



Higher Education Biblical Foundation Course Design Model

ESTABLISHING A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Today’s students have different learning characteristics than previous generations;ⁱ and those coming to Adventist institutions of higher learning are compelling the institutions to change. Based on conversations with currently enrolled students, the authors learned these students are looking to be engaged and they want their courses to be designed with our Seventh-day Adventist biblical foundation. When they graduate, Adventist students want to be ready to meet the world head on, with their Adventist Christian worldview developed. They want to come away with an understanding of how the scriptures apply to their vocation and calling.ⁱⁱ We must challenge students to choose the Lord and use an Adventist Christian worldview as the perspective from which to make decisions and operate their lives.

Joshua gave the Israelites a clear choice similar to the choice professors are given: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood,” (i.e. a traditional approach, teaching the way we were taught), “or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell,” (i.e. a contemporary approach, teaching the way things are taught in other

institutions); “but as for me and my house,” (classroom), “we will serve the Lord,”ⁱⁱⁱ (i.e. following the divine plan for education built on the foundation of scripture, committed to service, with a view of eternity).

The importance of this choice is highlighted in the book “Total Truth.” Author Nancy Pearcey warns professors what happens when one hasn’t developed a biblical approach for delivering the course content.

The danger is that if Christians don’t consciously develop a Biblical approach to the (academic) subject, then we will *unconsciously* absorb some other philosophical approach. A set of ideas for interpreting the world is like a philosophical toolbox, stuffed with terms and concepts.

If Christians do not develop their own tools of analysis, then when some issue comes up that they want to understand, they’ll reach over and borrow *someone else’s* tools—whatever concepts are generally accepted in their professional field or in the culture at large. ... ‘The tools shape the user.’^{iv}

The authors outline their seven steps for designing a course using the *Higher Education Biblical Foundation Course Design Model*.

STEP 1: CREATE A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION COURSE CONCEPT MAP

The professor should begin the process by “beginning with the end in mind” through specific reflection on the following questions: “What is the over-arching biblical concept which defines my course?” “How is this concept a truth about God?” and “What **biblical examples (BEs)** of this concept can be shared meaningfully throughout this course?” The answers to these questions are used to begin the development of the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map*.

The map streamlines the professor’s thinking and outlines the biblical course concept and its alignment to **BEs**, the academic or **declarative knowledge (DKs)**, and processes or **procedural knowledge (PKs)**, of the course, along with the course **assessments** which will be used to measure the student’s grasp of the content. Because the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map* is a visual representation of all essential elements of the course design, it becomes an important part of the course syllabus.

Table 1

A PARTIAL LIST OF BIBLICAL CONCEPTS

Abundance	Choice	Desire	Feelings	Identity	Order	Restoration
Acceptance	Circle of Life	Discovery	Forgiveness	Individuality	Organization	Rhythm
Accountability	Commitment	Diversity	Free will	Intentionality	Overcoming	Self-Awareness
Adaptation	Communication	Emotions	Freedom	Interaction	Patterns	Self-Worth
Adjustment	Compassion	Empowerment	Friendship	Interdependence	Peace	Strength
Alignment	Connection	Environments	Fulfillment	Justice	Perspective	Systems
Ambition	Cooperation	Equality	Grace	Knowledge	Power	Tradition
Appreciation	Coping	Eternity	Gratitude	Leadership	Reality	Transformation
Balance	Courage	Ethics	Growth	Liberty	Rebellion	Trust
Beauty	Creativity	Excellence	Harmony	Living	Rebirth	Truth
Belonging	Culture	Experience	Heroism	Love	Reconstruction	Unity
Brotherhood	Death/Dying	Explore	Hierarchy	Loyalty	Redemption	Values
Caring	Democracy	Fairness	Honor	Morals	Reflection	Will
Change	Dependency	Faith	Hope	Nationalism	Relationships	
Character	Design	Family	Humor	Nature	Renewal	

To begin the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map*:

- Identify two to three **biblical concepts** that could represent the essence of this course. See Table 1, for a partial list of **biblical concepts** that were collected by professors.
- Next, the authors suggest you spend time in Bible study, prayer, and reflection with the identified **biblical concepts**, asking God to help determine which one biblical concept will best represent the truth of God within the academic content of this course.
- Continue the process by writing the **defining sentence**: one sentence that connects the biblical course concept to the academic course content.

For example, the professor of COMM 397: Communication Research, identified “Discovery” as the **biblical course concept** because she identified the biblical basis for her course to be from Deuteronomy 29:29. The professor then wrote the defining sentence: “God has designed the process of discovery to reveal to us what He wants us to know.”

- The **biblical course concept** and the **defining sentence** are placed in a green diamond shape in the center of the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map*. Figure 1 shows the beginning of the *Biblical Course Concept Map* for COMM 397.

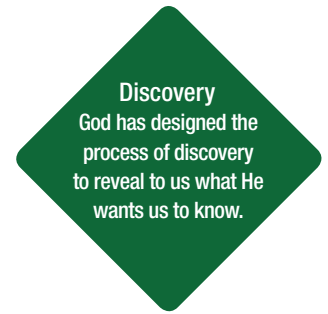


Figure 1: Biblical Course Concept and Defining Sentence for COMM 397

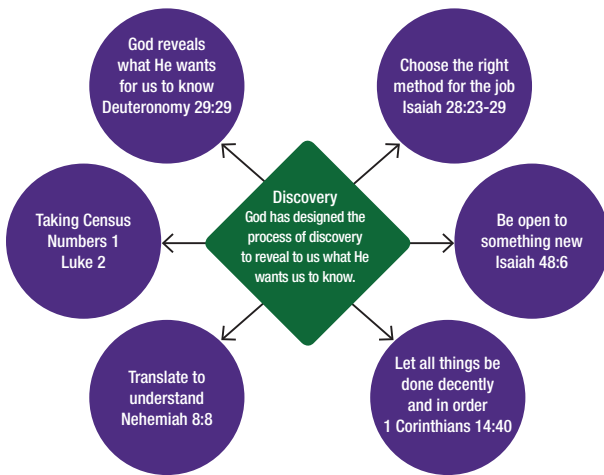


Figure 2: Biblical Examples tied to Biblical Course Concept for COMM 397

Next, identify **Biblical Examples (BEs)** which include biblical teachings, fundamental beliefs, and specific Bible stories that illustrate the **biblical concept**.

The professor identified six BEs for the course:

1. Deuteronomy 29:29 – Discover God’s revelations
2. Isaiah 28:23-29 – Choose the right method for the job
3. 1 Corinthians 14:40 – Let all things be done decently and in order
4. Isaiah 48:6 – Be open to something new
5. Nehemiah 8:8 – Translate to understand
6. Numbers 1 & Luke 2 – Taking a census (a procedural format)

- Put each of the **BEs** in a separate purple circle and use arrows to connect the **biblical course concept** to each of the **BEs** on the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map*. See Figure 2.

The **Biblical Foundation Course Design Model** emphasizes the identification of the desired end results for the academic course content.

- This is done by determining and listing what **declarative knowledge (DK)** and **procedural knowledge (PK)** students need to know or do to demonstrate understanding of the academic course content.

The professor identified three **DK statements** and three **PK statements** for the course.

- Place each **DK** in an orange rectangular shape and each **PK** in a blue hexagon shape and add them to the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map*. Most professors do not have an identical number of **DKs** and **PKs**. However, the total number of combined **DKs** and **PKs** should be limited to no more than eight.
- Review the **BEs** already identified and determine where the **BEs** align best to a **DK** or a **PK**. The **BEs** are usually rearranged on the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map* to a position closer to the **DK** or **PK** where they best align, and an arrow is drawn connecting the **BEs** to the appropriate **DKs** or **PKs**. Figure 3 shows the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map* with the **DKs** and **PKs** added for COMM 397.

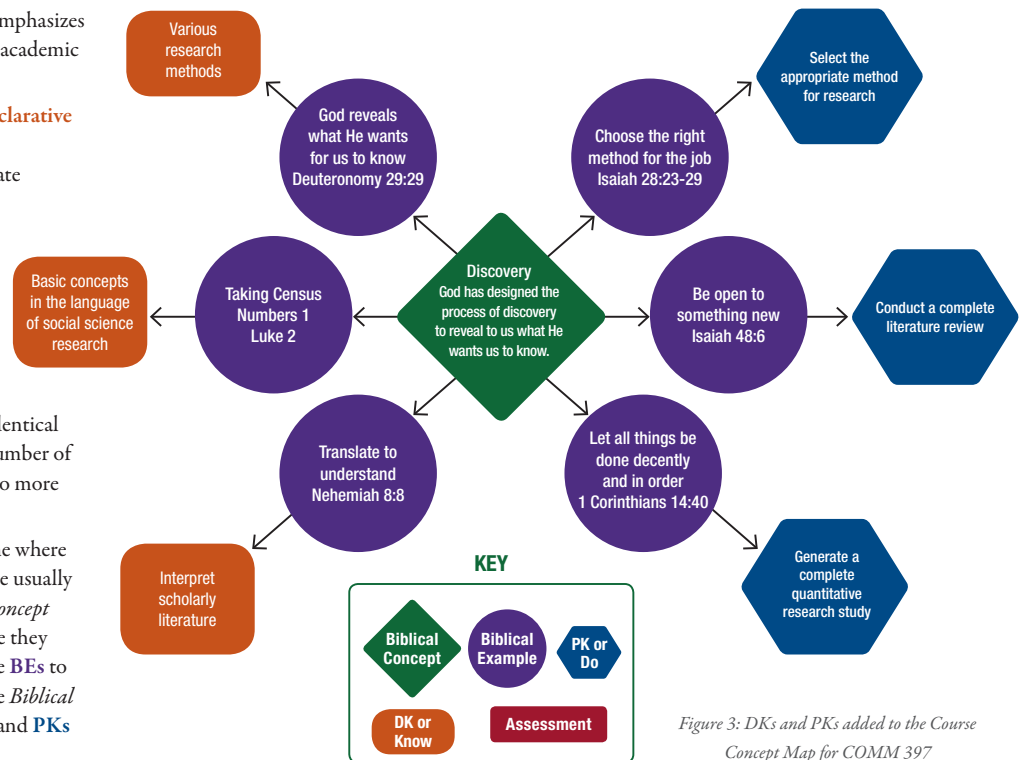


Figure 3: DKs and PKs added to the Course Concept Map for COMM 397

- Finally, to complete the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map* process determine which **assessments** measure student understanding of each of the **DKs** and **PKs**. For current students, real world activities or projects should be used whenever possible. Place the **assessments** in red rectangular shapes and connect each to the appropriate **DK** or **PK**. One **assessment** may connect to more than one **DK** or **PK**. Use real world activities or projects for these **assessments** whenever possible.

In COMM 397, the professor chose to use Tool Presentations, Literature Reviews, Study Guides, Annotated References, Choral Readings, and a Group Project, along with tests as the **assessments** for the course. The completed *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map* for COMM 397 (Figure 4) shows the *biblical course concept* and the *defining sentence* aligned to the **BEs**, the **BEs** aligned to the **DKs** and **PKs**, and the **DKs** and **PKs** aligned to the corresponding **assessments**.

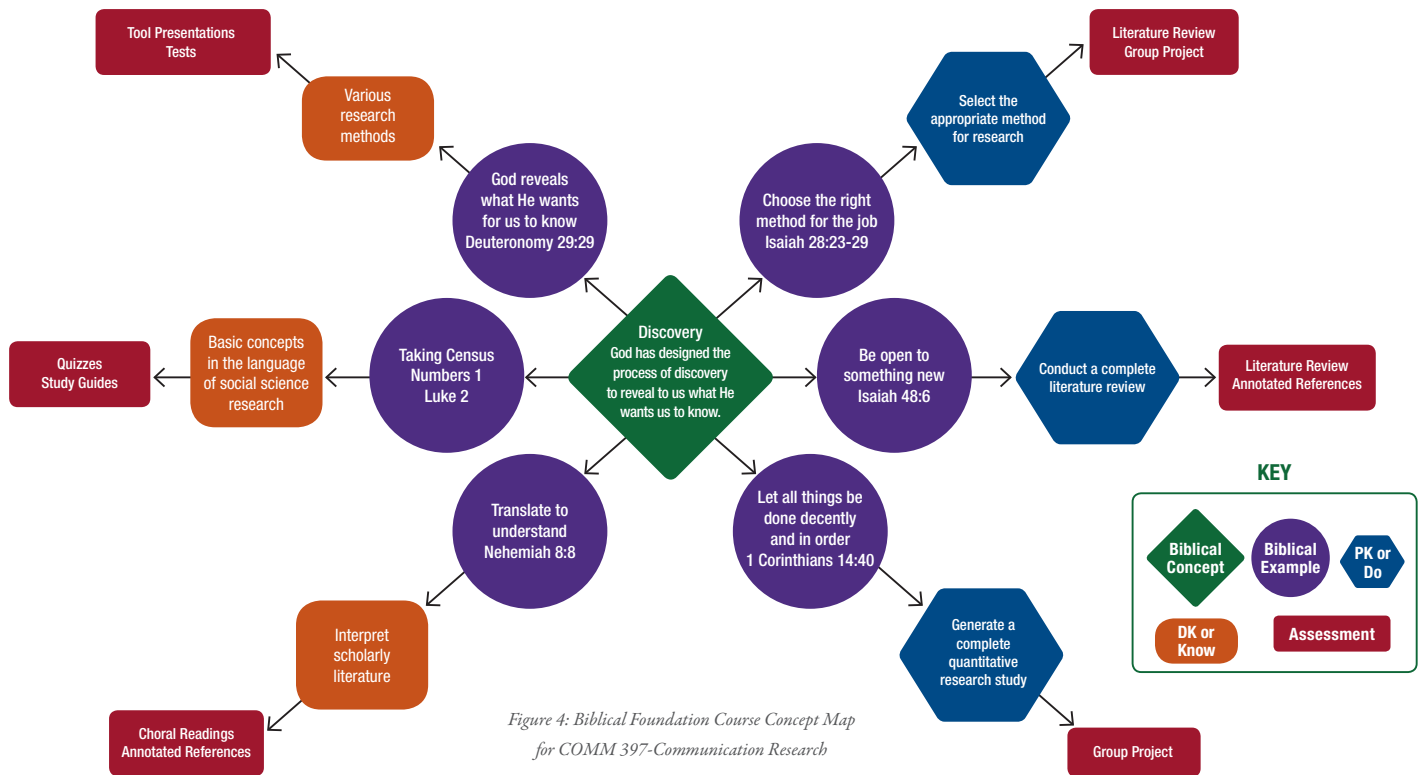


Figure 4: Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map for COMM 397-Communication Research

STEP 2: WRITE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning Outcomes (LOs) describe in sentence form what students will be able to demonstrate in terms of knowledge and procedures upon finishing the course. The LOs build on the **DKs** and **PKs** identified in the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map* of Step One and are designed to intentionally show the progression of the learning process to move students toward higher-order thinking as represented by the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy. The LOs will be recorded in the course syllabus so students understand what will be expected of them as they complete the course.

One LO is written for each **DK** and **PK**. Keep the following in mind:

- Focus on student learning and state the LOs in clear, measurable, and observable terms. Vague words, such as “understand,” “know,” and “become familiar with,” are difficult to measure and should be avoided. Instead, choose action verbs from the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy such as “perform,” “identify,” “describe,” “explain,” and “demonstrate.” Foundational courses or General Education courses, will use more verbs from the lower levels of the taxonomy—*remembering, understanding, and applying*—while upper division and graduate courses will draw more from the higher levels—*analyzing, evaluating, and creating*.
- The LOs should be listed after the sentence stem, “Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to do the following:”. Table 2 shows the LOs for COMM 397. Remember, there is a *one-to-one* correlation between each LO and a **DK** or **PK**; and, each LO should begin with an active verb from the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

The LOs for COMM 397 are listed in the Table 2 box. Each outcome correlates directly to a **DK** or **PK** and is written beginning with an active verb. The taxonomy category is listed in parenthesis after the LO.

Table 2 Learning Outcomes for COMM 397- Communication Research

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to do the following:

1. Define the basic concepts in the language of social science research. (Remembering)
2. Interpret scholarly literature. (Understanding)
3. Examine various research methods/tools. (Analyzing)
4. Conduct a complete literature review (Evaluating)
5. Apply the appropriate method for your research study. (Applying)
6. Generate a complete quantitative research study. (Creating)

STEP 3: SELECT YOUR TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Active Teaching and Learning Activities (T/LAs) should be identified and used to engage students.^{vi} Research evidence overwhelmingly supports the claim that students learn best when they engage with course material and actively participate in their learning. Active learning shifts the focus of instruction from professor delivery to student involvement and takes the place of a professor lecturing for the entire class period. It is understood that students must take ownership of their learning and come to class *prepared* to interact with the day’s lesson. Students will recognize that to succeed in an interactive course, they must become active learners taking responsibility for their own learning.

Active T/LAs feature a wide range of activities which share the common element of “involving students in *doing* things and *thinking* about the things they are doing” according to Bonwell and Eison’s research.^{vii} Further studies indicate T/LAs are associated with greater academic achievement among today’s students.^{viii}

Other major characteristics associated with active learning include: immediate professor feedback, increased student motivation—especially for adult university learners, and student participation in higher order thinking (analyzing, evaluating, and creating).

As you plan to introduce each LO, also plan to incorporate several active T/LAs in your daily plans. T/LAs range from simple (i.e. periodic pause, minute paper, or think-pair-share) to complex (i.e. simulation, problem-based learning, or service learning) which involve more preparation and classroom time. For detailed strategies and more information on the benefits of active teaching and learning techniques visit the following links:

- <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/active/strategies/>
- http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101_Tips.pdf

Active T/LAs release both the professor and the student from covering every page in a textbook and moves the textbook to its rightful place in the course—a resource. It also allows professors time to bring in the biblical connections and Adventist beliefs identified in the first step of this *Biblical Foundation Course Design Model*. Students need to see the connections between the **biblical course concept**, **BEs**, the **DKs** and **PKs**, and the class activities and assignments.

STEP 4: PLAN FOR FEEDBACK

Designing a Feedback Plan (FP) is the fourth step in the course design model and will also become part of the course syllabus. The FP should have two parts: it should outline how the professor will *ask* for feedback *from the students* and how the professor will *give* feedback *to the students*. Without a Feedback Plan most assignments seem to stand on their own and are often seen simply as busy work by students. The absence of prompt, useful feedback reduces interest in learning. When professors provide students with prompt feedback followed by a discussion of incorrect responses, they are using one of the most *powerful predictors of positive student outcomes*.

In Part 1 of the FP, professors should share the **techniques** they will use to collect feedback from students. Feedback from students is often overlooked by professors; but, a quick strategy, the minute paper, can be used by professors to quickly obtain helpful and important student feedback. To use this strategy, ask students to write in class for one minute and answer one question similar to: “What was the most important thing you learned during this class?” “What important question remains unanswered?” Or, “Give an example that relates to the topic of the day.” Other ways professors often receive feedback from students include using student response systems (clickers) and/or through course evaluations including a mid-term evaluation. Mid-term evaluations, developed by the professor, can be used to assess how the course is being perceived by the students while there is still time to make revisions prior to the final course evaluation.

In Part 2, the plan should also list the **timeframe** for returning graded papers *with feedback* AND the timeframe for electronically responding back to student questions. Professors should provide student feedback within 24-48 hours to intentionally “close the assessment loop” for most assignments. Ideally, this closure allows students to utilize the professor’s input to improve learning in subsequent class activities and assignments. If feedback for a large assignment will take longer than 48 hours, professors should state the expected return date in the syllabus and again remind the students when the assignment is collected. (Students generally expect regular assignments graded and returned within 2 days and projects/reports within 1 week.) The FP should end with how students get additional feedback or assistance if they desire it.

STEP 5: PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT

To make the **assessment** a valuable learning activity, today’s students need to know, upfront, what to expect and when to expect it. They also desire options; variety in assessment options help learners feel like they have some ability to create their own meaningful learning experience, which is a critical desire of students entering higher education classrooms today.

Frequent **assessment** throughout the course is important; professors should identify both formative (ongoing, low-stakes) and summative (final) assessments in the **Assessment Plan (AP)**. The AP describes in detail the *criteria of how students are to be graded* for each assignment, including *weighting of categories/assignments* and the *grading scale* for the course. The AP should also *provide a rubric and/or checklist for each major assignment/project* and *identify how and when quizzes and tests are given*.

Professors should provide a *course calendar* in the syllabus; and the calendar should list the due dates for all quizzes and other assignments/**assessments**. In reality, all assignments are generally formative or summative assessments, because they are used to assess student learning. But not all **assessments** are assignments. Professors often informally assess student learning during class discussions or other in-class activities.

STEP 6: CHECK FOR ALIGNMENT

An important element of the *Biblical Foundation Course Design Model* is alignment. All components of the model should be checked to make sure they are in alignment with each other. The professor should remember:

- The course’s biblical foundation of faith and learning should be represented by the *biblical course concept* and *defining sentence*, which should be naturally connected through the **BEs** to a **DK** and/or **PK**.
- Every T/LA should align to a **DK** or **PK**; and, every **DK** and **PK** should align to an **LO**; and, every **LO** should be **assessed**.
- There should be at least one assignment, active T/LA, and **assessment** for every **LO**.

STEP 7: PREPARE A DETAILED SYLLABUS

To culminate the newly designed course, create a detailed syllabus which reflects the requirements of the institution and keeps in mind the preferences of today’s students. The syllabus should include:

- All elements illustrating the course’s biblical foundation such as the *Biblical Foundation Course Concept Map* and a paragraph describing the biblical foundation connection to the academic content of the course.
- Office Hours: including regular and electronic avenues for students to contact the professor outside of class time. Note that electronic communication is the preferred style of communication by most of today’s students—be available electronically, while you are in the office and include *all* options and hours.
- Hours and contact pathways for additional help possibilities such as the IT/IS or LMS Help Desk, library resources, Research and Writing Center, and/or lab assistants, etc.
- **Feedback** and **Assessment Plans** that are detailed and easily identifiable.
- Required policies from your institution, such as Students’ with Disabilities & Academic Honesty (plagiarism) policies.
- Detailed directions for completing all the assignments that have been listed in the course calendar with rubrics and/or checklists for all major assignments.

ⁱ“Getting to Know Gen Z – Exploring Middle and High Schoolers’ Expectations for Higher Education,” (Barnes & Noble College, 2012), accessed July 5, 2017, <http://www.bncollege.com/Gen-Z-Research-Report-Final.pdf>

ⁱⁱRick Ostrander Interview with David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, “Developing Good Faith,” *Advance*, (Washington DC, Counsel for Christian Colleges and Universities, Spring 2016), accessed July 7, 2017, https://issuu.com/cccu/docs/16_springadvance_web/55, pps. 54-55.

ⁱⁱⁱJoshua 24:15 (King James Version)

^{iv}Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005), p. 44.

^vStephen Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1989), pps. 95-144.

^{vi}Jeff Nevid, “Teaching the Millennials”, *Observer* 24, no. 5, (May/June 2011) Association for Psychological Sciences, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2011/may-june-11/teaching-the-millennials.html>

^{vii}Charles Bonwell and James Eison, “Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom,” *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1*, (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 1991), p. 19.

^{viii}Vickie C. Cook, “Engaging Generation Z Students”, (University of Illinois Springfield, 2015), accessed July 7, 2017, https://sites.google.com/a/uis.edu/colts_cook/home/engaging-generation-z-students