

APPENDIX B:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE: Characteristics of ECU Students

Rationale: Oral and written communication instructors understand that a major component of communication is knowing your audience. Likewise, knowing the typical ECU student's background as well as the typical first-year experience makes communication in the classroom more effective (for more detail, see Howe & Strauss (*Millennials Go to College*, 2008) and <http://www.ir.ecu.edu/web/SurveyData&Results/NSSE/>).

BACKGROUND:

1. The majority of ECU students belong to a generation known as *Millennials* (1982+), who are:
 - Sheltered by their parents. As a result, they have learned to follow rules and expect them to be clearly defined. Also, they may not have adequate problem-solving skills.
 - Confident, especially in technology. However, they may need to readjust their perceptions of college standards (i.e., they may not get all A's as 41% did in high school).
 - Team-Oriented. With a strong desire to cooperate, they expect college projects will have the same highly structured nature of high school assignments, so they are averse to risk-taking and even individualism.
 - Conventional. Rewarded as children, they have learned the best way to get along is to go along.
2. Many ECU students (27%) are First-Generation, which often means they get little encouragement to stay in school or understanding of the higher education environment.
3. Many ECU students come from our service region, which contains two of the five poorest counties in America. 66% come from a family with income below \$75,000. 35% of first-year students receive Pell Grants. 80% of students receive some type of financial aid.
4. One out of every nine students has a documented disability.
5. Half of our students come needing a developmental class (i.e., math, reading, writing).

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE:

1. 60% of first-year students frequently worked harder than they thought in order to meet faculty expectations.
2. 30% of first-year students spent more than 15 hours/week preparing for class, but 20% worked five hours or less.
3. Only 5% of first-year students wrote more than 10 papers between 5-19 pages, and only 17% wrote at least one paper more than 20 pages in length.
4. 31% of first-year students read fewer than five assigned books and packs of course readings during the school year.