digitally and even enjoyed it to some extent, the fact that they couldn't interact with their peers in person presented challenges for a generation that was already worried about not being very competent or confident in social situations.[12] So it may take time and practice for Generation Z to be fully comfortable as they get back into socializing with others in person on campus. It will be important, then, to provide opportunities for Gen Z-ers to ease into face-to-face experiences. In addition, re-entry into a world with greater in-person interaction may warrant additional mental and emotional support for students, so that they can effectively manage any anxiety and stress that could occur.

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29%

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INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS | **Recommendations**

Hold screen-free activities and events

Life throughout the pandemic has required most people to be greatly connected to their screens. Some in Generation Z have cited technology and screen time as having a role in their apprehension about face-to-face social settings.[13] Screen-free activities and events, where students opt to not use their phones and other devices, may give students an opportunity to socialize and practice their interpersonal skills without the distraction of technology.

Ease into social experiences

For some students, going from spending a lot of time alone or in small groups to attending big campus events may be overwhelming and difficult. As campuses welcome students back this Fall, offering events and gatherings of varying sizes can give students the chance to engage in groups at a level that is comfortable for them.

Create low-stakes opportunities to practice social skills

Practicing social skills can be a great way to help students overcome apprehension in social settings. By holding mock interviews or Toastmasters-type events, where students can practice interacting with others in low-stakes settings, campuses can help them gain confidence and prepare for important interactions, such as professional networking events and job interviews.

BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, 77 percent of Gen Z students rated their social well-being as fair or excellent

77%

19%

DURING THE PANDEMIC, only 19 percent of Gen Z students rated their social well-being as fair or excellent

Purdue University

Purdue University's Steps to Leaps initiative focuses on the "core aspects of enhancing and improving student character and well-being" and includes five pillars: well-being, leadership and professional development, impact, networks, and grit.[14, 15] The networks pillar specifically emphasizes the need for connections and bonds, both professionally and personally. Students have access to tip sheets that cover strategies for developing meaningful networks, information about research studies related to networking, student spotlights, and lists of networking events and other places to practice social skills. Faculty and staff can also integrate one of the many learning modules on building networks, connections, and relationships into their courses or training events, and students can access videos and well-being tips to build their interpersonal skills.

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Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

Pandemic.
Social injustice.
Environmental decline.
Financial instability.
Unemployment.
Healthcare access.
Cost of higher education.
Political partisanship.
Grades.
Relationships.
Peer pressure.
Social media judgment.
Fear of Failure.
Career paths.
Safety and security.
Discrimination.
The list of potential stressors and worries goes on.

The need for support services and structures for mental and emotional health and wellbeing has never been greater.

During COVID, college students reported having diagnosed

39% depression

34% anxiety

As young adults, Generation Z is carrying the weight of the world, along with the everyday stresses and woes facing teens and young adults. It's not surprising, then, that even early studies of Generation Z and mental health issues have shown troubling levels of anxiety, depression, and stress.[16] During COVID, those numbers continued to be high: 39 percent of college students reported having diagnosed depression and 34 percent reported anxiety, while 26 percent indicated feeling lonely.[17] These rates certainly reflect the toll that social isolation, distance education, financial stress, and unemployment—as well as the fear, grief, and illness surrounding COVID itself—took on the population at large. Some college students, however, faced unique circumstances. For example, being home during the pandemic might have been difficult for LGBTQ students who are not out or who have not been accepted by their families. And other populations, like students of color, women, veterans, and those from low-income households, may have had minimal access to the campus support networks, resources, and peer groups that are essential for their health and wellbeing. As COVID has exacerbated mental health issues for many college students, the need for support services and structures for mental and emotional health and wellbeing has never been greater.

Ensure that students know where to get support

Less than half of students know where to access mental health resources on their campus.[18] And only 6 percent report seeking out a faculty or staff member if they need support.[19] It's important, then, to make sure students know where they can get services. Consider having an easy-to-remember program name that serves as a one-stop virtual destination for health and well-being. For example, GradWell at Boise State University is an online centralized hub for graduate students for mental and emotional health support.

Reduce any stigma around mental health

While some Gen Z-ers seem to be quite comfortable disclosing their need for mental health support, others may not be. The Greater St. Louis Mental Health Innovation Council offers a program for college students to come together to integrate initiatives on their campuses aimed at reducing stigma about mental health.

29% *of students engaged in counseling during the past year.*

Provide personalization

Only 29 percent of students engaged in counseling during the past year,[20] which is surprising given the relatively high rates of diagnosed mental health issues, stress levels, and loneliness among this generation. To expand service to more students, consider integrating a personalized user experience for Gen Z-ers. Platforms like ULifeline, created by Duke University Medical Center, invites students to complete a quick, free, online evaluation to assess their personal risk for a variety of mental-health-related issues, which may compel them to seek out appropriate resources and support tailored for them.

Ensure same-day options for counseling

Generation Z is a DIY generation, where YouTube, and now TikTok, are on-demand information repositories for anything they want to know. So if Gen Z-ers have to wait too long for a counseling screening, a consultation, or a triage appointment, they may simply find alternatives on their own, perhaps accessing information online that is inaccurate or even harmful. Consider even 15-minute same-day telehealth check-ins to get students the support and resources they may need right away.

Integrate mental health and wellbeing into the curriculum

Mental health support is not just a service offered by one office; it is a campus commitment to the wellbeing of the whole student. Thus, it's important to provide support through a variety of student campus experiences, including academic courses. At the University of Texas at Austin, the Texas Well-being program offers 15 digital modules that faculty can download to their Canvas sites to incorporate into their classes. Topics include mental health, resilience, and motivation.

Provide more options for habit-building exercise and self-care

Consider that 35 percent of college students are not exercising,[21] which can serve as a natural outlet for stress. In addition to campus recreation programs, consider hosting short walking and exercise events at residence halls and student unions, meeting students where they often gather. In addition, since Gen Z-ers are motivated by tracking their progress,[22] offering virtual 5Ks or other online challenges can get students to do habit-forming exercise on their own, with the ability to log their achievements as they go.

Offer life skills and emotional resiliency programs

Offer opportunities for students to build resilience and develop critical life skills to aid in their mental and emotional health. For example, workshops, courses, or orientation sessions on stress management, conflict negotiation, emotional intelligence, and self-care could help students learn strategies that contribute to a sustainably healthy lifestyle. One such initiative is the Mindstrong program at The Ohio State University, which consists of a set of seven sessions designed to teach college students skills for coping, stress reduction, and resiliency.

Involve their close connections

Instead of seeking out professionals, many Gen Z-ers are going to roommates, friends, significant others, and family members for support.[23] Consider training students to recognize possible wellbeing issues in other students and help connect them to campus resources. At the Healthy Minds Resource Center at Red Rocks Community College, students engage in peer-to-peer counseling and facilitate workshops on a number of pertinent health issues. While peer counseling is not a new phenomenon, Generation Z's reliance on peer support and the possible shortage of mental health professionals in higher education may necessitate growing these types of programs on campuses.

WELLBEING | **Campus Spotlight**

Lynn University

Lynn University's Resilience Toolkit is designed to provide students with guidance, resources, and support to help them become more resilient.[24] New students are introduced to the Resilience Toolkit during their first year, when all students take a course called "Theories of Self" in the *Dialogues of Self and Society* using an in-house workbook, "Finding Your OASES." The course helps students develop and apply five resilient behaviors in their lives. In addition, students are invited to resilience workshops put on by students, RAs, and student staff every month. The training continues with a sophomore seminar focused on resilience building.[25]

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Social Justice and Social Change

Generation Z is the most diverse generation in U.S. history,[26] and they're characterized as open-minded and compassionate.

55%

of Gen Zers think their generation can bring about positive change.

This is a generation that puts their values into action and is using every advocacy opportunity to have their voices heard.

Even in early studies, this generation was clear and vocal about wanting rights and protections for everyone, believing that equity and equality are not just the right things to do, but that diversity makes the world a better place.[27] More so than other generations, a majority of Gen Z-ers have a positive view of social justice,[28] and they make decisions about where to work, what to buy, and who to socialize with based on their commitment to this ideal. This is a generation whose members put their values into action and are using every advocacy opportunity to have their voices heard.

Since the nationwide racial justice protests in 2020, in particular, Generation Z's focus on social justice has become a central force in its advocacy efforts. While not everyone in Gen Z is a social justice advocate, a Morning Consult poll found that 90 percent support the Black Lives Matter movement,[29] and 78 percent engaged in at least one action to support the 2020 racial justice protests.[30]

And Generation Z believes they are the ones to make a difference —66 percent of Gen Z-ers think their generation can bring about positive change, compared to only 55 percent of Millennials who believe that about their generation.[31] This likely stems from Gen Z's values of unity, cohesion, and collaboration: they know that solving the world's problems will require different people with different views to come together for the greater good.[32]

Recommendations

Take bold action

Some campuses have taken very visible action of renaming buildings (like at Emory University) or even renaming institutions (like Dixie State University) that have historical ties to people or symbols that reflect oppression. Further, some institutions are replacing oppressive or culturally appropriated mascots (like Saddleback College). In addition, other campuses are revisiting their budgets and reprioritizing positions, developing programs, establishing new initiatives, and integrating curriculum that focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion, which is of paramount importance to Gen Z-ers.[33]

Involve students

Creating inclusive communities that support social justice is not something to be done to students, but instead done with students. Gen Z-ers want to be involved in social change, and they're ready and willing to be part of the solution. For instance, the Spelman Speaks series at Spelman College brings together faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members to discuss challenging social justice issues.

Make a social justice commitment as an institution and then follow through

This generation does not just want lip service; they want to see change. And they want it from higher education. The Student Voice survey found that only 12 percent of students noted that their institution had "developed and communicated a comprehensive action plan related to racial justice" in the months after the death of George Floyd.[34]

12% *of students noted their institution had "developed and communicated a comprehensive action plan related to racial justice" in the months after the death of George Floyd.*

Be prepared for students to engage in offensive behavior

Many institutions are grappling with the balance between free speech and hate speech—something that is truly tested when a current or prospective student posts a defamatory comment, photo, or video on social media. For instance, an incident at Kansas State University in 2020 involved a student posting on Twitter a comment related to George Floyd that many other students felt was offensive, inappropriate, and even defamatory.[35] This event prompted the institution to develop a social media policy that "balances institutional values with free speech."[36] If you don't yet have a social media policy on your campus, consider developing one to provide clear and transparent expectations of online conduct.

Institute real change with all stakeholders

It's not uncommon for institutions to deploy an annual campus climate survey to faculty, staff, and students to learn more about inclusion and engagement. However, it's critical to include many voices in the process of analyzing the results and devising action plans that truly address campus climate issues. The University of Nevada, Reno has a process that involves deploying campus climate report forums, with separate sessions for various stakeholder groups, to create action plans around the survey findings as a way to empower voices and integrate innovative ideas.

Focus on more than just civil discourse

Civil discourse is important in that polarized opinions can lead to unproductive conversations and even anger and hostility. But civil discourse isn't enough. Many Gen Z students desire unity and not simply coexistence. Consider offering dialogue programs, which have been found to lead to greater openness around diversity, as well as feelings of empathy.[37]

Connect students who share the same passions and interests

In terms of friendships, Gen Z-ers believe that having shared values is more important than having the same hobbies.[38] Instead of solely offering events associated with interests (like a cooking program or outdoor adventure), consider also offering events where students can do speed networking, breakout discussions, and interactive activities (in person or online) that get them to connect with others based on issues they care about.

Help students connect to organizations and movements around issues they care about, not just organizations that are willing to work with the institution

Those in Generation Z prefer working toward sustainable social change rather than engaging in short-term service efforts.[39] Thus, they may not want to participate in a pre-planned, one-time volunteer opportunity, especially if it doesn't reflect a passion area for them. Help students reach out to organizations aligned with their passions: to serve on a board, participate in an internship, volunteer long-term, or engage in research to address a pressing need for the organization.

78%

of students engaged in at least one action to support the 2020 racial justice protests.

90%

of students support the Black Lives Matter movement.

Campus Spotlight

University of Puget Sound

For Fall 2021, rather than sending institutional swag to admitted students, the University of Puget Sound instead allocated that money to a fund from which students can donate a specific amount (around six dollars) to one of five selected community organizations, which focus on issues related to the environment, food insecurity, sexual assault, youth development, and refugees and immigrants. Through this "Remake the World" initiative, the goal is for students to learn more about issues specific to the local community and to contribute to causes they care most about. In addition, by not sending swag, there's no carbon footprint from mailing the items, and no environmental impact of having them end up in landfills—both a true plus in the eyes of Generation Z.[40, 41]

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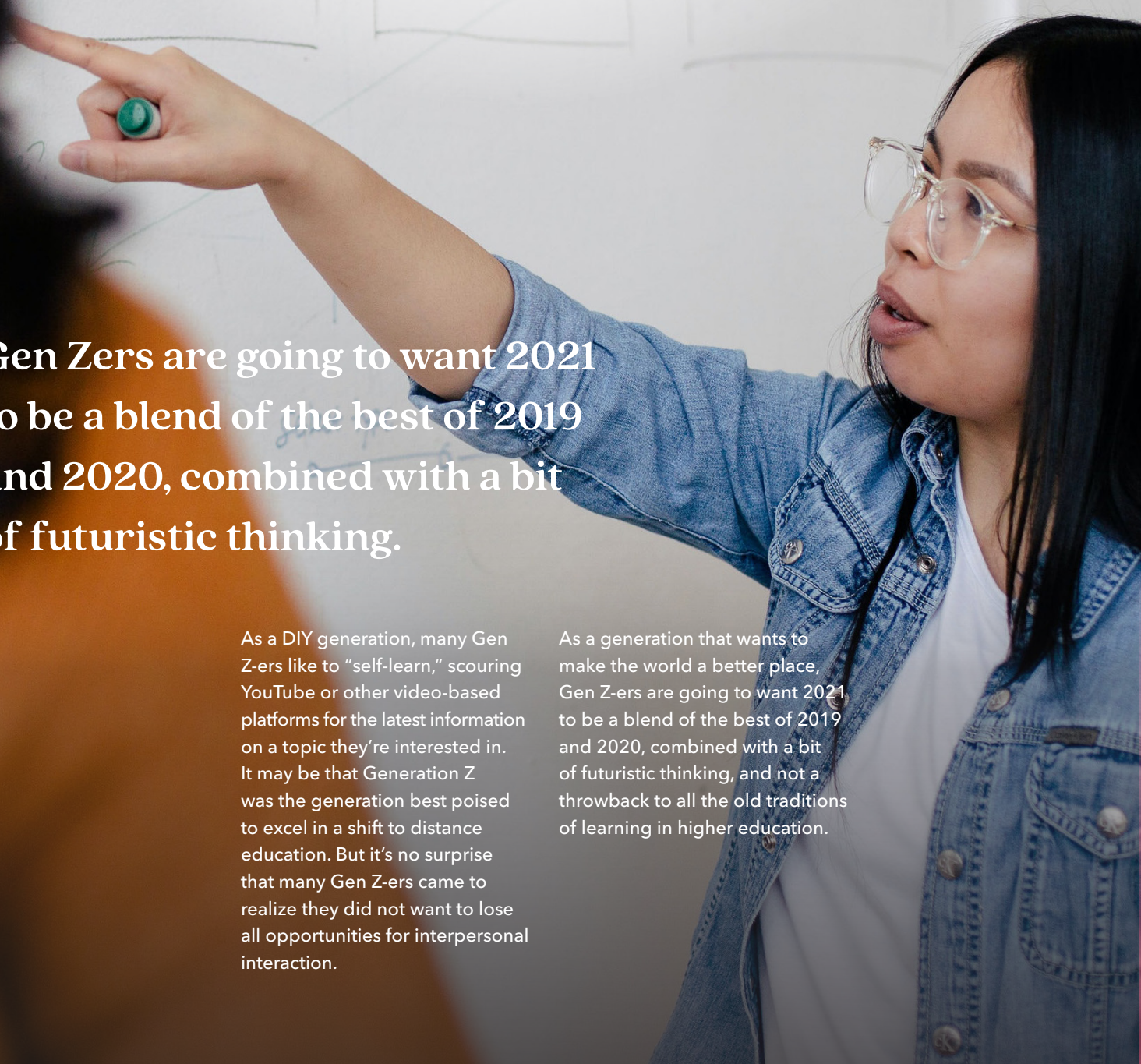
Learning

Intrapersonal learning, which involves engaging in independent projects at one's own pace or in one's own space, is one of the most preferred learning methods of those in Generation Z.[42] Many Gen Z-ers like to decide how they want to spend their time learning—perhaps going deeper into researching one subject while glossing over another that's less intriguing. And, once they have learned something, they want to apply that learning to real-life issues, both to contextualize the material and to bring the content to life.

Gen Zers are going to want 2021 to be a blend of the best of 2019 and 2020, combined with a bit of futuristic thinking.

As a DIY generation, many Gen Z-ers like to "self-learn," scouring YouTube or other video-based platforms for the latest information on a topic they're interested in. It may be that Generation Z was the generation best poised to excel in a shift to distance education. But it's no surprise that many Gen Z-ers came to realize they did not want to lose all opportunities for interpersonal interaction.

As a generation that wants to make the world a better place, Gen Z-ers are going to want 2021 to be a blend of the best of 2019 and 2020, combined with a bit of futuristic thinking, and not a throwback to all the old traditions of learning in higher education.

Be mindful of the impact on students of moving back to the old

Just as jarring as it was to move from a face-to-face campus experience to an online one, it may be just as jarring to move back entirely to an in-person one. While some students may be excited to return to "normal," some might not be. Remote learning was flexible and convenient, and it fit with a different type of life schedule that many students have since adopted more permanently.

Consider permanently offering hybrid course options

Early studies on Generation Z pointed to a strong desire for hybrid learning, particularly flipped classrooms, where students could first learn on their own, and then practice, engage, and interact with others later, in an online or in-person synchronous environment.[43] While the pandemic necessitated an increase in distance learning, the flipped classroom model still offers great value to Generation Z, even when it becomes no longer a necessary modality for safety reasons.

Integrate social and emotional learning into classes

Given that many Gen Z-ers admit to lacking confidence and competence in their social skills,[44] find ways to include intentional curriculum and assignments that help students develop the skills they need for self-care, self-reflection, self-development, and emotional intelligence. These types of activities should not simply be reserved for classes that lend themselves to this type of content. Any course can benefit from being taught through the lens of social and emotional learning.

Get students into learning groups

While they like to learn on their own, many Gen Z-ers also enjoy learning with other students who are motivated and dedicated to their own academic success.[45] Consider having students form in-person or virtual learning groups within each course, similar to K-12 "learning pods." Instead of forming these groups for collaborative assignments or as study groups to prepare for an exam, have them meet regularly to work alongside each other, doing individual homework in the company of their peers.

Create a digital archive for live classes

In face-to-face classes, sessions are delivered in real time, often with no ability to archive the content. But today, students are used to being able to review class content afterward, because the synchronous or asynchronous online session was likely recorded. If recording live classes isn't feasible, consider creating supplemental videos about the content covered in class, so that students can review that content after the session is over.

LEARNING | **Recommendations**

Offer some online options

Some students find online instruction more effective and more desirable, whereas others find that in-person instruction has more value.[46] Going back to only in-person classes may leave out a segment of students who have come to enjoy online learning or who want the flexibility to take some classes in person and some online.

Offer virtual office hours regardless of the course modality

While it makes sense that those who teach online courses offer virtual office hours, also consider having some virtual office hours for face-to-face courses. Doing so can increase instructors' availability and accessibility. And while video platforms have offered a great tool for online connection, the University of Pennsylvania, for example, took its virtual meetings to the next level with a platform called Gather, which creates avatars that can meet in simulated classrooms and office spaces.

Adjust the academic calendar

Whether the term starts and ends earlier, is shorter overall, or simply switches to an online-only modality after Thanksgiving, adjusting the academic calendar to end in-person classes by Thanksgiving has proven to have many advantages. Consider this adjustment more permanently as a way to reduce the carbon footprint and costs for students traveling for breaks, which would also help address Generation Z's concerns about environmental impact and financial security.[47]

35%

During the pandemic, 35% of college students reported that at some point, hunger had affected their ability to study.

Focus on helping students get access to basic needs

During the pandemic, 35 percent of college students reported that, at some point, hunger had affected their ability to study.[48] It's not surprising then that institutions saw drastic increases in visits to campus food pantries; for the University of South Florida, these numbers quadrupled from 2019 to 2020.[49] As the pandemic has drawn greater attention to the need for higher education institutions to provide resources to students to meet their basic needs, those needs will not simply go away when the pandemic comes to an end. Many students will still need support and resources from their institutions and local communities.

Showcase new initiatives

This is not the time to move forward as if the pandemic never happened. Instead, showcase the newly launched programs, policies, practices, and initiatives that have actually made the campus better. Whether it was Zooming in experts from around the globe to talk with students, or integrating more innovative and adaptive learning platforms into courses, some really innovative ideas are worthy of sharing with others.

University of Washington

The University of Washington's Well-Being for Life and Learning Initiative, a program of the UW Resilience Lab, is designed to support instructors in "designing learning environments that promote well-being and support the whole student."[50] The four foundations that help guide the initiative's work are teaching for equity and access, nurturing connection, building resilience coping skills, and connecting to the environment.[51] The initiative includes a comprehensive guidebook with ideas and resources for promoting well-being with students, as well as monthly meetings that bring together instructors in a community of practice to share ideas, strategies, and lessons learned, "acknowledging that how we do the work is part of the work."[52]

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Conclusion

These young people thrive in a world where they can toggle between their digital devices and their in-person social connections, driven by relationships while creating an impact.

While it's no surprise that students, staff, and faculty are ready to move out of pandemic mode and into a less ambiguous campus experience, 2021 will be a new academic year with opportunities to support and educate Generation Z students like never before. These young people thrive in a world where they can toggle between their digital devices and their in-person social connections, driven by relationships while creating an impact. They want their learning environments to embody flexibility paired with stability, and interpersonal connection with intrapersonal development. Overall, they want a college experience that is inclusive, where both they and their institutions can make a difference in the lives of others.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Corey Seemiller and Dr. Meghan Grace are generational researchers who specialize in studying and writing about Generation Z youth and young adults. They have conducted three original studies and have published four books and several articles, and they speak around the world to K-12 education, higher education, military, nonprofit, and corporate audiences.

For more information about their work with The Gen Z Hub, visit thegenzhub.com

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