

## TEACHING GENERATION Z

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I arrived at the 2018 LWI Biennial Conference with a healthy amount of expectation. I had just been hired as a legal writing instructor at FAMU College of Law and would begin teaching in the fall. I was ready to glean wisdom and advice from seasoned professors, and I was also looking forward to meeting other new professors, like myself. All in all, I was excited to be around other academics. The first session of the conference, and the session that stood out to me the most, was the plenary session on Generation Z led by Dr. Corey Seemiller.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Seemiller gave a grand introduction to Generation Z. She told us who the members of Generation Z are and what makes them different from the generations before them. I am a proud millennial and, in true millennial fashion, I never gave much thought to the generation after mine. Dr. Seemiller let us know that Generation Z is making a difference and should not be overlooked. Members of Generation Z were born between 1995 and 2010, so my current 1L class is comprised of Generation Z students who pushed through high school, college, and on to law school with few, or zero, breaks in between.

What fascinated me the most about Generation Z is that they have always been “wired,” they are financially conservative, they are entrepreneurial, and they are solution-driven. I knew my class would have individuals from different generations, but these characteristics about Generation Z made me think about how I can innovate traditional law school teaching to provide all of my students with a more fulfilling experience in my class. It also made me consider how exciting it will be to witness the impact this new generation will have on the legal profession.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Corey Seemiller, Plenary Talk, LWI Biennial Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (July 12, 2018).

Generation Z has an almost instinctual relationship with technology. As Dr. Seemiller explained, they have always been wired and they are accustomed to having information at their fingertips. They want answers to their questions and they expect these answers to come rapidly. My challenge will be balancing these expectations of immediacy while teaching the analytical process that is required to solve legal problems.

Generation Z lived through an economic crisis during their very impressionable teenage years and, as a result, they are a financially conservative group; being financially secure and financially responsible is important to them. They are willing to work hard to secure their futures, so I know that I can push them to the outer bounds of their potential. At the same time, they are entrepreneurial and motivated to create solutions to problems. Dr. Seemiller gave some statistics that showed that a large percentage of this new generation plans to impact the world with an invention or by starting their own businesses. This entrepreneurial nature ties into their problem-solving spirit but is also consistent with their desire to be financially secure. Law school is a great place for Generation Z, since attorneys are trained problem solvers, and, in some ways, the legal profession can offer the financial stability they seek. I look forward to having a front-row seat to the revolutionary ideas these new law students will create, and I also look forward to helping them visualize and execute their ideas through the law.

We sometimes groan about the digital age and the need for young people to be “wired,” but the digital era has also birthed a generation of remarkable individuals. They are slightly tainted by the recession, but they are determined to change the trajectories of their lives and possibly the world. As their legal writing professor, I will stress the importance of communicating efficiently through writing to effect change and will have the privilege of helping to develop their legal minds. Understanding the generational traits of Generation Z will make me a better professor and, in turn, will hopefully make them better law students and better attorneys. I left Dr. Seemiller’s session and the entire LWI Conference feeling equipped with a base of knowledge I did not have before and with new thoughts and ideas about how to approach the cohort of law students I have been given the opportunity to teach.