

# Campus Voice

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{THE BLUE BANNER}

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## Wanted: improved on-campus communication

### Generational stereotypes remain prevalent between faculty and students

Fact or fiction?

College students are coddled, lazy, irresponsible and impulsive individuals. Professors are traditional, boring, controlling and conservative. Well, these are the stereotypes. UNC Asheville psychology professor Ann Weber presents a very interesting perspective on this issue.

"College professors have generational stereotypes about their students, and students have generational stereotypes about their professors. That doesn't mean that they are necessarily true," Weber said.

Professors and students should learn to work through stereotypes because they can learn from each other.

"I had a homework assignment once that was called 'Keep Dr. Weber Cool,'" Weber said. "I would ask my students to send me the music, fashions and trends that they liked. I have to say, what I received was very interesting."

If the major differences between students and their professors are generational, we should not only recognize these differences, but also try to work through them.

"Overall, stereotypes in general are just superficial," Weber said. "Professors have many generalizations about students at first, but once they are able to get to know their students, the stereotypes go away."

Teens and 20-year-olds are the Millennial Generation and people between the ages of 30 and 60 are either Generation X or baby boomers, according to McCrindle research, an organization dedicated to studying generational patterns and demographic trends.

Is it a disadvantage if your col-



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lege professor grew up around the same time as your parents? If so, doesn't this mean the same generalizations your parents make about you are the same as your professor's?

"Many professors are the parents of millennial children. We raised you, we protected you, entertained you, we did everything. And as a result, we spoiled you into thinking that everything should be handed to you," Weber said.

Regardless of the circumstances, every student, at one time or another, probably encountered an older person comparing them to a generational stereotype.

"The younger generation is viewed by the older generation as unsophisticated, uninformed and less serious," Weber said. "These are all classic stereotypes about adolescents."

According to the McCrindle group, the baby boomer or Generation X professors are authoritative, responsible and strict.

While professors have stereotypes about the younger generation, students also have stereotypes about the older generation.

"My strict high school teacher told me to be responsible in college because professors don't remind you of when things are due," said freshman Hannah Orr. "He also said that professors are a little crazy and sometimes make

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bad jokes. I've found that to be true at UNCA."

The biology student says she knew her professors would try to relate to students in her generation in some way.

"Sometimes I think when professors try to relate to students it doesn't work, but it also depends on the student," Orr said.

Orr also says she recalls a time when her professor was more lenient when she injured herself.

"I also didn't expect my professors to be OK with me missing class for a couple of days, even though it was because I fell off of my bunk bed," Orr said.

More assessment programs would provide more opportunities for both students and professors to critique each other.

Assessment programs that exist at UNCA are the national survey of student engagement, the voluntary support of accountability and the collegiate learning assessment.

"When I was in college, I had a lot of stereotypes about my professors. I thought they were absent-minded nerds who always spilled

coffee on the papers they were grading," said associate professor of psychology Mark Harvey.

Harvey calls stereotypes "illusory correlations defined as beliefs that inaccurately suppose a relationship between a certain type of action or an effect."

"An example would be if someone says it always rains when I wash my car," Harvey said. "Because an individual always refers to when they washed their car and it rained, they maintained that stereotype based on that one instance."

Stereotypes cause a lot of misconceptions between the intentions of college students and their professors.

"Some stereotypes that the older generation have about college students I would definitely question, such as being cynical, or uninteresting, but a lot of stereotypes I hear are positive," Harvey said.

Though some are positive, stereotypes overall are misleading, unnecessary and almost always incorrect.

"I only hear positive things that professors say about their students. The professors here are very grateful to have students who are just willing to learn," Harvey said.

Accepting the generational differences and working through them can only help, not hinder, the relationship between students and their professors.

"Because our way of learning as a student was different, we should work together to learn things about each other and our differences and appreciate the things that are great and accept the things that we don't understand about each other," Weber said.