Title:
Student Focus: Efficacy of the online learning environment for varying generations

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Abstract:
The recent economy in the U.S. and the resulting employment problems have sent many
students back to school to change careers or to further their existing career by engaging in
graduate studies. Today’s online students are varied: some are born in a media-rich,
networked world; others have grown into it. How does this affect their performance as
online students, particularly those in graduate classes with a mix of generational
influences? The efficacy of providing varying generations of students with a self-
assessment of their learning strategies and distractions in an online environment will be
presented and discussed in this session.

Proposal
Faculty members have seen an increase in students from varying generations in their
online classes. The online environment provides these students with the benefits of being
able to balance the multiple demands of daily life, while conserving funds due to less
travel to a physical campus. However, the online environment allows distractions that the
student would not normally experience in a face-to-face classroom.

The research for this proposed poster presentation builds on four years of past research
studying university students and online learning preferences and strategies. This session
will present the results of a study that investigated those generational differences among
students, as well as the technology that distracted each of them.

The outcomes of this project include helping us to become better teachers in the
classroom whether it be online or on campus. With the influx of additional students from
various generations in our classes, the tools used in this study have helped to clarify for
the student their learning strengths as well as weaknesses. For the teacher, we have an
increased knowledge of how best to approach students who are at risk of distraction from
the varied, sometimes unrelated, technology available to them during an online class.