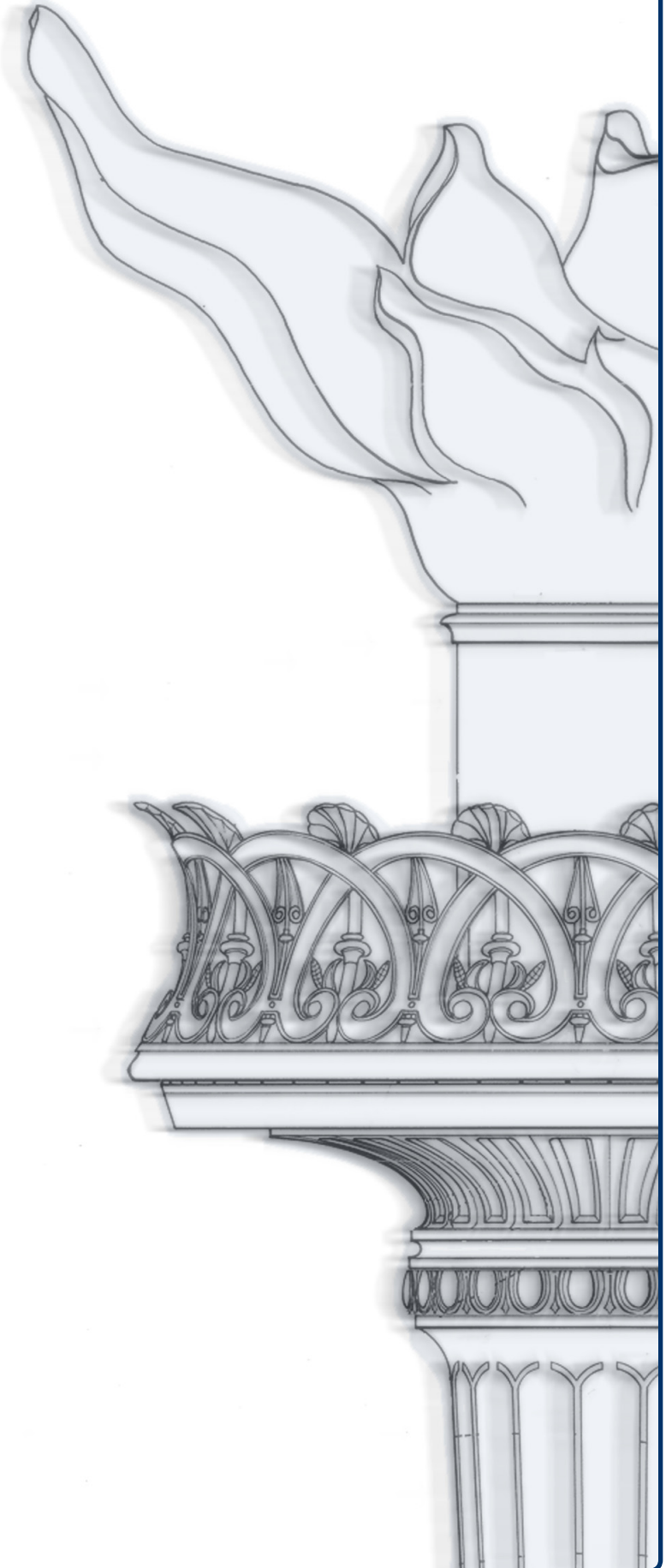


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Texas Association of College Teachers
Defending Academic Freedom



Quarterly eBulletin
JULY-SEPT. 2006

The TACT Quarterly eBulletin

Jul/Aug/Sep 2006 LX No. 1

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President's Column

by Dr. Elizabeth Lewandowski
TACT President

And the Drought Continues...

Sitting at my computer, I look out the window at the backyard. The grass is completely covered with yellow and brown leaves and it is 104 degrees. Yes, it is August in Texas and the drought is on.

We are experiencing the worst drought in 50 years. We can water and water our lawns, shrubs and trees and still we can only hope that they will survive the severe drought and weeks of 100 + temperatures. Every cloud in the sky makes us hope for rain. Many of us would do a rain dance if we thought it would help!

I have holly bushes all around my home and they survive the heat and drought pretty well. My zoysia grass is hibernating, but doing better than most lawns since it is bred for conserving water in high temperatures. I've mostly given up on the non-native annuals and even some non-native perennials. The trees all have very deep roots that will help them survive yet another dry summer.

Sitting inside in air-conditioned comfort with my 3 cats alternately napping during the heat of the day and chasing each other and playing tag in the cool of early morning and late night, I wonder how the early settlers even survived these summers. And why they chose to do so. Sipping a cold iced tea, I cannot help but see parallels between the Texas drought of 2006 and the drought of financing we are experiencing in higher education.

In the last 40 years, Texas has reduced the percentage of the cost of higher education that it funds by fifty percent. Just about the same percentage of average rainfall that most of us are missing. Look around you – brown leaves and lawns, non-native plants shriveling in the heat, even native plants struggling to survive. Look at the effect of the financial drought on higher education – difficulty in recruiting quality faculty, facilities not kept in good operating condition, salaries not keeping up even with the annual cost of living increases, and insufficient retirement funding.

Today, because there is no rain, to keep our lawns and greenery alive, we must use vast quantities of water by running our sprinklers. Similarly, we must use other means to keep our universities alive. University presidents are forced to spend more and more time working to raise funds from outside sources to cover the cost of new construction and increased demand on existing facilities. Faculty and staff receive salaries that, in many cases with increasing health care costs, effectively end with the individual taking a pay cut each year. Students are forced to pay ever increasing tuition and fees to get an education.

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President's Column

by Dr. Elizabeth Lewandowski
TACT President

And the Drought Continues...

(continued from previous page)

We can continue to water (even with restrictions) for quite some time yet. At some point however, the water available will decrease until we cannot continue to water lawns and trees. What then? Do we let the plants die? The general student body is reaching the limit of its ability to pay increasing tuition and fees, the generous donors do not have bottomless pockets, faculty and staff see that other states are making reasonable pay increases and are not patient. What then? Do we let higher education die?

As much as we would like, there is little we can do to stop the drought. We can each conserve water in our homes and businesses. We cannot make it rain. As for the financial drought in higher education, we can do something. The Texas state legislature will soon begin its biennial session. We need to stay in touch with our legislators to ensure that state funding for higher education does not continue to decrease. That means keeping up with what is happening in Austin and responding to it. Throughout the session our lobbyist, Chuck Hempstead, will be keeping tabs on the activities in Austin and updating you regularly. Take a moment to call, write or email your senator and representative in response to these updates. As little as 10 contacts from constituents can make a difference!

The easiest way to for you to make a difference in the drought in higher education funding is for you to join me at the Capitol in Austin on October 20 during our Fall Conference. Join your colleagues and me as we make office visits to committee chairs and our local senators and representatives. Get some face time to make your point and help end the drought.

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The 2006 Optional Retirement Program Study is now available!

For the thirty-second consecutive year, this analysis has been made available to members of the Texas Association of College Teachers and the Texas Community College Teachers Association to assist in retirement planning. The Optional Retirement Program (ORP) is designed for full time faculty at state supported institutions of higher education. Created by the Texas Legislature in 1967, it is offered as an alternative to participation in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). Upon employment at an institution, an employee is given 90 days to choose whether to invest his or her retirement fund in ORP or TRS.

For a precise glossary, detailed product descriptions, and comparative tables showing company rankings, fees, and performance histories for 18 fund categories please visit http://www.tact.org/private/mem_priv.shtml.



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Executive Director's Report

by Chuck Hempstead
TACT Executive Director

Beware! ...It's Back-to-School

I have always enjoyed writing the traditional, optimistic, "here come the fresh-faced kids with inquiring minds" back-to-school column. This year I'm feeling a bit differently.

Read President Elizabeth's column here on comparing higher ed funding to the scorched earth of this summer's 104-degree days. This morning I wrote a first alert covering a newspaper article on the lack of state appropriations and the rising tuition pricing out the middle class. Two days in a row last week I was called by long-time TACT members who needed to know the process to defend themselves against student accusations by accessing our Educators Professional Liability Insurance. And the Legislature last week began budget hearings on Legislative Appropriations Requests ordered to be submitted at ninety percent of current levels.

Whew! Tough start.

President Elizabeth has rightly decided that at our Annual Fall Conference on October 20-21 we will combine the Board Meeting with the House of Delegates Meeting Saturday morning so that we may take our message to the Capitol Friday morning. Legislator presence may be minimal just before the elections, but we will visit with staff, leave our talking points and write our thank you notes to increase our presence. If you can come, let me know and I'll make appointments with your legislators.

O.K., back to the fresh faces. Thank you for what you do in and around the classrooms of our great state. You are truly determining the future of Texas in your commitment to your daily duties. We know that the students are not at a time in their lives that they can appreciate the positive changes that are happening to them. But they will someday.

Finally, if only for your colleagues that you like and admire: tell them what we're doing for them and plead that they subscribe to the TACT Educators Professional Liability Insurance. I was not chosen for jury duty this morning, but it reminded me that it's not always the bad guys whose reputations and assets are challenged in our legal process.

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Director, First-Year Experience

Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

Sam Houston State University

The Millennial Generation of Students: New Challenges, New Opportunities

Generations are an interesting study. Right now, we have four generations represented on our campuses. How is it that all of these generations work together and get along together? How does the most recent generation learn, and how do we adjust our classroom experiences for these students? Although there have been long books written about these things, this short article will attempt to present a few useful ideas for the next academic year.

American history has demonstrated a cyclical nature of dominant and recessive generations. The four types that construct a cycle include dominant idealists, recessive reactives, dominant civics, and recessive adaptives. American generations have always followed this order of generations within a cycle except during the Civil War cycle when the civic generation was skipped. We are now in the fifth cycle since 1584, and each generation in a cycle lasts an average of 23.4 years (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 84).

The four generations that are currently found on our campuses are Silents (birth years 1925 to 1942), Boomers (birth years 1943 to 1960), Thirteeners or Generation Xers (birth years 1961 to 1981), and Millennials (birth years 1982 to 2002). Each generation views life just a little bit different from the other generations. The following chart from Coomes and DeBard's *Serving the Millennial Generation* presents these differences (p. 40).

(See chart at top of next page.)

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Although studying the differences in generations is interesting, we will focus our attention towards the Millennials. The Millennials have also been called Generation Y, Generation Next, and Echo Boomers. Their birth years are between 1982 and 2002. They are 80 million strong and make up one third of the population of the United States. Starbucks, souped-up car stereos, telephone voicemail, and Bill Gates have always been a part of their lives. They have lived in a very different world than most of us.

According to Howe and Strauss in *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, Millennial college students have seven characteristics that make them unique from previous generations: special, sheltered, confident, conventional, team-oriented, achieving, and pressured (p.43-44). They have been made to feel special their entire lives. For example, they have received awards for participation on teams, whether or not their team won. Being rewarded for participation, not achievement, can present unique challenges in the classroom when students are not used to being graded only on the final product. These



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	Boomers	Gen Xers	Millenials
Level of Trust	Confident of self, not authority	Low toward authority	High toward authority
Loyalty to institutions	Cynical	Considered naive	Committed
Most admire	Taking charge	Creating enterprise	Following a hero of integrity
Career goals	Build a stellar career	Build a portable career	Build parallel careers
Rewards	Title and a corner office	Freedom not to do	Meaningful work
Parent-Child Involvement	Receding	Distant	Intruding
Having children	Controlled	Doubtful	Definite
Family life	Indulged as children	Alienated as children	Protected as children
Education	Freedom of expression	Pragmatic	Structure of accountability
Evaluation	Once a year with documentation	"Sorry, but how am I doing?"	Feedback whenever want it
Political orientation	Attack oppression	Apathetic, individual	Crave community
The big question	What does it mean?	Does it work?	How do we build it?

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are the sheltered children of parents who hung "Baby on Board" signs on their car windows and brought us nanny cams. The Millennials are not ready to let their parents go and continue to be in constant communication with them. They have been rewarded for so many small feats that they are very confident. They have had easy academic success in high school and expect college to be easy also. They are conventional in the sense that they accept codes of conduct and dress codes, believe that the best way to get along is to go along, accept standardized testing, and respect cultural differences. They have participated in so many team-oriented activities that they also enjoy group work in the classroom. They are high achievers, but get down if they don't succeed. They also feel pressured to succeed in every area of their lives and aim to please.



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So, what is one to do in the classroom to reach these students in a learning-centered environment? R. C. Angell stated, "The general level of intellectual interest among undergraduates is low. The collective life is not characterized by intellectual curiosity and intelligent discussion. . . . A small minority are sincerely interested in all their academic work; a large minority do not put their hearts into any of it; while the great mass are genuinely intent upon only a few of their subjects, commonly the more practical ones, and apathetic toward the rest." You might think that this is a very recent statement, but it was actually made in 1928. It seems that some things don't change. We never think that the current generation is as engaged as our generation was. What we need to understand is that each generation is unique in the way they learn and interact in a classroom.

In general, Millennials want clear instructions, expect technology to be integrated into the classroom and assignments, misunderstand plagiarism, expect teachers to know more than they actually do, and want help in seeing the roles they will play in the future. There are several pedagogical approaches that will help you and Millennials appreciate one another more in the classroom. According to an article in the Spring, 2005 edition of University of Florida's *Teaching & Technology: Ideas for Enriching College Teaching and Learning* (p.3), college teachers should do the following to better engage their Millennial students:

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- "Review your content – Is it "need to know" or "nice to know"?" Students want to know if it will be on the test.
- "Review your delivery strategy – Are you lecturing while students surf the net?" Instructors should find ways to present information in a variety of ways including having them present the information themselves.
- "Review opportunities for interaction – Are students disconnected from your lecture content?" Students need to interact, so consider integrating activities such as quizzes, small group activities, and Internet research.
- "Review the context of content – Are you presenting only the facts?" Students enjoy case studies to help them understand the importance of content.
- "Review your directions/explanations – Are you giving concrete and complete guidelines?" If you want students to do an assignment a certain way, then give them an example. Remember, they want to please you!
- "Review your emphasis on individual work – Are you fighting a losing battle against collaboration? It could be worthwhile to set up some team activities



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or projects and use rubrics to assess individual participation." These are the students who are used to working in teams.

- "Review any tendency to provide 'one size fits all' teaching - Are students given some choices in their course content or deliverables?" Consider replacing a traditional research paper with a portfolio, video presentation or webpage submission that might better fit the student's learning style.

And now, just a word about the parents of Millennials. They have been commonly referred to as "helicopter parents" because of their habit of hovering over their Millennial. Parents of Millennials tend to be Boomers or Gen Xers. They are generally pessimists and are into attachment parenting. Many of us in higher education will have encounters with helicopter parents. The parents will choose the classes for their students and keep tabs on their grades with the password that their students give them. These parents also have a tendency to threaten legal action. In many of our minds, they are meddling, over-involved and interfering. The best advice in dealing with these parents is to try to deal directly with the student, not the parent, and always keep good documentation. This is especially true because of the constraints of the Buckley Amendment. (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act).

Now, go forth into the new world of the Millennials. May the force be with you!

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