The Emerging Role of Parents in Higher Education

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AACRAO
March 2, 2007
Boston, MA

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U of MN Facts as of Fall 2006

Enrollment – Fall 2006

- Undergraduate degree-seeking: 28,645
- New High School: 5,439
- New Advanced Standing: 1,645

U of M Parent Program History

- Coordinated effort started in 1993 (one-half of an FTE)
- Design, edit and send parent newsletter
- Full-time director position created in 1999
- Coordinate newsletter, website, email, listserv, on-campus events, blog, off-campus events, orientation

Characteristics of Today's Students/Parents

Level of family involvement is not what it used to be

- Parents have been told to be involved
- College finances
- Technology

Asking parents to "let go" is asking them to change how their family relates

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Characteristics of Today's Students/Parents

Today's parents are

- Accustomed to guiding their students' activities
- In close contact with their students
- Frequently college grads themselves
- Experienced in changing institutions
- Technologically savvy
- Increasingly, GenX'ers

Characteristics of Today's Students/Parents

Today's students are

- Savvy in technology—and use it all the time
- Respectful of social conventions & institutions; authority oriented
- Financially dependent on their parents
- Close to their parents
- Initiating communication with parents; parents are their "best advisers"

Frequency of Family Communication

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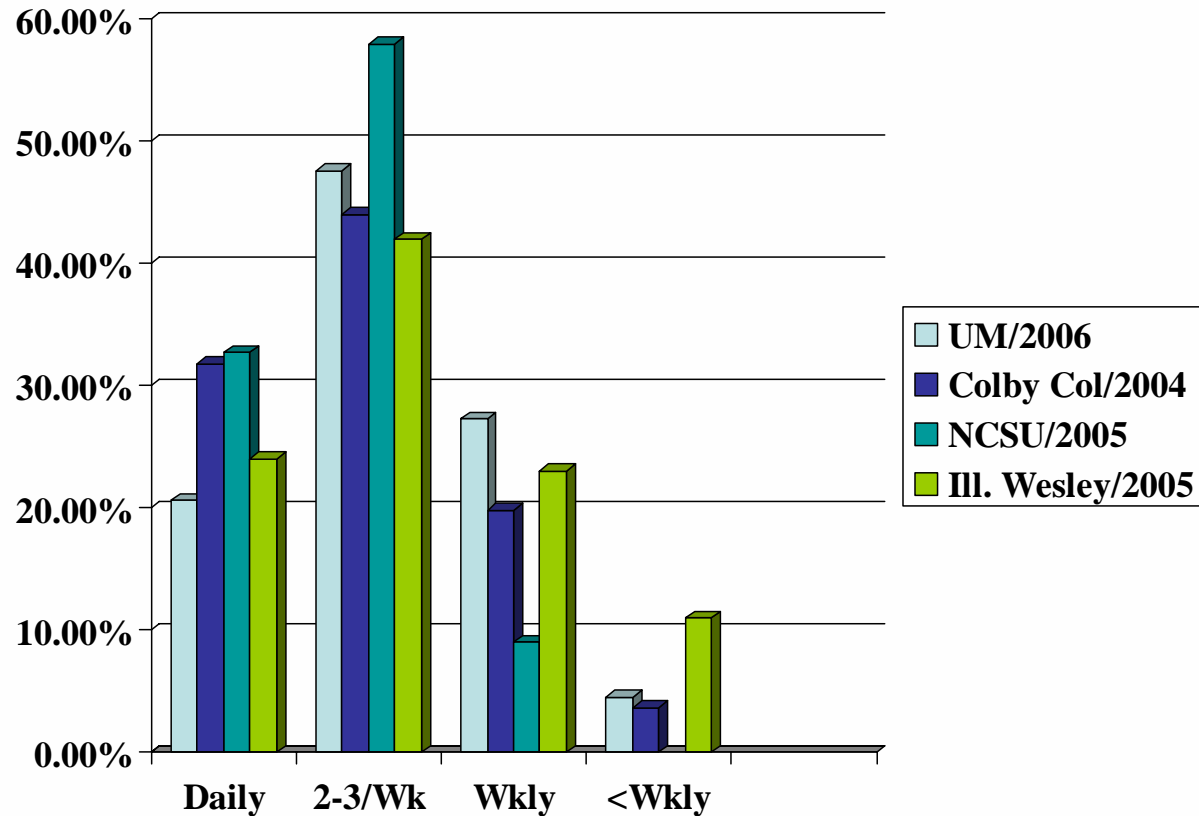
Parents' Expectations of the College/University

- Admissions
- First Year Programs Office
- Parent Program Office
- Colleges
- Departments
- Academic Support Resources

great
STUDENTS

Parents' Expectations of the College/University

- Flow of information
- A secure, regulated environment
- Nice amenities (larger residence hall rooms, more privacy, better dining options)
- Improved learning conditions, services
- Students' control over their schedule
- More customization, personalization
- "Value" and "Results"

Parent expectations affect student expectations

"The FERPA Effect"

- FERPA launches a significant change in parent/student roles
- Factors that affect response to FERPA
  - Parents' educational background
  - Cultural background
  - Economic factors
- How/when FERPA is explained makes a difference
- Different institutions deal with FERPA differently

Meeting Expectations without Violating FERPA

- Talk about policies; make policies readily available – paper and web-based

- Talk about "what usually happens"

- Explain how parents can get information they need

- Make it easy for students to provide information/access

New Privacy and Security Tutorial for Parents

- Addresses privacy and security from a student data perspective
  - Grades, registration, FERPA
  - Housing information
  - Mental and physical health information
  - Faculty information
  - Advising information

Handling Crises without Violating FERPA

- What is a crisis? (Parents may have a different definition)

- Who has the critical information at *this moment?*

- Who has background information?

Special Considerations and FERPA

- What does a release cover/not cover?

- Is there a single, clear institutional approach? Do all staff people understand the institution's approach?

- Do staff members know how policies affect other offices on campus?

- What about faculty?

U of MN Approach to Parents

- Parent Program Coordinator – written book "You're On Your Own (But I'm Here if You Need Me)"
- Parent Orientation
- Parent Website

  (www.parent.umn.edu)
- Parent Newsletter
- Parent E-mail – E-mail updates
- Parent Blog
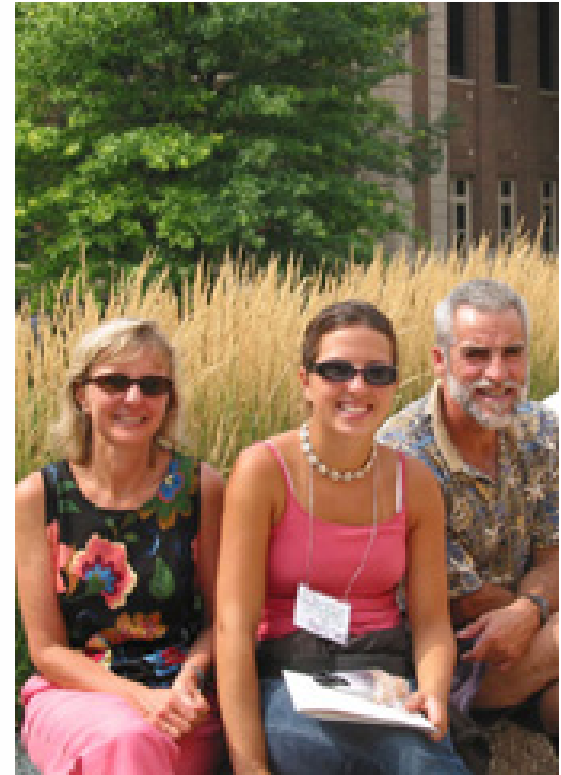
Parent Orientation

- Optional parent orientation - $25/parent
- 700 participants in 1995
- 3,495 participants in 2006
- Separate from student orientation (but concurrent)
- Focus on resources and services available to the student
- Nitty-gritty of registration, financial aid, FERPA, campus safety, housing, billing

Parent Website

Highlight Contact Information

Parent "Outcomes" (Parallel Student "Outcomes")

Families contribute to student success by

- Understanding the student experience

- Knowing campus resources

- Supporting University's goals for student learning outcomes

- Knowing when to empower student to take responsibility, make decisions; when to step in with *appropriate* support (understand FERPA)

- Developing an affinity for the University

Parent Newsletter

- Paper and on-line
- Timely topics
- Questions answered by counseling staff
- Upcoming events
- "Place for Parents" at Move-In Day and Homecoming

Parent E-mail

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UNIVERSITY Parent

Parent Communications

Inside U Parent

Parent Communications
General Information
Academics
Room and Board
Money Matters
Health and Safety
Career Planning
Transportation
Timely Issues
Parent Events
FAQ and Help
Fun and Interesting
Contact Information
E-mail Us
U of M Home
Parent Home

Search the Parent Web site

Go

Home > Parent Communications > Recent E-mail

Parent E-mail—March 8, 2006

—Please Take the Parent Survey
—Spring Break
—Finance Update
—Scholarship Information
—Miscellaneous

Just in time for Spring Break, the College of Continuing Education released its U Reads 2006 list of recommended reading. Each year, a group of students, staff, and faculty are asked to recommend titles for the list, and this year's contributors came up with an eclectic collection, including "the story of a family's fraught transformation to American life from their tradition-bound life in India; true tales of globalization and life 65 million years ago; a discussion of how running a navy ship is similar to managing a business organization; and thoughtful and insightful fictional works." Those fictional works include the ever-popular The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger. For information about the U Reads program and for this year's list, see www.umn.edu/umnnews/Feature_Stories/U_Reads_20063A_10_more_books.html.

—Please Take the Parent Survey
Every two years, we survey the parents of our students. We want to know if the Parent Program is meeting your expectations, if you are receiving the information you need about the University, what concerns you have about your student, and what your student's experience has been. We use the information you provide to assess and improve the University's parent services and communications. The survey also informs other offices on campus about parents' perceptions of the student experience.

Please help us by filling out the survey at the following Web site: www.parent.umn.edu/survey.html. It should take about 10 to 15 minutes.

To encourage you to participate, we have lined up some prizes. At the end of the survey, you can register for a chance to win a one-night stay at the Historic Faculty House adjacent to campus (www.facultyhouse.net); one of three $25 University Bookstores gift certificates; or a copy of You're on Your Own (But I'm Here if You Need Me: Mentoring Your Child during the College Years, by U of M Parent Program Director, Marjorie Savage (Simon & Schuster, 2003).

Thank you. We need and appreciate your input. Again, the Web address is www.parent.umn.edu/survey.html. If you would prefer to respond to a paper survey, send an e-mail to parent@umn.edu or call 612-626-9291, and we will send a paper copy and a stamped envelope for its return.

—Spring Break
Students will be on Spring Break next week. Many students choose to stay on campus over Spring Break in order to have time to catch up on projects and studying, or they just want to enjoy the University without classes for a change. The residence hall dining facilities are not open during break; they will close after lunch on Friday, March 10, but students can order a Grab & Go dinner for that evening. The dining facilities in the residence halls will open again for brunch on Sunday, March 19.

The University will be closed on Friday, March 17.

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Move-In Day

- Assist with move-in
- Hold specific informational and "meet and greet" events for parents
- Informal program to remind parents of basics of campus life – allow ample time for questions
- Gives students and parents a break from each other

Appropriate Family Involvement

Parents can benefit the institution through
– Recruitment
– Retention and graduation messages
– Legislative support
– Affiliation (membership in "Alumni & Friends" group or Parent Association)
– Financial donations
– Volunteers (mentoring, assisting with campus events)

Conclusion

- Not going to change family relationships
- Work collaboratively to meet parents/students expectations
- Proactively addressing FERPA concerns is better than reacting to complaints
- Outward expression of commitment to parents makes a difference

Questions?

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