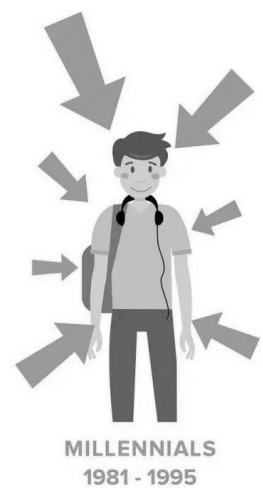


## Students First, What about Millennials?

Laquanna T. Sledge



In the last five to seven years, the term "millennial" carries a dual nature, akin to a double-edged sword. On one side, this specific generation, including myself, has collectively reshaped and redefined society as we know it. Through their continuous advancements, innovation, and unprecedented creativity, they have presented the world with a new paradigm. However, on the other side of this divide, millennials frequently face criticism, characterized as entitled, lazy, and inattentive. Nevertheless, the millennial generation has undeniably attracted considerable attention due to its distinctive characteristics when compared to preceding generations (Phillips et al., 2014, 519). What is a millennial? Or Who could be defined as such? Millennials, typically born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s to early 2000s, depending on interpretation, are a demographic group known for their digital fluency, inclusive values, and emphasis on achieving a balanced lifestyle. Raised amidst rapid technological progress and significant societal shifts, they embody a generation marked by transformative experiences.

As a higher education professional and an even more ardent student advocate, I possess a variety of perspectives when discussing millennials. I contend that throughout history, every generation has seen both praise and critique from their predecessors, encompassing the positive, negative, and indifferent aspects of each evolving generation. When working with students, it is essential not to make sweeping presumptions about them, as this can impede the potential for nurturing meaningful relationships. In my line of work, fostering such connections lies at the core of our mission when interacting with stu-

dents in our institutions. Among the positive attributes I have observed millennials bring to organizations are boundless energy, unfiltered honesty, and, most notably, a penchant for asking insightful questions.

Millennials infuse workplaces with an unparalleled surge of energy that can genuinely inspire anyone on their team to believe that they have the power to effect positive change in the world, even through small efforts. I can consistently rely on my students to provide straightforward and candid feedback about their experiences, whether it relates to a particular class, instructor, or the quality of the cafeteria food. They do not shield their opinions behind titles or roles; they are forthright and sincere in their expressions. The most significant contribution I believe millennials can make to an organization, however, lies in their curiosity.

They boldly inquire about matters that others might shy away from during staff or departmental meetings, as they seek to uncover the fundamental issues at hand. This inherent inquisitiveness distinguishes them (and us) from our parents and grandparents. This inherent curiosity sets millennials, as well as us, apart from our parents and grandparents. Unlike previous generations, millennials tend to exhibit an ardent desire to explore, question, and seek out current information and experiences. This curiosity is reflected in their approach to technology, culture, and social issues, driving them to constantly adapt and innovate in a rapidly changing world. It is a distinguishing trait that shapes their outlook and behavior, influencing everything from career choices to personal relationships.

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For millennials, a crucial aspect of their approach to work involves efficiency — how to accomplish tasks in the most streamlined manner possible. A clear understanding of their role within the broader vital context is equally critical. As an employee, I expect trust from my employers, coupled with the latitude to make mistakes and learn from the vital context. As an employee, I expect trust from my employers, coupled with the latitude to make mistakes and learn from them. Most importantly, I value the absence of unwarranted assumptions. This desire for trust and autonomy arises from the frequent labeling of millennials as entitled, lazy, and inattentive. In my role, I see it as my responsibility to help my students discover their purpose in their pursuits, guiding them in identifying their motivations and crafting their personal narratives to shape their career aspirations and broader educational goals. My objective is to ensure that they are the focal point of their own journey, which may indeed be facilitated by the perception that they are entitled.

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### Author's Note

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