

Age Diversity

At Roane State Community College, diversity is a term well exhibited throughout the campus. One displayed dynamic in Roane State classes is the mixture of student ages. In each class, a student's age can range from eighteen to sixty and consist of students anywhere in between. This diversity is common among college classes, however it is a big change to the normal of what a college freshman, like me, is used to. The age difference changes the feel and mentality of a class while bringing in the idea that anyone of any age can enter any class.

Many pressures can come from sitting in the same class room as an older man; a man who could already have completed many years in a career such as nuclear engineering. The demands are infinite. For example, say that man is taking the same English class with me and I have a question about a paper, but instead of getting that question answered, I stay quiet for fear that the older man, or anyone in that higher age group, finds my question juvenile and ignorant. The pressure to be as sophisticated and educated as the other, more mature students in the classroom is tangible. Also, the weight of the teacher's expectation is present as well. My dual enrollment psychology teacher told my senior class one day about how a thirty year old, single mother made better grades in his class than a nineteen year old that lives at home and has no demands of him whatsoever, and my teacher was absolutely astounded by that fact. The idea, conceived in my head after that story, was the fact that I had no reason to be any less capable than a person with hardships I hope to never have to experience. Therefore, the stress of staying as proficient and dedicated as the older students in my class is a huge difference than what I was used to in high school.

Elaborating on that subject, high school was a place where all my peers and friends put fun first and homework second to chores. It seems that the older students in my classes find college as an opportunity instead of a nuisance as school was in high school. The older students have usually already been to college, and see their current school work as a necessity to further their lives into a successful career. I feel that the mindset of my older peers is the kind that I should obtain, and the transition from high school graduate to college scholar is strange and difficult. In addition, the diversity of age in college freshman classes is very different than the age difference in high school freshman classes. In high school, grades were separated by age and the only difference was maybe a year or so. However, now, age is irrelevant and anyone with any criteria can be in any “grade.” That fact is a very weird idea to become acquainted with. It takes a classroom to a whole new level.

Maturity is not a bad thing. When students act mature in a classroom, things get done quicker and conversations take place that are intelligent and applicable to the subject at hand. With mature, adult individuals mixed in with a classroom of young adults, the class gets a serious and established feel to it, making the room demanding yet conventional. With the influence of an older person added to the room, the “class clown” is less likely to act out, and propels the class forward at a faster rate. This is enjoyable; however, it can be a bit stressful to go at a speed that is set more for the older students. The mature feeling brought about by the addition of older students also puts pressure on me and the younger students, just as the pressure is put on by the older students’ knowledge.

All together, the diversity in the classroom can be beneficial in some ways, like moving quickly and getting things done through the determination of the class. However, it can also be stressful with the pressures of more mature and knowledgeable individuals listening to one’s

ideas and thoughts. The jump from high school to college is a big one, but in the long run it will hopefully teach me to look at college the way my older peers do, as an opportunity. The age diversity creates a mature mentality along with a pressure to succeed and establish a successful career as those who returned to college are hoping to do as well.