

**CREATING PARENT INTERACTIONS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES THAT  
ASSIST WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE AND INDEPENDENT  
PROBLEM SOLVING IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

by

Susan Little Lantz

An executive position paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Summer 2016

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## **DEDICATION**

*Dad, I completed this for the both of us.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The millennial generation has brought a new challenge to the work of student affairs professionals on campuses: rising numbers of students inexperienced in dealing with problems associated with the independence of college life and rising numbers of “helicopter” parents all-too-willing to intervene. Instead of solving problems independently, many college students now depend upon their parents to assist with challenges faced during the college years. And more parents now are ready and willing to intervene when learning of problems or challenges their child has experienced. In order to increase situations in which students are self-reliant, it is important that college administrators manage parental involvement in positive and helpful ways, engaging their assistance in the developmental growth of the college student. This Executive Position Paper (EPP) explores this issue with the aim of helping higher education student affairs professionals develop productive relationship with parents that promote student growth and self-reliance. This EPP draws on literature, my professional experience, and survey information from student affairs professionals. This information and information on best practices at colleges and universities is the basis for proposing seven strategies to create positive parent interactions and effective practices to help student develop resilience and independent problem-solving skills. This EPP concludes with a more specific action plan for Bucknell University.

## **Chapter 1**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE**

#### **Introduction**

I was in my office at the university when I heard the door to the student conduct administrator's office slam shut and saw a student in tears running into the hallway of our student union. Minutes later my assistant indicated that a parent was on the phone requesting to talk with the dean about a student conduct issue. The two situations were connected. Lindsay was applying to study abroad during her junior year of college and needed a letter of recommendation from the conduct administrator, since she had previously violated the student code of conduct. During her conversation with the conduct administrator, Lindsay became concerned that she might not receive a positive recommendation, reducing her chances of being approved to take courses in South Africa with her friends. Overwhelmed by the situation, Lindsay fled and immediately called her parents. Both parents were on the phone when my assistant transferred the call. The parents immediately explained that the reason for their call was to fix the problem caused by the conduct administrator.

This story illustrates a growing challenge experienced by student affairs administrators in colleges and universities across the country: too many college students without the ability to solve problems when dealing with personal, social, and academic challenges. Due to strong connections with their parents, one behavior pattern some

students fall back on is calling, texting, or emailing their parents immediately and either asking for help or complaining in a way that compels the parent to take over and solve the problem, therefore taking the responsibility away from the student. “A result is that [college students] are unprepared for stumbles. Even worse, they are surprised when they occur and baffled about how to deal with them” (Levine & Dean 2012, p. 90).

Lindsay was surprised by the conduct administrator’s reaction to her request and was shocked that her behavior earlier in her academic career could possibly jeopardize her future in this way. Lindsay quickly felt out of control of her academic future and immediately contacted her parents before trying any other coping or problem-solving mechanism. Her parents had previously managed difficult situations for her and she needed their assistance in this moment as well.

More than any other generation, current college students have strong connections and frequent communication with their parents. Forty-one percent of students are in touch with parents by phone, email, text, or visit at least daily and 19% of college students contact their parents three or more times per day (Levine & Dean, 2012). At the same time, parents are increasingly involved and passionate about their children’s educational experience at every level, including college (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The result is that the relationship between parents and university administrators has also changed, with many parents becoming immediately involved in the daily problems and crisis situations involving their children.

Lindsay’s parents felt that the study abroad experience was imperative to her successful college education. When talking with them, I realized they were prepared to

use whatever was in their control to help their daughter reach her educational goal. The conversation was not angry or even overly controversial. They loved their daughter dearly and wanted to help her through this personal struggle. I spent the remainder of the week in numerous conversations with Lindsay and her parents, assisting Lindsay through this obstacle in her college education.

### **Problem Statement**

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) includes “problem solving,” defined as the “process of designing, evaluating, and implementing a strategy to answer an open-ended question or achieve a desired goal,” in their "Essential Learning Outcomes" used by many colleges and universities. Many institutions of higher education adapt the AAC&U learning outcomes to assist in fulfilling their mission for their students. Problem solving is an example of an “intellectual and practical skill” universities hope to see students develop prior to graduation. This involves educating students to learn strategies to solve problems at an increasingly complex level (AAC&U, 2007).

Although faculty and administrators often see the current population of Millennial students as capable of demonstrating the academic ability of problem solving within the academic curriculum, they see these same students as unable to solve personal and social difficulties often associated with college life: a request being declined by a college administrator, a challenging roommate relationship, the inability to join a desired club or organization, or a failed exam or paper (Lythcott-Haims, 2015). Instead of solving problems independently, too many college students are at a loss about what to do and



depend on their parents to address these challenges. And too many parents are likely to intervene directly when contacted by their children about an obstacle they are facing.

According to “Chief Student Affairs Officer: Responsibilities, Opinions, and Professional Pathways of Leaders in Student Affairs,” a 2014 report from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, parental involvement is one of the top issues faced by campus administrators (Wesaw & Sponsler, 2014). The web has many articles on helicopter parents, snowplow parents, hovercraft parents, and tiger moms on college campuses. Although many parent interactions can be helpful, it is often the difficult parent conversations that can be overwhelmingly time-consuming and frustrating for campus administrators and antithetical to the student’s educational and developmental growth.

Recent surveys reveal that 68% of student affairs administrators report an increase in parent involvement in college student lives within the four-year time period. These administrators report that too often this parental involvement is intrusive and excessive (Levine & Dean, 2012). Examples of overinvolved parent interactions include situations in which parents call housing offices to resolve facility issues such as replacing light bulbs and fixing room temperatures. Parents contact deans to complain about grades, excuse students from missed classes, and resolve roommate conflicts. This type of parent involvement can often take the educational focus away from the student’s developmental process of becoming self-reliant and independent. Having parents swoop in to solve difficult problems for the college student encourages a continuation of

parental dependence for problem solving and is counter-productive to students' development of autonomy.

### **Purpose**

The main aims of this Executive Position Paper (EPP) are (a) to help student affairs professionals learn more about the growing “helicopter parent” issue and its implications for student affairs work and (b) to learn strategies for better managing parental involvement so that it is most productive for the college student and the institution. The ultimate goal is to shift from the type of parental involvement that diminishes students' opportunities to learn important life skills to a college parent mentoring relationship that assists in positive adult development.

This project will explore the development stages of both the current college student and current college parent in an effort to learn more about the challenges and opportunities of college student parent interactions.

- What are parent expectations of the college experience and how do parents intend to be involved when students experience difficulties?
- How can students become less dependent on parents when problem solving?
- How can universities meet the needs of college student parents and still stay true to the academic and educational mission regarding the development of the college student?
- What organizational and structural strategies can university administrators use to help reach their goal of positive parent interactions and stronger student resilience and independent problem solving?

- What strategies can be used to ensure that parents are productive partners in the educational process of positive adult development?

Chapter Two is a review of the current literature regarding the Millennial generation, college student parents and the evolution of their role on college campuses, and student learning outcomes on college campuses surrounding the issues of resilience and problem solving.

Chapter Three reviews results from a survey of student affairs professionals at residential colleges to learn more about their experiences with and attitudes about parent interactions.

Chapter Four draws on the literature, the survey results, and my own lengthy professional experience as a student affairs administrator to offer recommendations for decreasing unproductive forms of parental involvement and for engaging parents more productively in ways that enhance students' autonomy, resilience, and independent problem-solving skills. Mirroring the strategies created for use by student affairs administrators, I will also create a comprehensive action plan for Bucknell University that reviews organizational structure, policies and practices that will help to create more positive parent interactions that support university goals.

This EPP's appendices are documents discussed and referenced in the EPP's chapters. Appendix A is the student affairs administrator survey used in Chapter Three. Appendices B-E are tables discussed in Chapter Three's research on student affairs administrator's interactions with parents. Appendix F presents a parent survey I developed that would be useful for student affairs professionals (the literature offers no

survey of this type). The survey's target population is parents of college-bound high school students. This survey can be used by student affairs and university administrators to learn more about parent expectations for sharing information, parents' expected role in problem solving when students experience difficulties, parents' understanding of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the impact of that act on the way colleges communicate with parents. Appendices G-Q include policies, procedures, communications and information from institutions discussed in Chapter Four's strategies and action plan for productively engaging parents.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate reasons for the reported increase in intrusive and excessive parent involvement in the lives of college students. I will explore three specific issues: characteristics of current undergraduate students, parent attitudes and their influence on this generation of college students, and the changing landscape of higher education. All three factors have implications for the work of student affairs administrators.

#### **Millennial Students**

According to Howe & Strauss (2007), today's traditional-age college students were born in the 1990s, making them a part of the Millennial generation. This generation of college students is described as sheltered, pressured, and achieving. From organizing play dates to coaching early-year soccer games and managing K-12 education, parents have been highly involved in their children's lives and decisions.

"As a generation, Millennials feel a specialness that started with the devotion of parents and families and has since worked its way out into our national civic life" (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 85). This generation of students has been awarded and recognized for everything. No longer reserved for winners, trophies designated for spirit, wardrobe, and

participation were often passed out to all campers, teammates, and elementary students throughout their young lives.

The most educated and intelligent generation to date, our current students are “smart, ambitious, and incredibly busy” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 4). Students today apply to more colleges than in the past and send more applications to selective colleges. More students than ever are using the early admissions process to gain entrance into a selective institution and students are more likely than any prior generation to aspire to advanced degrees. Over a third of students report an intention to study abroad (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Ramirez, Aragon, Suchard, & Hurtado, 2014).

In another trend, Millennial college students often pursue multiple credentials. Students attempt to earn double majors, minors, and certificates in subject areas of interest. Students compete early for internships and positions in career-related organizations that will assist in building a successful resume. “Millennial teens and collegians may be America’s busiest people” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 4). This adds to an already time-consuming college experience.

“Stress has become the daily reality of Millennials’ lives” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 71). As a result of new digital technologies, more rigorous schools, their own ambitions, and their parents’ hopes and dreams, Millennials have many demands placed on them. Current students also report experiencing more emotional health issues and are more likely to be depressed than previous generations (Eagan et al., 2014). Mental health challenges are rising on college campuses. “Rates of anxiety and depression among American college students have soared in the last decade, and many more students than

in the past come to campus already on medication for such illnesses” (Wilson, 2015a).

Serious issues such as suicidal thoughts and psychosis are increasing on college campuses. “Many others, though, are struggling with what campus counselors say are the usual stresses of college life: bad grades, breakups, being on their own for the first time” (Wilson, 2015a).

The pressure to succeed can be overwhelming for students. This pressure increases due to a lack of experience with failure. This generation of college students has been protected more than any other generation. From baby-proofing homes to metal detectors at schools, students have been sheltered from harm from an early age. Parents are often tackling obstacles for their children at all ages, making children less accustomed to doing so.

### ***The “Me” Generation***

Psychologist Jean Twenge (2006) titles this Millennial generation “generation me (GenMe).” She describes this generation in a manner similar to Howe and Strauss, dubbing them as special. She describes their parents as regularly pushing messages of “you are special, no one else is like you” (Twenge, 2006, p. 59). She indicates that by the time this generation arrives on college campuses, they truly believe they are special, capable of any type of success. She also indicates that these special students are unfamiliar with failure. Students from “generation me” report that their parents believe in self-esteem and regularly encourage students to believe in themselves and their abilities. This attitude often causes disconnect between students and faculty. Unfamiliar with receiving criticism and lower grades, college students can be seen by faculty as

“having a sense of entitlement and ... not very deferential, some are outright hustlers and try to browbeat professors into giving good grades” (Twenge, 2006, p. 29). A generation of perfectionists, Millennials are expecting the perfect college experiences with perfect GPAs, membership in the most prestigious campus organizations, varsity spots on competitive sports teams, and perfect resumes upon graduation.

Twenge and Campbell (2009) describe this state of entitlement as narcissism. Excessive self-esteem, a common trait of narcissism, has risen in college age students. “The upswing in narcissism appears to be accelerating: the increase between 2000 and 2006 was especially steep” (Twenge & Campbell, 2009, p. 31). Twenge and Campbell (2009) highlight the parent’s role in this increase of narcissism. “Good intentions and parental pride have opened the door to cultural narcissism in parenting, and many parents express their love for their children in the most modern of ways: declaring their children’s greatness” (Twenge & Campbell, 2009, p. 31). Parenting has shifted away from discipline to a world in which children ask and receive whatever they request.

This increase in characteristics associated with narcissism, with parents acting more like friends and less like authority figures, helps to create a feeling of entitlement for students on college campuses. Students believe that if they are working hard, they deserve special consideration in times of need. “One-third [of students] believed they deserved at least a B just for attending class. And – perhaps most incredible – one-third thought they should be able to reschedule their final exam if it interfered with their vacation plans” (Twenge & Campbell, 2009, p. 232).



This sense of entitlement extends past the college years. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* indicates that 85% of hiring managers and human-resource executives said they believe that Millennials have a stronger sense of entitlement than older workers, according to a survey by CareerBuilder.com. According to respondents, the generation's greatest expectations include higher pay (74%); flexible work schedules (61%); a promotion within a year (56%); and additional vacation or personal time (50%) (Alsop, 2008).

Students with high traits of narcissism are likely to struggle in college. Overconfident about their abilities, they do not prepare appropriately for academic assignments, therefore receiving lower grades than their non-narcissistic peers (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). The overconfidence and underperformance do not change narcissistic students' belief in entitlement. This increases opportunities for students to demand attention from faculty and administrators, engaging parents as needed to gain the merits they believe they deserve.

### ***Ill Prepared for Independence***

In *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today's College Student*, Levine and Dean (2012) describe this generation of students as a "generation on a tightrope," balancing between the world in which they live, largely constructed and managed by their involved parents, and a dream world where they want to be seen as independent adults capable of solving the world's crises. They write,

In contrast to their predecessors, today's college students are more immature, dependent, coddled, and entitled. This is a generation of students who have not been permitted to skin their knees, rely much more on their parents than their predecessors, and have fathers and mothers, often described as helicopter parents,

who are more involved in their lives and college affairs than ever before. (Levine & Dean, 2012, p. xiv)

Parental involvement on college campuses is much more extensive today than in past years. “Whereas once parents simply unloaded the station wagon at the start of orientation week, kissed good-bye, and drove home, now they linger for days – fussing, meddling, crying, and even ranting if they think their very special child isn’t getting the very best of everything” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 11).

All too common is the student wanting to be shielded from problems or potential discomfort. In *The Culture of Entitlement: Implications for Student Affairs Professionals and the Campus Community*, Burke and Hughey illustrate this:

Many residents – especially females – feel entitled to a "dating process" before they are paired with a roommate. If a student does not pay for a private room, they must have a roommate even if he/she is not of their specific choosing. On many different occasions, we have had residents stomp into our offices demanding that the new roommate move out or his/her parents will call and demand the same. Contrary to popular belief, students are NOT entitled to a revolving door of roommates. (2014, p. 2)

The college administrators interviewed and surveyed by Levine and Dean (2012) believe too many first-year college students are ill prepared for the independence of campus life. The campus administrators noticed more students with a “delayed sense of independence and being a grown up ... a very extended adolescence” (p. 89) – students unable to solve problems independently and afraid of failing. Lacking skills to solve problems faced on a college campus, students instead turn to their parents to fix any difficulties.

## **Current Generation of Parents on College Campuses**

This familial closeness common of Millennial students can also create a dependency upon parental involvement. Familiar with being involved in their student's K-12 education, this generation of college parents continues their active involvement on the college campus. How did this close connection evolve to invade college campuses? The increase in parental involvement on college campuses began when the Baby Boomer generation became parents of college-age students. "Boomers were emotionally present in their kids' lives, often becoming one of their kids' closest friends. Whereas Boomers' parents were hands-off, Boomers tried to control and ensure outcomes for their own kids and became their strongest advocates" (Lythcott-Haims, 2015, p. 5). With education as a top priority, Boomers have always advocated for their children's successes in school.

When Boomers' children started kindergarten, elementary school teachers started to see an increase in parental assistance with even the simplest tasks. First-graders completed take-home projects of a quality that could not be reproduced in school. Polished Power Point presentations, complex science experiments, and superior detailed prose were presented to teachers as independent work. Parental involvement invaded the classroom to a level that encouraged elementary school teachers to increase the in-class project work in order to truly assess students' abilities (Lythcott-Haims, 2015). This parent involvement continued throughout high school, both in school and in outside activities. Parents continued to actively advocate for their students, often interacting with school officials, coaches, teachers, and others when conflicts arose.

As parents, Boomers, ever accustomed to expressing their opinions, being heard, and getting their way, wanted to 'be there' for their kids, whatever it took, still

challenging the system, but now on behalf of their kids, often supplanting themselves as a buffer between their kids and the system and its authority figures. (Lythcott-Haims, 2015, pp. 5–6)

The close parent involvement that started protecting children from potential harm, encouraging them to believe in their abilities, and inspiring them to achieve successes in a variety of forms became an expected part of children's daily lives. "Even though we parents may one day be eager to exit the arms race – realizing if belatedly, that our adult children ought to be able to handle things – we will have a hard time exiting the field. Our kids – accustomed to our involvement on all fronts – won't have the wherewithal to handle things if we go" (Lythcott-Haims, 2015, p. 71). Students have become financially, emotionally, and psychosocially dependent on parents. Thus helicopter parents enter college campuses.

### ***Helicopter Parents***

Parents are actively involved in the college admissions process, and subsequently the college experience. This involvement can come at the expense of the student's own feeling of independence and autonomy. "Observing such shifts among other things, in 1990, child development researchers Foster Cline and Jim Fay coined the term 'helicopter parent' to refer to a parent who hovers over a child in a way that runs counter to the parent's responsibility to raise a child to independence" (Lythcott-Haims, 2015, p. 4). On a college campus, this hovering takes many forms, including parents making decisions for the child regarding which college to attend, which major to choose, and which courses to take. Parents are increasingly becoming involved in multiple campus matters, including who their child should have as a roommate, which activities and events

colleges should schedule, and what options should be available in campus dining halls (English, 2013). Parents are attempting to make the campus experience easier for their children, and therefore are staying actively connected to their students' college campuses.

At my private residential campus in the northeast, a majority of students are members of fraternities and sororities. Over the past five years, parents have increasingly become involved in these campus organizations. The membership process is governed by students, with professional staff members supervising, advising, and supporting the student-run activities. Every year, parents become overly involved in the process, regularly calling campus offices to demand that their sons or daughters become members of certain – the best – fraternities and sororities. Last fall, Sophie was invited to join three different sororities; however, she really wanted to be a member of an organization that didn't offer her membership. Devastated by what she described as a social disaster, Sophie tearfully contacted her parents. Sophie's mom texted student representatives from Sophie's choice sorority, asking why she wasn't invited to join their organization. Sophie's dad emailed the director and associate dean responsible for sorority affairs, highlighting their daughter's positive characteristics, assuring that she would be a welcome addition to her preferred sorority. Unhappy with the response from students and administrators, Sophie's parents traveled to campus to intervene, explaining their despair over their daughter's now ruined college experience.

In their research on helicopter parents, Somers and Settle (2010a) describe five types of helicopter parenting styles currently hovering on college campuses. The *consumer advocate* views the college experience as a product rather than an education

and is concerned about negotiating the best possible price and the best possible services. The *fairness advocate* wants to ensure that the student is receiving equitable treatment. “While these parents usually present with a request for ‘equity,’ they really want better – not equal – treatment” (Somers & Settle, 2010a, p. 24). The *vicarious college student* parent attempts to relive his or her years spent as an undergraduate. These parents can often be seen on campus, more than just on family weekend. *Safety patrol* parents are focused on campus safety issues and speak often with campus officials about potential for harm. The fifth type of helicopter parent is not seen as often on college campuses. *Toxic parents* have “numerous psychological issues and are controlling [and] negative” (Somers & Settle, 2010a, p. 26). *Toxic parents* often are unsatisfied with everything about the campus and about their students.

The most common types of helicopter parent on a college campus are *fairness advocates* and *consumer advocates*. After their conversations with 190 academic and student affairs professionals at public, four-year institutions, Somers and Settle (2010a) estimated the percentage of helicopter parents on each college campus at 40 to 60%.

### ***Technology as a Cause and Enabler of Helicoptering***

Cell phones, computers, and other new forms of technology are making close involvement easily attainable. One notable development of the last ten years is online technology connecting parents to K-12 schools.

School districts across the country are using online technology to allow parents to regularly monitor their children’s academic progress and conduct records. “Once upon a time, parents saw their child’s grades on a quarter or semester basis; today, parents access

online portals where grades are uploaded weekly if not daily” (Lythcott-Haims, 2015, p. 31). School districts are using online technologies that communicate to parents about their children’s daily school experience. Increasingly, schools are using internet-based systems allowing parents to login and access information about a child’s conduct, like the number of demerits, referrals, or accolades over a particular period of time.

Lewisburg Area School District in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania utilizes *Power School* to keep families in the district informed. Students and parents receive usernames and passwords that allow them access to an online transcript. Teachers update this electronic grade-book regularly, allowing students to have an updated understanding of their status in each class. Parents can see what homework has been turned in, what assignments are missing, and grades students received on quizzes and exams. If a parent is a more regular user than the child, it is common for that parent to know a test score before the student knows.

Grades and conduct are not the only information regularly accessible. In this same school district, parents also have access to an online school lunch program. If a student buys lunch through the school, parents can see details regarding what was purchased each day (Lewisburg Area School District, n.d.). No longer do parents need to trust that their son is eating healthy school lunches, they can check to see if he purchased chocolate or white milk, carrots or cookies.

This regularly accessible online information can be extremely powerful and is a positive development in K-12 education. These technologies keep parents informed and connected in ways previously impossible. They have created cultural changes and new

expectations for interdependence and control between parents and children that extend into the college years. For parents accustomed to this level of information about their child, the transition from high school to college can feel extremely abrupt and difficult. Suddenly, parents are completely disconnected from information about their child and lose control over access to information.

Continuing that close connection on college campuses has become easier thanks to an increase in technology. In their book, *The iConnected Parent: Staying Close to Your Kids in College (and Beyond) While Letting Them Grow Up*, Hofer and Moore (2010) outline lessons learned during several quantitative and qualitative research projects involving college parents, communication, and technology. They use the term *iConnected parenting* to “refer to a culture of parents deeply involved in their children’s lives, even as they approach adulthood, that uses the technology of instant communication to enhance their connection” (Hofer & Moore, 2010). Due to the conveniences of email, smart phones, and social media, more now than in past generations, college students are having conversations with their parents about their relationship breakups, seeking assistance in editing papers, sharing information regarding their choices for lunch in the cafeteria, and complaining about messy roommates. Technology has become this “continuous cord from home to campus” that allows college parents to continue the involvement that has become a hallmark of parents’ lives before college (Hofer & Moore, 2010).

“The immediacy of cell phones and laptops now brings mom and dad onto campus and right into the classroom. Boring lectures, ‘mean girl’ roommates, difficult



tests – parents hear about them instantly” (Hofer & Moore, 2010, p. 10). This changes the techniques students use to solve problems experienced on college campuses. Instead of talking through course selection options with academic advisors, editing papers with writing center tutors, and discussing grade discrepancies with faculty, students now pick up their cell phones to get advice from mom and dad. Instead of solving problems on their own, using new campus resources, students are relying on their parents to solve problems and make decisions with them or for them.

Parents are readily accessible; contacting them is easier and more comfortable for students than reaching out to other resources. This new iConnected parenting is allowing students and parents to create and retain an incredible closeness that greatly affects how students develop academically, socially, and professionally. For many college students, iConnected parenting is “putting their passage to adulthood on indefinite hold” (Hofer & Moore, 2010, p. 13).

The high level of parent-child communication during the college years is not necessarily premeditated. Before arriving on college campus, students surveyed by Hofer and Moore (2010) anticipate talking, emailing, and texting parents an average of once a week. When those same students were questioned at the end of their first semester, they reported communicating with parents an average of 10.4 times per week. The number of contacts continues to be just as high during the later college years. “Most students weren’t unhappy about it at all – even though there was a huge discrepancy between their expectations and the reality of what was happening during that first semester” (Hofer & Moore, 2010, p. 17).

In addition to technology making it easier for parents to be in touch with their students, it also makes it easier for parents to demonstrate helicopter parent behaviors such as constant contact with college administrators. Parents can easily find information regarding who to contact from campus websites and can email, call, and text 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### ***The Effects of Helicopter Parenting on College Students***

When does that closeness, strong support, and advice from a parent become over-parenting? Hofer and Moore (2010) found a connection between a high amount of parent communication and the micromanaging of their student's academic life. Micromanaging behavior can take the form of calls to ensure students wake up and attend class on time, text reminders to study for exams, and regular questioning of students regarding test scores and paper grades. Students interviewed by Hofer and Moore (2010) acknowledged that their parents had copies of all course syllabi and knew usernames and passwords for online class sites and student portals.

“The more parents tried to help academically, the less autonomous and less independent students perceived themselves to be” (Hofer & Moore, 2010, p. 47). Students who reported high parental involvement in their academic experience demonstrated fewer study skills, had less experience in organizing their time, and had lower GPAs. They also were less likely to express satisfaction in their college experience.

The constant connection between parents and students often expands parents' role in making college-related choices for their children, encroaching on students' autonomy

to make their own decisions. However, when parents strongly influence academic decisions such as course selection and choice of majors that do not match the desires of the student, the result is increased difficulties for the student (Hofer & Moore, 2010). Students with expectations that are different than their parents' expectations are living lives decided by parents instead of chosen by students themselves. In a study assessing the effect of parental expectations, researchers found that students whose parents had expectations that differed from their own expectations experienced lower levels of self-worth and lower levels of success in adjusting to college (Agliata & Renk, 2008).

Although open communication between parents and college students has been found to ease college student distress, a symptom of helicopter parenting is often an unhealthy style of over-communication between parents and children. "Co-rumination occurs when we dwell with our kids on their problems, worry about a problem's causes, focus on a child's negative feelings and egg each other on to keep talking" (Simmons, 2015). Co-rumination has been linked to both anxiety and depression.

The literature distinguishes the effect of helicopter parenting or over-parenting on college students from the effect of involved parenting or parenting that supports students' autonomy. For example, an answer of Strongly Agree to the statement "My mother encourages me to discuss academic problems I am having with my professor" indicates an involved parent. In contrast, an answer of Strongly Agree to the statement "If I were to receive a low grade that I felt was unfair my mother would call the professor" represents a helicopter parent (Schiffrin et al., 2013). Recent studies highlight the negative effect of helicopter parenting on college students. Schiffrin et al. (2013) report

“students who reported having over-controlling parents reported significantly higher levels of depression and less satisfaction with life” (p. 548). Using the self-determination theory<sup>1</sup>, Schiffrin et al. (2013) studied the parental effect on student development. Over-controlling parents had a negative effect on the student’s ability to develop autonomy, a characteristic important in self-determination.

In studying the consequences of over-parenting on college campuses, Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014) found that students who experienced higher levels of over-parenting also experienced low levels of self-efficacy. Low self-efficacy affects college students’ ability to adapt on campus, “creating a sense that one cannot accomplish things socially or in general on one’s own” (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014, p. 325).

Over-parenting continues to have negative effects past college, causing difficulty as students adapt to the workplace. When discussing problems in the workplace, students with over-involved parents were more likely to choose solutions that relied on others rather than take responsibility for the situation and become personally involved in the solution (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014).

### ***Positive Parental Involvement on College Campuses***

While over-involved parenting has been seen to impede the developmental growth of college students, involved parents can have a positive impact. Two college presidents discuss the helicopter-parenting phenomenon in a *Washington Post* editorial. Both are

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<sup>1</sup> Self-determination theory suggests that people are motivated to grow and change by innate psychological needs. The concept of intrinsic motivation plays an important role in self-determination theory.

familiar with the dangers of over-involved parents on college campuses. “But we also understand that total disengagement is not the solution. Our students would not be the inquisitive, disciplined and community-minded people they are without a history of parental involvement” (Glassner & Schapiro, 2012, p. 1).

Finding the right balance for parental involvement is important. In a study using quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate college student perceptions of attachment styles to parents, Joel N. Lampert (2009) found that over-parenting did not increase students’ GPA or adjustment to college. However a moderate level of parental involvement was beneficial for college adjustment and academic performance.

As the Dean of Students at a private residential college, I often had parents initiate a phone call with “I don’t want to be one of those helicopter parents, but ...” Finding the balance between under-involvement and over-involvement can be challenging for parents, especially when their students are upset. During focus groups with college student parents, Lampert (2009) heard stories of parents struggling with how to intervene and assist when students experienced difficult moments. Parents who felt educated by colleges regarding those potentially difficult moments felt more prepared to assist. Additionally, parents who had an official role at the institution, such as a member of a parents’ association, understood the difference between appropriate involvement and over-parenting (Lampert, 2009).

Looking back at the example detailed in chapter one, the interaction with Lindsay’s parents could be seen as unnecessary and causing additional work for a busy dean. Working directly with Lindsey, rather than continuing to interact with her parents,

would have been a more effective use of time and more helpful for Lindsey's adult development. However there are times when parental involvement can be helpful in fulfilling the institution's academic mission. In early spring 2013, our university administration was concerned about the recent number of students transported to the hospital with high blood alcohol content. A year into a new comprehensive plan to reduce negative consequences of high-risk drinking, we knew we needed a new marketing medium and the help of parents.

The American College Health Association (2008) indicates that parents are a top source of health information for college students (76%) and that college students rate parents as one of the most believable sources of health information (65%). Therefore, the university administration created a marketing initiative utilizing parents. We created a postcard with information about the consequences of binge drinking along with suggestions for what students can do to stop irresponsible alcohol-related behaviors. We mailed this postcard to students' campus mailboxes. We emailed all parents about our concerns, shared with them an e-copy of the postcard, and asked them to talk with their children about high-risk drinking.

The strategy proved effective. The following day, Colin, a student government officer, told me about an interesting interaction that occurred minutes after the parent email was sent. He was with six male friends at a home basketball game when, one by one, each of his friends received a cell phone call or text from his mother. Colin's mother joined the others as well, calling to ensure that her son was behaving responsibly and watching out for his friends. Later that month, we surveyed students to check on the

effectiveness of this communication. Sixty-seven percent of student respondents indicated that the conversation with their parents about the postcard did affect their decisions regarding future alcohol consumption (Alcohol Education Communication Survey, 2013).

Parents can be helpful partners in encouraging college students to exhibit positive behaviors. “Studies have found that parental engagement supports higher levels of student autonomy, higher levels of psychological adjustment and life satisfaction, and higher levels of participation in and satisfaction with college” (White, 2013, p. 1). College can be a difficult experience for students. Students often encounter many “firsts” while in college. These firsts can often be more challenging without a familiar support system nearby. Knowing that parents are available can be a comfort during times of turmoil. “And for better or worse, many students want more parental participation. In 2007, for instance, nearly a quarter of college freshmen said their parents had ‘too little’ involvement in choosing their college courses and activities” (Hoover, 2008, p. 1). Students value others’ input when confronting life-affecting decisions, especially when the input comes from their parents.

“Students are more committed when they experience higher education as a family affair. Students don't trust anyone as much as Mom and Dad” (Hoover, 2008, p. 1). Family members are often an important part of the full college experience, celebrating achievements and helping students through difficulties. “We know that parental involvement is positive: middle-class, college-educated parents impart cultural capital, and their children generally do better in college” (White, 2013, p. 1).

Students without parental support may have a disadvantage. In his book *Beyond the Big Test*, William Sedlacek (2004) indicates “students who have done well in school tend to have a person of strong influence who confers advice, particularly in times of crisis” (p. 45). For many students, parents provide that support. However, not every student has access to the same parental support. Compared to the “traditional” college student, first-generation and lower-income college students often have substantially less in terms of parental support (Sedlacek, 2004). Students whose parents have previous college experience and have a better understanding of college policies, terms, organizational structure, and systems are likely to be more helpful than other parents when assisting a child in dealing with college issues such as financial aid, registration, or fraternity recruitment.

Parents can influence student outcomes during college in ways that can have either a positive or a negative impact, depending upon the level of involvement, the population of students, and the student’s developmental stage (Harper, Sax, & Wolf, 2012). Students with involved and informed parents are likely to be more successful in college, as compared to students with over-involved or uninvolved parents. Therefore it is important that college officials continue to include parents in their efforts to educate students and work directly with parents on types of involvement that assist in building student independence and autonomy.

### **Current Strategic Issues in Higher Education**

Student affairs professionals are regularly challenged with parent interactions. Many of the changes in the landscape of higher education within the past ten years have



increased these challenges for campus administrators. These changes affect the ways parents are involved on college campuses and the ways in which college administrators now interact with parents. Current characteristics seen in higher education often cause helicopter parents additional concerns, thus increasing the difficulty of student affairs professionals' parent related responsibilities.

### ***Recent Changes Affecting Parent Expectations***

Key to the issue of parent-college relationships is the idea of *in loco parentis*. Institutionalized in the 19th century, *in loco parentis* is the idea that colleges should act as surrogate parents for emerging adults who are venturing away from their families for the first time. Under this doctrine, faculty and administrators became caretakers in addition to educators. Parents were comforted, knowing that caring adults were responsible for their children. A shift occurred in the mid-1970s, giving students more independence and allowing faculty to adopt the singular, intellectual role of teacher. "Public opinion strongly supported more independence for youth, more distance between parents and kids, and a general rolling back of any *in loco parentis* role" (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 105). Within the past ten years, another shift is occurring. Throughout many challenges that transpire in higher education, parents today expect colleges to provide the security that the concept of *in loco parentis* displays (Sandeem & Barr, 2006).

Several additional changes, including increased expectations from parents about sharing information, the rising cost of higher education, increasing reports of student deaths on college campuses, and an increase in the number of students with disabilities

who are attending college have forced college administration to rethink policies and procedures.

***Restricted and regulated access to student information.*** The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds from the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. This act, passed in 1974, transfers these rights to the student at the age of 18 or when the student enrolls in a school beyond high school (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). “The law’s main original purpose was to keep government agencies like draft boards from prying into student’s lives. The law also prevented parents from finding out what students were doing while at college. And while this was not FERPA’s main purpose, most Americans believed this was just as well” (Howe & Strauss 2007, p. 105).

Although FERPA has remained constant in the last ten years, parent expectations regarding access have changed, and this change is challenging the enforcement of FERPA. Parents accustomed to discussing students’ academic status with high school teachers are no longer able to get similar information from college and university faculty. Parents, even those paying for tuition, do not receive transcripts, regular grade reports, or other education records. Parents accustomed to close engagement with K-12 teachers and officials are no longer automatically “in the loop” – no longer automatically notified

of academic or code of conduct issues.<sup>2</sup> Even parents who feel they are receiving information from colleges often only have a piece of the entire picture. Universities are not uniform in how they conform to FERPA on their campuses, making it important that parents are familiar not only with FERPA, but also with how their student's college manages FERPA compliance (Hofer & Moore, 2010).

***Rising cost of higher education.*** The cost of higher education is increasing faster than the rate of inflation. This has the effect of raising parents' and students' expectations for college – for the quality of instruction, for the amenities of campus life, and for the benefits of a college education (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). In 2014, the average private college tuition increased 3.7%, public college tuition increased 2.9%, and inflation only rose 1.4% (Lorin, 2014). “Tuition at a private university is now roughly three times as expensive as it was in 1974, costing an average of \$31,000 a year; public tuition, at \$9,000, has risen by nearly four times” (Davidson, 2015). The costly investment of a college education is causing families to adapt a consumer attitude when shopping for colleges. “The fact is that they are paying high prices ... there is an expectation that as prices increase, so should product quality” (Levine & Dean, 2012). There has been a shift in how parents understand the college structure, from an organization guided by an academic mission to a consumer service similar to that provided by a hotel or other business. With a consumer mindset, if parents are unhappy with the product, they criticize poor customer service. Disgruntled parents can ultimately

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<sup>2</sup> One exception is a FERPA amendment in 1998 allowing institutions to notify parents regarding violations of school policy that involve alcohol and other drugs (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

lead to a loss in revenue – tuition dollars. Therefore the consumer mindset of many families affects how administrators respond – or need to respond –to parent complaints.

***Rising concerns about safety and security.*** In today’s world, parents worry about the safety and security of their college children in ways that they never used to. In 2015 issues of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, readers found headlines such as “10 Are Dead, 7 Wounded, in Shooting at Community College in Oregon,” “5th North Seattle College Student Dies of Injuries,” “1 in 4 Female Undergrads Experienced Sex Assault or Misconduct, AAU Survey Finds,” and “Evangelical Group’s Taunts Reopen Dialogue on Racial Tensions on One Campus.” Campus deaths from hazing, infectious disease, alcohol, and suicide are of great concern. Since the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting tragedy that killed 33 people, college communities have concentrated on plans to ensure campus safety for a variety of possible emergencies. “The list of potential hazards facing a university can reach into the hundreds: a power outage, a natural disaster, a large campus event, a bacterial outbreak” (McIntire, 2015). The exhaustive list of potential dangers creates many variables for university administrators to factor into their emergency planning. Parents, accustomed to protecting their children from any potential risk, expect universities to take their place when those dangers occur on campus. When emergencies occur on campus, students will often call or text parents immediately, often before detailed information is available. This causes panic in parents, especially those thousands of miles away. In addition to managing the campus emergency, student affairs professionals also need to manage the anxiety and concern this causes for parents.

***More complex regulations for students with disabilities.*** Legal protections and special supports for students with disabilities, part of K-12 schooling since the 1970s, have expanded into the realm of higher education. This creates new expectations on the part of parents of students with disabilities. In 2014, an increased number of first-year students self-reported disabilities: learning disability (3%), ADHD (6%), autism spectrum disorder (1%), physical disability (4%), chronic illness (2%), psychological disorder (7%), other (5%) (Eagan et al., 2014). Students with both visible and invisible disabilities have expectations for support programs that have been shaped, in part, by their K-12 educational experiences (Sandeem & Barr, 2006, p. 158). These expectations are often magnified by their parents, who have spent years advocating for educational support services. Students with disabilities often struggle during the transition from high school to college. “Many students felt conflicted about using disability support services on campus because they did not know how to be a self-advocate. Students confessed they did not understand who were eligible for services and what kind of services they would obtain, thus making it even more bewildering” (Hong, 2015, p. 221). Students with disabilities often lack self-awareness and skill at self-advocacy, which makes it more likely for parents to feel the need to intervene.

### ***Student Learning Outcomes***

“Institutions of higher education appear anxious about the increasing influence of parents on campus and question the implication of parent involvement for student development” (Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011, p. 674). Persevering through failure and discomfort can assist in students’ developmental growth. Parents who consistently solve

problems for students while they are in college rob them of a crucial learning experience of a college education.

What developmental goals do universities have for their students? Institutions aim to prepare students to become engaged, lifelong learners and effective citizens (Keeling, 2004). Considering the whole student, institutions are collaboratively educating students both inside and outside the classroom. “Learning is a complex, holistic, multi-centric activity that occurs throughout and across the college experience” (Keeling, 2004, p. 8). At a given institution, all university professionals, faculty and staff, share responsibility for creating and achieving the institution’s defined student outcomes.

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has identified “essential learning outcomes as a guiding vision and national benchmarks for college learning and liberal education in the 21st century” (AAC&U, 2007). Many institutions of higher education adapt the AAC&U learning outcomes to assist in fulfilling their mission for their students. These suggested learning outcomes provide a new context to steer students' cumulative development throughout their collegiate experience. The academic material students learn in courses in their major is not the sole emphasis of a college education. The AAC&U essential outcomes also include “knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning” (AAC&U, 2007). Upon graduation, students should have moved from basic to advanced knowledge in each of these areas.

***Problem solving.*** AAC&U (2007) includes problem solving, defined as “the process of designing, evaluating and implementing a strategy to answer an open-ended question or achieve a desired goal,” as one of those essential learning outcomes. Problem solving is an example of an “intellectual and practical skill” universities hope to see students develop at advanced levels prior to graduation. This involves assisting students in creating strategies to independently solve problems at an increasingly complex level. Throughout different experiences while in college, institutions hope that students become able to more easily reach solutions to difficult situations by practicing the process of thinking through problems (AAC&U, 2007).

***Ethical reasoning and action.*** Closely related to problem solving is the personal and social responsibility of ethical reasoning and action. Ethical reasoning gives context regarding right and wrong behavior. “It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions” (AAC&U, 2007). Ethical conduct progresses as students practice ethical decision-making.

Positive progression in problem solving and ethical reasoning depends upon independent action and learning by students. An increased dependency upon parents is tied to a decrease in achievement of desired outcomes such as autonomy and identity development (Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011). Parental over-involvement hinders students’ ability to achieve success in learning outcomes created by universities. For institutions

that measure their success by the completion of university created learning outcomes, the over-involved parent becomes a liability for institutional success.

### **Implications for Student Affairs Professionals**

Professional organizations in higher education are reacting to increased parent involvement. For example, CASE: Council for Advancement and Support of Education and NASPA: Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education have created special internal communities to assist administrators with parent involvement. In 2008 the Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Programs Professionals (AHEPPP) was formed and has grown to include over 160 member institutions. This organization's core purpose is "to support professionals in higher education who promote student success through informed parent and family engagement" (AHEPPP, n. d.).

The developmental stages of Millennial college students and increased parental connection have caused institutions to make changes and additions to organization structure, policies and procedures (Levine & Dean, 2012). Many institutions have been creating programs, offices, and positions to manage the involvement.

An example of a change in procedure can be seen in the schedule of events for the day that first-year students move onto campus at my university. The director of orientation purposely schedules important academic advising sessions when parents are otherwise occupied. The director's goal is to facilitate the transition to students' independent decision-making by encouraging them to make important academic decisions with the advice and support of campus resources, instead of asking mom and dad what to do. Recognizing that this transition is difficult for parents as well, the



orientation director also changed the parent program curriculum to include information regarding the registration and academic advising process, allowing parents to gain confidence in the process and confidence in the support available to students.

To counter the lack of preparation for independent living seen in some Millennial students, administrators are also developing programs to educate students in areas significant for first-year students. Of key importance are critical thinking, creativity, and continual learning (Levine & Dean, 2012). Universities are changing curricula for first-year student seminars to include information that was previously assumed to have been mastered by all students prior to college matriculation. Student affairs divisions are adding programming opportunities, mandating roommate contracts, and adapting policies and procedures based on the lack of independent problem solving skills found in today's college students.

### **Conclusion**

Interactions with parents should not interfere with roles and responsibilities historically important to the profession. For student affairs administrators, this includes providing students with opportunities to increase self-awareness and self-direction (Keeling, 2004). It is important that universities closely examine their organization and structure as well as their policies and procedures in order to ensure they respond in a way that discourages over-parenting and embraces parental involvement that assists in increasing students' self-direction.

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights changes in student characteristics, students' relationships with their parents, and strategic issues in higher

education within the past twenty years. These changes have created a unique dynamic for administrators when interacting with parents of their college students. This information was used in creating research regarding university administrators' interactions with parents, to be discussed in Chapter Three, and the strategies for positive parent involvement on college campuses discussed in Chapter Four.

## **Chapter 3**

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

#### **Introduction and Purpose**

The literature regarding the connection between current college students and their parents suggests that universities need to embrace the important role parents play in their students' development and growth. "Parent involvement, but not such over-involvement as could be classified as a helicopter parent, is appropriate, supportive, and helpful in terms of student adaptation to college and academic success" (Lampert, 2009, p. 45). College administrators can play a role in educating parents regarding the importance of allowing students to explore independent decision-making (Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011).

This survey explores student affairs administrators' perceptions about their interactions and experiences with parents. The goal is to understand more about the ways parents communicate with their students' colleges and to learn more about college administrators' assessment of parent interactions. This chapter presents and discusses my survey results. Chapter four discusses implications of the survey results, such as recommendations for strategies that will assist in developing parent interactions that help further the educational goals for their students.

#### **The Survey: Description and Rationale**

In a series of questions using Likert scales, administrators were asked to give their opinions regarding their interaction with parents and their opinion of parents' roles in

solving student problems. Three qualitative questions were also asked, including the recounting of a memorable parent interaction. In addition, administrators were asked to provide information on their type of student affairs responsibility (general student affairs, academic support, housing, conduct), their level at the university, their gender, and the number of years they have been in the higher education or health and safety field. (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey).

### **Method: Sample and Procedure**

Student affairs administrators from seven residential, four-year institutions in the northeast were invited to participate in this survey. (Appendix B lists the institutions surveyed.) The respondents included chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) and student affairs leadership team members. Ninety-two administrators were invited to participate in the online survey (using Qualtrics). The survey link was emailed to potential participants; the email explained the study, invited participation, and assured confidentiality. The survey was anonymous and did not ask for names or other identifying information. I sent out two follow-up emails to student affairs administrators with a reminder about the survey and a copy of the survey link.

*Student affairs* is a term commonly used for a group of services at the university level that support campus life and enhance student growth and development. The offices that comprise student affairs vary at each institution surveyed, only a few including career services, campus safety, and academic support services in their array of responsibilities. The CSAOs also varied in who they considered leadership team

members, some including assistant directors and administrative coordinators, others only providing director level professionals and above.

Respondents were given three weeks to access and complete the survey. All respondents who started the survey completed it; however, not all respondents answered every question. Seventy administrators completed the survey, providing a 76% response rate. All seven CSAOs completed the survey. After the survey was closed, results were analyzed using frequency counts and coding of the qualitative open-ended questions. (Appendices, C, D, and E show in more detail ANOVA and *t*-test statistics).

### **Results**

As seen in Table 1, seventy percent of respondents were at the director level or above. Table 2 shows that 56% were in traditional student affairs departments, including dean of students, student conduct, student activities, residence life, and housing. As divisions vary by institution, it is not surprising that the professional areas of the respondents vary as well, including six individuals in “other” areas such as community service and women’s resources.<sup>3</sup> The majority of respondents (67%) have been in higher education at least 10 years, appropriate for a group of administrators identified as leaders in student affairs. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents identified as female, which reflects the breakdown in most institutions, where the preponderance of student affairs staff are female.

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<sup>3</sup> Although offices for parent and family programs are common in student affairs divisions, none of institutions surveyed have such an office in the division and none of the respondents completing the survey have direct, official responsibility for parents.

**Table 1. Which category best describes your position?**

| <b>Answer</b>                         | <b>Response</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Academic Affairs/<br>Academic Support | 6               | 9%       |
| Career Services                       | 5               | 6%       |
| Health & Wellness                     | 9               | 13%      |
| Housing/Residence Life                | 8               | 11%      |
| Multicultural Affairs                 | 5               | 7%       |
| Student Affairs/<br>Dean of Students  | 20              | 29%      |
| Student Conduct                       | 5               | 7%       |
| Student Activities                    | 6               | 9%       |
| Other                                 | 6               | 9%       |
| Total                                 | 70              | 100%     |

**Table 2. Which category best represents the level of your role at the university?**

| <b>Answer</b>   | <b>Response</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---|-----------------|----------|
| Chief Student Affairs<br>Officer                      | 7               | 10%      |
| Associate/Assistant Dean or<br>Associate/Assistant VP | 19              | 27%      |
| Director  | 23              | 33%      |
| Assistant Director                                    | 14              | 20%      |
| Program Coordinator                                   | 1               | 1%       |
| Other   | 6               | 9%       |
| Total   | 70              | 100%     |

***Amount of Parent Contact***

With 44% of administrators indicating they communicate with parents once a week or more (Table 3) and 70% of respondents indicating they talk with one or more parents in a typical week (Table 4), it is clear that student affairs administrator responsibilities include spending time interacting with parents of their college students.

**Table 3. How often do you interact with parents of college students?**

| Answer                 | Response | %    |
|------------------------|----------|------|
| Less than once a month | 18       | 26%  |
| Once a month           | 4        | 6%   |
| 2-3 times a month      | 17       | 24%  |
| Once a week            | 11       | 16%  |
| 2-3 times a week       | 12       | 17%  |
| Daily                  | 8        | 11%  |
| Total                  | 70       | 100% |

**Table 4. In a typical week, how many parent interactions do you have?**

| Answer | Response | %    |
|--------|----------|------|
| 0      | 21       | 30%  |
| 1-5    | 40       | 58%  |
| 6-10   | 8        | 11%  |
| 11+    | 1        | 1%   |
| Total  | 70       | 100% |

As seen in Table 5, the most common modes of communication included office phone and email. However, several administrators indicated that their parent interactions occur in person (65%). Parents also reached out to their students' colleges using administrators' mobile phones, text, and social media. Using multiple electronic means of communication is consistent with Hofer and Moore's (2010) description of the iConnected parent. Table 6 shows that sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated that a parent who engages with them on an issue typically continues to interact with that administrator about that issue two to four more times. Therefore, it appears that university administrators do spend a considerable amount of time communicating with parents.

**Table 5. How does a parent contact you? Please check all methods that apply.**

| Answer            | Response | %   |
|-------------------|----------|-----|
| In person         | 44       | 65% |
| Office phone      | 61       | 90% |
| Mobile phone      | 8        | 12% |
| Email             | 62       | 91% |
| Instant messenger | 0        | 0%  |
| Text              | 5        | 7%  |
| Social media      | 4        | 6%  |
| Other             | 2        | 3%  |

**Table 6. When a parent contacts you regarding a situation, how many separate contacts are typical for one issue?**

| Answer    | Response | %    |
|-----------|----------|------|
| 1         | 18       | 27%  |
| 2-4       | 47       | 69%  |
| 5 or more | 3        | 4%   |
| Total     | 68       | 100% |

As seen in Table 7, when asked to characterize the amount of contact they have with parents, the majority (59%) indicated that the amount of contact they have with parents is appropriate. However, 41% of campus administrators believed that the amount of contact they have with parents is inappropriate. Some would like to have more contact, but 32% of the respondents indicated they would like less contact with parents. When asked to explain, the administrators indicated they would rather talk directly with students and they would rather students take the initiative to solve problems and handle concerns independently. One administrator offered: “Although I enjoy talking with parents and empathize with many of their concerns, I feel that they too often try to solve



problems their students should be solving.” The administrators also believed that parents and students should communicate more directly with each other. “Many of the concerns can be addressed with communication between the parent and student; working on developing communication processes will help parents explore ways to improve their relationships.” A few respondents indicated that they do not enjoy interacting with parents who are constant complainers or those with a sense of entitlement.

Nine percent of respondents would like more contact with parents in order to educate them regarding campus procedures and resources, to engage with them in positive ways, and to learn more from parents about their students and about parent expectations. “The more interaction I have with parents, the better I understand and can program for students.” The explanations provided by both those wanting less contact and those wanting more contact were consistent with the concept that administrators value the close relationships parents have with their children but believed that parents are too involved in making decisions for their students.

**Table 7. Which of the options below best describe how you feel about your amount of parent contact?**

| <b>Answer</b>                               | <b>Responses</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---|------------------|----------|
| I would like less contact                   | 22               | 32%      |
| I would like more contact                   | 6                | 9%       |
| The amount of contact I have is appropriate | 41               | 59%      |
| Total                                       | 69               | 100%     |

### ***Characteristics of Parent Interaction***

The majority of administrators indicated that they rarely or never reach out to parents (Table 8). Therefore, the majority of parent contact was initiated by the parent.

The mean frequency of administrator-initiated parent contact is 2.01 (“rarely”), with 1.00 indicating never and 4.00 indicating frequently.<sup>4</sup> However, administrators did occasionally reach out to parents, supporting the research that parent involvement can be helpful to the development of college students (Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011). The narrative information provided throughout the survey suggests that administrators were especially appreciative of parent involvement in situations involving students’ health and safety.

Administrators have experienced, with a frequency mean of 2.81, the helicopter parent phenomenon of parents calling but asking that their students not learn of their involvement (Table 8).<sup>5</sup> Placing administrators in the ethical dilemma of being dishonest to a student, parents are trying to maintain a sense of control over their college students’ lives. Wanting their students to believe they can be trusted, parents often place the college administrator in the middle of their relationship.

Supporting the hypothesis that students often ask their parents for assistance in solving problems, administrators indicated with a frequency mean of 2.59 that students do ask their parents to contact university administrators in order to solve their problems (Table 8).<sup>6</sup> When parents respond favorably to such a request and make the call, they hinder the educational process needed to develop independent problem-solving skills.

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<sup>4</sup> The frequency mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Occasionally; 4=Frequently).

<sup>5</sup> The frequency mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Occasionally; 4=Frequently).

<sup>6</sup> The frequency mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Occasionally; 4=Frequently).

**Table 8. How often do the following situations occur?**

| Question   | Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Total Responses | Mean |
|--|-------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------|
| Students ask their parent to contact you in order to solve a problem | 9     | 23     | 24           | 13         | 69              | 2.59 |
| Parents ask you not to tell their student they contacted you         | 10    | 11     | 30           | 18         | 69              | 2.81 |
| You initiate Parent Contact  | 19    | 32     | 16           | 2          | 69              | 2.01 |

Another helicopter parent indicator is the parental desire to get a favorable answer to a question, regardless of how many calls need to be made. Thirty-four percent of respondents indicate that occasionally, after receiving an answer, a parent calls another office to get a more favorable response, and another 6% of respondents indicate this phenomenon occurs frequently (Table 9). This supports the literature indicating that some parents will intervene at all costs to assist and protect their child (Lythcott-Haims, 2015).

**Table 9. Unhappy with your response, the parent contacts your supervisor for a more favorable response.**

| Answer       | Response | %    |
|--------------|----------|------|
| Never        | 13       | 19%  |
| Rarely       | 28       | 41%  |
| Occasionally | 24       | 34%  |
| Frequently   | 4        | 6%   |
| Total        | 69       | 100% |

Table 10 highlights the characteristics of parents' tone when they first make contact. The administrators indicated that most often, the tone of the initial parent contact

is one of concern. However, parents often call to express thanks or to ask questions about policies and procedures (inquisitive). Parents did express anger toward administrators, but not as commonly as they expressed frustration or annoyance. Although administrators described negative, difficult, and frustrating parent interactions throughout the survey, Table 11 shows that they characterized their involvement with parents as primarily positive (70%). It is not hard to imagine that the negative interactions are often the most memorable.

**Table 10. How often do the characteristics below describe their tone?**

| Question               | Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Total Responses | Mean |
|------------------------|-------|--------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------|
| Thankful               | 1     | 6      | 29           | 30         | 66              | 3.33 |
| Inquisitive            | 1     | 9      | 31           | 26         | 67              | 3.22 |
| Concerned              | 3     | 6      | 11           | 47         | 67              | 3.52 |
| Frustrated/<br>Annoyed | 5     | 13     | 30           | 19         | 67              | 2.94 |
| Angry                  | 7     | 31     | 26           | 3          | 67              | 2.37 |

**Table 11. What percentage of your parent interactions would you characterize as positive/negative?**

| Answer   | Min Value | Max Value | Average Value | Standard Deviation | Responses |
|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Positive | 5.00      | 100.00    | 70.38         | 23.29              | 65        |
| Negative | 3.00      | 100.00    | 32.75         | 26.22              | 64        |

### ***Problem Solving***

As seen in Table 12, the administrators responding to this parent interaction survey overwhelmingly indicated (80%) that parents of current college students are generally too involved in solving problems for their college-age children. Accordingly, the advice to parents that administrators were invited to offer at the conclusion of the

survey addressed the issue of parents' over-involvement. It is clear that the administrators were frustrated about this over-involvement and interested in making a change in ways that would assist student development.

**Table 12. Generally speaking, how involved are parents in making decisions regarding their college students' lives?**

| Answer         | Response | Percentage |
|----------------|----------|------------|
| Far too little | 0        | 0%         |
| Too little     | 0        | 0%         |
| About right    | 14       | 20%        |
| Too much       | 44       | 65%        |
| Far too much   | 10       | 15%        |
| Total          | 68       | 100%       |

### ***Comparison Groups***

I tested for differences in responses based on a few demographic factors. Due to the small sample size, it was difficult to make additional comparisons in ways that would not compromise validity. To determine if male and female administrators had different reactions to their interactions with parents or if parents interacted with males differently than they interacted with females, I used a *t*-test to compare means on a set of items by gender (see Table 14 in Appendix C). The evidence does not indicate there was a difference in parent interactions based on the gender of the student affairs administrator.<sup>7</sup>

To determine if the administrators' years of experience affected their perception of parent interactions or their ability to handle situations involving parents, I used ANOVA to compare difference in means on a set of items by years of experience (see

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<sup>7</sup> Only one item out of seventeen on which gender comparisons were done showed a difference big enough to achieve statistical significance at the  $p = .05$  level. However, the difference was not large, and in the context of all the other items showing no pattern of differences between male and female responses, further interpretation of this sole item is not warranted.

Table 15 in Appendix D). Although there was mostly no difference in responses based on years of experience, the boldface questions on the appendix table show the items with a difference of means big enough to achieve statistical significance at the  $p = .05$  level. The administrators with 10 or more years of experience appeared to have engaged with thankful parents more frequently. This could be a consequence of their greater number of years interacting with college student parents or of a more relaxed attitude regarding parent interaction based on their greater level of experience. Although there did not appear to be a pattern to explain the differences in mean, there appeared to be a significant difference in how administrators characterized positive and negative interactions based on years of experience.

In addition to potential differences based on years of experience, it is possible that parents interacted with administrators differently based on the administrator's level within the institution. For example, a parent might be more patient or calm with a dean or a vice president than with a program coordinator or an assistant director. To determine if there was a difference in responses, I compared the difference in means by level of position using a  $t$ -test, separating the six different categories into two different groups. Group one included administrators who are chief student affairs officers, associate/assistant deans, associate/assistant VPs, or directors. Group two included assistant directors, program coordinators, and administrators with other titles (see Table 16 in Appendix E). The comparison did show differences of means big enough to achieve statistical significance at the  $p = .05$  level for the question determining the frequency of parents asking an administrator not to tell their students about the call. The

higher-level administrators (category one) experienced this situation more often. This could be due to the responsibilities of the different roles. Deans are more likely to be contacted when parents have significant or sensitive concerns (“my daughter just broke up with her boyfriend and I’m concerned about her, but she’d be mortified to know that I called you”). Although there does not appear to be a significant difference in the levels of administrators experiencing frustrated or angry parent contacts, the difference in the frequency of thankful, inquisitive, and concerned parent contacts was close to significance, around a  $p = .10$  level. It appeared as if the higher-level administrators experience those contacts more frequently. In addition to their greater experience in dealing with parents, deans and directors were more likely to receive the calls regarding “big picture” items. This would include calls to express gratitude for their children’s positive experiences.

### ***Advice for Parents of First-Year Students***

When asked about a message for parents of first-year students, 60 respondents participating in the survey provided words of advice. The detailed responses were carefully reviewed and coded<sup>8</sup> into specific messages; several answers included multiple messages. The messages were consistent across the 60 responses, with 51 suggesting one or more of the following.

- Parents need to allow students to struggle and/or fail.

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<sup>8</sup> The coding process I used included reading the results several times, creating themes that appropriately represented the different responses, and reviewing for accuracy. Each response could potentially fall into multiple theme categories. I reviewed the results several times before arriving at a set of categories that accurately reflected the sentiments expressed in the responses.

- Parents should switch to a consultant role.
- Parents must allow students to make independent decisions and advocate for themselves.

The messages were consistent with the belief that parents are too involved in making decisions for their students. One respondent seemed to be talking from the point of view of both parent and administrator:

We cannot protect our children from all upsetting or frustrating situations. And we shouldn't try. Disappointment is disappointing. When we help our children feel their sadness it helps them learn that they are capable of coping with difficult experiences and shows that we have faith in their ability to be ok when life doesn't go their way. This is how we can help them become resilient adults. If you've been the CEO of your child's life, it's time to switch jobs. Your new role should be that of a consultant.

Another administrator suggested that parents needed to change the type of involvement they now have with their children:

[First-year students] are learning to become a newer version of themselves. Allow them to make the journey with support. You no longer need to clear the path for them; they are learning to clear paths, take new ones, and decide which are best left unexplored.

The advice from administrators supported the literature that indicates that parents who are not involved in the lives of their college students are just as much a matter for concern as over-involved parents. Four administrators responding to the survey reminded parents that it is important to intervene when “circumstances present a real danger,” indicating that parents should “never hesitate to contact us in an emergency.”

Seven campus administrators detailed an important partnership role for college administrators and parents.



Allow for and encourage change and growth, encourage them to seek out resources and make their own decisions, trust that their experience will likely be different than yours, trust the professionals who work at the institution and work in partnership with them.

Additional words of advice for parents included suggesting open, clear, regular communication. One administrator suggested “Talk to your student, process, talk to them again.” Another piece of communication advice included “Encourage children to keep you informed about their progress. Read as many publications about the institution as possible and try to subscribe to campus news updates.” This advice encouraged parents to be involved by staying informed.

Administrators also had advice about the appropriate communication practice on a college campus: providing information directly to students and talking with the student first when issues arise.

We are here to help support, guide, challenge, and educate your student, as well as the family. We will contact you when it is imperative you are to be involved. We will encourage your student to loop you in when things are happening. Please understand it is hard for us if you call and ask us to help your student with their issue, but not allow us to share with them that you contacted us. They will think it is weird if we just show up on their doorstep, but we can work together to find a solution. Be open to that.

Many administrators advised parents of first-year students to become actively involved in the institution and in the education process. For example, several administrators suggested that parents remind their students to practice positive health and safety behaviors, such as locking rooms and securing personal belongings, and encourage their students to become actively involved in campus organizations and events. A health center director encouraged parents to support independent student behaviors in all areas.

Parents and students need to know their insurance coverage for the area. Parents need to be aware of HIPAA. Parents need to remind the student that part of becoming an adult means accepting responsibility for your actions and the consequences of those actions. Encourage students to be independent, ask questions and seek answers on their own.

### ***Memorable Parent Stories***

Although one administrator said “it’s too painful” to recount the most memorable parent interaction, the respondents shared 51 different parent stories, with several administrators communicating multiple stories. I reviewed each story carefully, coding<sup>9</sup> the responses into different themes as listed in Table 16. The stories varied in theme and in the level of difficulty of the interaction, with the majority ending favorably (59%). Twenty-seven percent of the stories featured angry parents. In all of the “angry parent” stories, except for one, the interaction remained negative throughout.

**Table 13. Memorable Stories**

| Tone of Initial Contact | Response | %   | % Ended Positively |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| Thankful                | 10       | 20% | 100%               |
| Inquisitive             | 7        | 14% | 57%                |
| Concerned               | 11       | 21% | 91%                |
| Frustrated/Annoyed      | 9        | 18% | 55%                |
| Angry                   | 14       | 27% | 7%                 |

The director of a student health center recalled a conversation with a student’s father. “He berated me, and ultimately called my supervisor.” His daughter was diagnosed with conjunctivitis and the father linked the minor ailment to a poor grade on an exam. “What was clear once I had time to process the interaction was that he was

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<sup>9</sup> The coding process I used was the same as the procedure I followed in coding administrators' messages to parents.

frustrated with his daughter's professor and a grade she'd received, but since the father had no power over him, he chose to take out his anger on me.” Frustrated that the health center did not intervene with the professor to excuse his daughter from the exam, the father refused to listen to what the director had to say about college policy and procedures.

Several administrators shared stories depicting the common trait among helicopter parents of believing they know more about how to advise their children than professional advisors.

A parent questioned my decision regarding a denied transfer course, wanting to know the exact information and materials I [used] to come to my decision. The facts that I have been in higher education over 20 years and that I regularly review such requests did not matter; he wanted to know specifically and in detail how I came to my decision. Unhappy with my response, he called the President's office.

Others gave similar examples of parents believing they know more than the professionals. These examples involved several different areas, including health insurance, career advice, course selection, and housing.

Several administrators who described difficult interactions also recounted stories of gratitude. “I've also had a mother tell me that I saved her son's life and express deep appreciation for the support I offered him. She sent flowers to say thank you.” Other administrators also shared stories that highlight their role in the educational and developmental growth of students. “I particularly enjoy meeting the parents at graduation. Often I meet with them and think back over the last four years and we marvel at how much their son or daughter has grown.” The stories also highlighted the important role student affairs professionals often play in the lives of students. “I always

enjoy when students bring their families to the Community Service Office to show off their home away from home. Parents know everything that is going on in their students' lives and are so happy to interact and get a glimpse."

Administrators told several stories of helicopter parenting moments, including moments when parents had access to students' private online portals and university email accounts. Career center professionals shared stories of parents overly involved in the job search process, including attending on-campus career fairs and interviews. "I had to have a discussion that while attending appointments on campus is not against policy, this would not be appropriate for on the job."

Several stories gave examples of difficult or challenging helicopter parents. A student conduct administrator recalled dealing with a father of a student involved in a conduct situation.

He took a leave of absence from his job in California, drove across country and took up residence in a local hotel for several months during the campus conduct process and subsequent legal challenge. He called, faxed or visited my office on a daily basis. When he and his son got in their van and headed west, I breathed a deep sigh of relief.

Another student conduct administrator provided a great example of how parents often find it challenging to allow students to handle difficult situations independently. This quote not only showed the helicopter type of involvement of some parents, but also highlighted the independent problem-solving skills many students do possess: skills that administrators like to encourage.

Over the years I have taken many parent calls where the parent identifies that they want me to tell them about the conduct incident their child was involved in. I always ask if the child has shared with them and in these situations the response

is, “Yes, but I want to hear it from you so I know the real story.” I ask them to recount what their child has shared with them and, more often than not, the only thing I say is “That is accurate” and then, usually, share a bit about how their child responded with maturity in our conversation. In my head, I am also saying “[It] might help if you trusted your child a bit here—they really are trying to do the right thing and need your encouragement, not your distrust.”

According to the respondents, parents often questioned university policies and procedures, sometimes defending their children’s egregious behaviors. Several respondents shared stories of parents threatening legal action because they were unhappy with university decisions. “A parent threatened a lawsuit because her daughter was not eligible to participate in sorority recruitment.”<sup>10</sup> These stories showed parents trying to take responsibility away from their children, placing the responsibilities on “unfair” practices or policies.

Several administrators mentioned parent associations in their responses, but did so with mixed reactions. Similar to parent-teacher associations common in K-12, university parent associations channel parents into programs that allow them to become advocates of their children’s institutions (Savage & Petree, 2013). Positive stories shared by respondents include parents giving campus presentations about their personal and professional interests and parents volunteering with career services to provide internships and arrange interviews for qualified students. However, one respondent indicated “the parents advisory committee is something I do not like working with, as well intentioned as they feel they are.” Many parent associations are grounded in development offices,

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<sup>10</sup> The institutions surveyed have GPA requirements for participation in fraternity and sorority recruitment.

often taking a primarily fundraising role. One administrator indicated this gives parent association members “a feeling of entitlement when talking with campus offices.”

### **Continuing Questions and Further Study**

The instrument I used to assess parent interaction did not inquire about differences in interacting with parents based on the parent’s gender. In subsequent research with student affairs administrators, it would be interesting to request information about differences in their interactions with mothers and fathers. In addition, it would be interesting to assess the differences in parents of first-year students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Reviewing the results of the administrator survey also generated more questions regarding parent expectations for the college experience as well as differences among expectations and university policies and procedures. Surveying parents of prospective students could be a helpful way of knowing how to interact with them when they call, what educational workshops to include during parent orientation, and what information to communicate through parent newsletters, websites, and social media sites.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The results of my survey of college student affairs administrators verify concerns noted here and in the literature regarding the prevalence and influence of helicopter parents in student life on college campuses. The respondents provided information supporting the importance of engaging parents throughout their children’s collegiate years and the educational role student affairs administrators often play in assisting parents through their transitioning role as parents of college students.

### ***Noteworthy results***

Consistent with the description of the prevalence of helicopter parents on college campuses by Somers and Settle (2010a), parents at the seven institutions I surveyed also displayed high rates of over-involved, intrusive behaviors.

- ***When asked to share a memorable parent story, 59% of administrators shared stories consistent with helicopter parent behaviors.*** The stories shared by the respondents support Twenge's (2006) description of *Generation Me* family relationships. Like the father blaming the health center for his daughter's poor exam grade, parents often find it easier to fault the institution rather than find fault with their children when students are in difficult situations. This often causes administrators to take a defensive stance, supporting college policies and highlighting the role of the student in the situation. The repeated request by the respondents to my survey for parents to trust college policies, practices, and professionals supports the concept that some parents currently trust themselves more than others – even seasoned professionals – to care for their children (Lythcott-Haims, 2015; Twenge, 2006).
- ***As indicated by 80% of respondents and emphasized in their parent stories and words of advice, too many parents are too involved in making decisions for students.*** It is notable that student affairs administrators overwhelmingly agreed that parents are solving too many problems for their college-age children. Their responses and comments indicated that parents' over-involvement is influencing how students develop resilience and independent problem-solving skills. With

student affairs professionals taking the lead, universities need to take an active role in educating students to carry out independent decision-making. Many respondents gave examples of educational moments with parents and the improvements they encouraged in the parents' relationships with their students.

- ***When quantifying their amount of parent interaction, 11% of administrators indicated they talk with parents daily and 12% indicated they talk with six or more parents each week.*** One administrator admitted to talking with 11 or more parents each week. Although parent involvement is expected with Millennial students, this amount of interaction with college administrators is cause for concern and is consistent with intrusive behaviors. In addition to affecting the development of their students, this amount of parent interaction is time-consuming for administrators with complex job responsibilities related to the education of students, and may affect the quality of their efforts with students.
- ***When characterizing parent interaction, 32% of respondents believed that they have too much contact with parents.*** It is striking that a third of student affairs administrators perceive excessive parent involvement – which could arguably be referred to as *intrusiveness*, since in other questions administrators are favorable toward true *involvement*. The comments throughout the survey depicted student affairs administrators wanting more contact with students when they are experiencing difficulties and less contact with their parents.

The survey results highlight the amount of time student affairs administrators spent interacting with parents; this amount of time gives them a unique opportunity to



positively affect the impact of parents on their students' college experience. Therefore, it is important that college and university administrators continue to be proactive in engaging parents in helpful and supportive ways, educating them regarding the importance of allowing college students to make independent decisions. Chapter four will explore specific strategies that may be effective in that educational process.

## **Chapter 4**

### **STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

#### **Introduction and Purpose**

This chapter reviews best practices and proposes strategies to help student affairs administrators at Bucknell and other universities effectively manage parental involvement. As prior chapters have shown, student affairs administrators are facing new challenges from the millennial generation and the growing phenomenon of over-involved, intrusive parenting. Parents, appropriately, want to be involved and should be involved in their students' higher education. The challenge from the perspective of the student affairs professional is to manage parental involvement in productive ways, to minimize helicopter parenting, and to engage parents as partners in ways that promote student autonomy and independent problem solving, as opposed to student dependency on parents and immaturity in dealing with the challenges of college life.

This chapter describes key strategies for engaging parents, directed to the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) for implementation. Each strategy includes supporting rationales for the recommendation along with examples of best practices currently employed at American institutions. This chapter also includes a specific action plan for Bucknell University. Based on my knowledge of Bucknell's organizational structure, practices, and issues, I created a list of action steps that will assist Bucknell student

affairs administrators in the management of parent interactions that encourage student resilience and independent problem solving.

### **Key Strategies**

The following strategies, directed to the CSAO, can help student affairs administrators encourage positive parent interactions and enhance independent problem solving in their students. Throughout this chapter, I am suggesting that the CSAO initiate conversations regarding the importance of engaging parents and take the leadership role in implementing change. In order to achieve success in the following strategies, it is imperative to involve the president and other top university leaders. Using a committee of institutional leaders can be most effective: specific committee membership will strongly depend upon university organization and structure. The university's top leaders, including the president, chief academic officer, chief student affairs officer and general counsel, should be involved in conversations, appointing an individual to take responsibility for each strategy.

#### ***Strategy 1: Parents and Student Responsibility***

*At the highest leadership level of the institution, determine who is ultimately responsible for the lives of students, which services the university is providing to students, and how the university interacts with parents.*

***Determine who is responsible for students.*** Most campuses, as indicated in written code of conducts and associated policies, assert that students are responsible for their education and experiences during college. However, colleges differ in determining which services and support to provide to students in fulfilling those responsibilities.

Answering this question is an important step in determining how to proceed with parent engagement. Knowing that parents are accustomed to intervening with students' past academic and social conflicts, are students now responsible for resolving social difficulties such as college roommate conflicts and academic difficulties such as disagreeing with an assigned grade? Or will the university provide solutions such as alternate housing assignments and grade changes? Are parents responsible for providing students with resources such as counseling, medication prescriptions, legal assistance, and tutoring? Or is the university now responsible for providing students with services they need in order to be successful, transitioning into the role that was once held by parents? I am not advocating for a specific answer to these questions, solely indicating that the question needs to be answered and clearly articulated to students and their parents.

When discussing the coddling that helicopter parents provide students during K-12 years, college administrators worry that parents have transferred that coddling behavior to professionals on their students' campuses. In an article in *The Washington Post*, Jeffrey Selingo (2015) warns of a new danger in overcompensating for parent expectations. "In the past decade, college campuses have turned into one big danger-free zone, where students live in a bubble and are asked to take few, if any, risks in their education" (Selingo, 2015, para. 1). Controversy is growing across campuses regarding how much university administrators should be doing to support student success. For example, student leaders at several institutions have started to ask faculty members to warn them when potentially traumatic material will be presented in classes, giving the

student the ability to skip class or ask for an alternate assignment. “Debate over trigger warnings is raging. Are they necessary to protect victims of trauma? Or do they coddle young adults who have become overly sensitive about life experiences?” (Wilson, September 14, 2015, para. 5).

When examining the issue of student responsibility, the following categories and questions are additional examples of issues that need to be discussed.

- **Mental Health Services:** Will the university provide unlimited counseling support for students in need? Will students be referred to community resources and be required to pay for those services? Will the university provide appointments with psychiatrists and if so, will those psychiatrists prescribe medication? How does the university determine if a student is healthy enough to remain enrolled in classes?
- **Medical Services:** Will the university provide 24-hour health provider care? If the health facility is not consistently open, does the university provide transportation to local hospitals/doctors/clinics? Will the university medical staff administer immunizations or allergy shots? If a student-athlete is injured, does the university provide access to physical therapy?
- **Remedial Education:** If students are not prepared for entry-level course material, will the university provide remedial education? If students are experiencing difficulty in classes, will the university provide free tutors? If students fail required courses, are they permitted to retake them?

- Academic Warnings: Will faculty provide mid-term grades? If students are in danger of failing, do faculty reach out to advisors and deans? If students are missing several classes, will the university intervene? Will parents be notified (within FERPA guidelines) of academic concerns and changes in academic status?
- Student Conduct: Will campus police issue local/state citations? When students are transported to the local hospitals or police stations for inappropriate conduct, will university personnel meet them there and assist with follow-up? Will the university notify parents of code of conduct violations (within FERPA guidelines)?

Although it is appropriate for student affairs to take the lead in these conversations, it is imperative to involve university leaders across divisions. After decisions are made, they must be shared, understood, and adopted by all members of the campus community. “Parents and prospective students alike must clearly understand what the institution can and cannot do and why the decision was made to either limit or extend services” (Sandeem & Barr, 2006, p. 178).

***Create a parent vision statement.*** A vision statement for work with families is useful for administrators who are confronted with difficult parent interactions. The assistant vice president for student affairs at Colorado State University (CSU) promotes a parenting role that “highlights positive ways to guide college students into adulthood” (Donovan, 2014, p. 2). The office of parents and family programs has mission and vision statements that fit that sentiment: “Colorado State University actively partners with

students' parents and families to support students' academic success and personal development while also assisting families to become appropriately involved and connected with their students and the University” (Colorado State University, n.d.). CSU also created ethical standards for its work with parents that demonstrate the university’s appreciation of parents’ appropriate involvement, students’ ability to make independent decisions, and the developmental growth of their students. The university’s mission statement, vision, and ethical standards guide its interactions with students and their parents.

Stuart Rabinowitz, president of Hofstra University, calls parents one of the university’s most important groups of stakeholders. "Most of them have paid for this education for their children or gone into debt for this education. And in some sense, they're entitled to know and be assured that we're looking out for their children's welfare" (Gregory, 2015, p. 25). Hofstra has created a guiding principle for sharing information with parents that directs the work of the university with both students and their parents. The university’s policy on family notification (Appendix G) is showcased on its website and in campus publications. This policy explicitly communicates Hofstra’s educational learning outcomes for students to parents, highlighting the rationale for discussing concerns directly with students instead of parents (Hofstra, n. d.).

***Develop clear and unambiguous policies.*** Institutions must ensure that policies and procedures are well defined, communicated, and accessible. Although many college administrators operate under the assumption that students are responsible for their own lives, the threat of lawsuits create many challenges when working with students (Sandeem

& Barr, 2006). College campuses have become increasingly litigious. Students and their parents continue to sue institutions, indicating that students were not protected from harm. This trend highlights the need for current, clear, and relevant policies as well as procedures for student grievances. Colleges are protected by clear policies and administrators whose actions are guided by those policies.

### ***Strategy 2: Communication Plan***

*Develop a plan that addresses the flow of information to parents. Create strategies for general information, health and safety education, and emergency messages. Ensure that all university employees are aware of and adhere to the communication plans.*

With transparency in mind, the communication plan for parents should follow the statement created for parent involvement. University leadership should determine what information they choose to share directly with parents and what information should be shared with parents through students. As indicated in Chapter Two, parents are an effective means of communicating information to students (American College Health Association, 2008). I shared an example in Chapter Two of using parents to assist in educating students about the negative consequences associated with high-risk drinking. Shortly after that email was sent to parents, asking for their assistance in a problem involving alcohol, another problem arose on campus. Several on-campus apartments were being targeted for burglary. University administration decided to send an email to all students residing in that apartment complex, reminding them to lock their doors and suggesting that they be vigilant of their surroundings. Shortly after that email was sent, I



received a phone call from a parent who heard about the email from her daughter. The parent was curious about our communication strategy, asking why we sent her the alcohol safety email, but not the one about housing safety.

Although our communication decisions were made in a way that encouraged student responsibility, this parent's confusion emphasized the importance of having a policy for communicating with parents that consistently guides all communications – a policy that is transparent to parents.

Although parents can be partners in educating and informing students, it is also important for universities to work directly with students, respecting their independence from parents. Striking a balance with communication messages is very important. A successful communication strategy will include tactics for engaging parents during the admissions process and for continuing with intentional communication throughout the different stages of students' college careers, as well as specific strategies for communicating health and safety issues.

***Admissions strategy.*** When discussing strategies to encourage engaged parenting, Somers and Settle (2010a) emphasize the importance of transparency and honest and realistic communication. Information sent to prospective parents sets the tone for what parents can expect when students matriculate. Gettysburg College has an extensive parent communication plan that starts with the admissions process (Gettysburg College, n.d.). In addition to the literature directed to prospective students, Gettysburg targets publications specifically to parents of prospective students. Parents are sent “From Parents to Parents: 20 Common Questions, 20 Honest Answers.” This

publication, with several quotes directly from current parents, sets the stage for parent relationships, showing parents that they are an important part of the campus community. After reading the information sent during the admissions process, parents get the sense that they will be a part of the college process with their Gettysburg student. Gettysburg encourages parents to stay connected to the institution through additional publications, webpages, and parent portals.

***Continual communication.*** Flowing from admissions communication, universities should create a deliberate strategy for continual communication with parents. What are the goals of this communication plan – to keep parents informed of college information, to share student-specific information, to encourage students and parents to regularly discuss important information, to gather parents’ support in educating students? Colby College clearly articulates goals for working with parents and publishes a statement that reflects what student affairs staff will and will not communicate to parents. They frame their relationship with students and families by acknowledging the important role parents were encouraged to play in their children’s earlier education, and indicating that at Colby parent engagement will continue, “but the shape and nature of your relationship with the college will necessarily be quite different” (Colby College, n.d.). The university explains its communication vision for academic, social, and student conduct related matters (Appendix H). Many colleges are encouraging parents to stay connected by regularly sharing e-newsletters and email updates.

***Health and safety information.*** As detailed in Chapter Two, parents are very concerned with campus safety (Somers & Settle, 2010a). Parents want to feel confident

that their children will be safe when a campus emergency arises. Since the 2007 Virginia Tech tragedy, campuses have increased plans to alert and notify those on campus of potential harm. Campuses are required through the Clery Act to notify the campus community of any significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees on campus. Institutions send those notices through emails, texts, social media, and other outlets. After receiving an emergency text from campus safety, a student's initial thought is often to alert parents. Therefore it is imperative that universities create a plan for sharing – or not sharing, depending on their communication policy – that information with parents and responding to parents' concerns during a crisis. As a current student at the University of Delaware, I receive text and email alerts when dangerous situations occur on or around campus. My mother has the option of signing up to receive those alerts as well. Colby and Gettysburg Colleges have similar emergency alert systems, allowing parents to subscribe to their emergency notification systems.

### ***Strategy 3: FERPA Policies***

*Develop clear Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) policies, determining how and when to share confidential student information with parents.*

*Provide FERPA policy education and information to all faculty, staff, students, and parents.*

FERPA implementation procedures should be detailed in university communication strategies. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education

records. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's K-12 education records. These rights are transferred to the student when enrolled in college, regardless of the student's age. It is crucial for all university administrators to know and understand the intricacies of FERPA and to implement FERPA in a way that best follows the university's vision for engaging parents. Universities should make it a priority to include higher education related FERPA information in their parent communication strategies. FERPA does not need to be an obstacle in talking with parents. As a chief student affairs administrator, I had many conversations with employees whose first instinct was to say, "Sorry, due to FERPA, I am unable to talk with you," when being questioned by a parent. That is simply not true and is not at all helpful in building goodwill among parents.

FERPA does allow information to be shared with parents under certain guidelines. "Generally under FERPA, written consent is required before records are released to a third party, including parents" (Lowery, 2005, p. 44). However there are several exceptions that do allow universities to share information with parents without written consent from the student. "These exceptions include (a) release to the parents of a dependent student, (b) health and safety emergencies, (c) parental notification for alcohol and drug violations, and (d) release to the public of final results involving crimes of violence" (Lowery, 2005, p.44).

Whether obtaining written consent or using an exception, university administrators may share details of students' college experience with parents. Prior to parent calls coming into the office, it is important that all administrators understand the

university's FERPA implementation policies and respond accordingly. Difficult conversations with parents are often easier when administrators are able to point to explicit policies and vision statements that support the decision regarding what information to share in that moment. Clear education for faculty and staff is key in order for parents to receive consistent responses and treatment regardless of whom they contact at the university.

FERPA policies should be clearly publicized at places commonly visited by parents and students. If a student's written consent is desired, forms or details for submitting releases or sharing evidence of dependent status should be equally accessible. Colby College shares FERPA information with parents and students during the admissions process.

Colby complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), which establishes the rights and restrictions of students to inspect and review education records, provides guidelines for the correction of inaccurate or misleading data, and establishes standards for disclosure of student information. (Colby College, n.d.)

The Colby admissions website gives advice about how students can ensure parents have access to information.

***Parent portals.*** Many institutions, including the University of Delaware, Gettysburg College and Colby College, have created parent portals where family members may create an online account that grants them access to certain university services and specific student information. Northeastern University also created a parent portal where “parents and guardians can review bills and transcripts online, get news and information from their student's college, and much more” (Northeastern University, n.

d.). Though the parent portal is easily accessible through Northeastern's Office of Parent Programs and Services' webpage, authorization for parents to access the portal must come directly from the student. Northeastern communicates parent portal information to parents and students separately before and during orientation. This policy is consistent with FERPA protocol, which gives students the right to restrict what information their parents are able to access.

***Strategy 4: Office for Parent Programs***

*Develop an organizational structure for managing parent expectations and parent interactions. Ensure that parent related responsibilities are accurately reflected in job descriptions and that all at the university know and understand those roles appropriately.*

As parents are calling, visiting, and asking to be heard, it is important that universities are prepared to respond. If the university does not already have an office dedicated to assisting parents, university leaders should designate an administrator to coordinate messages and services to parents and families. Consistency is crucial. Parents should receive similar treatment, regardless of whom they contact. As indicated in the survey discussed in Chapter Three, 41% of university administrators indicated that parents occasionally or frequently called a supervisor or other office if they did not receive the answer they were expecting. Although it is inappropriate to guarantee parents will always find the answer they want, it is appropriate to expect that every administrator will act in ways that are consistent with university policy and ways that ensure parents feel respected, heard, and valued. Having one person ultimately responsible for parent

services ensures that responses to parent questions are framed in terms of the university's mission, parent vision statement, and supporting policies.

**Offices for parent and family programs.** Despite limited university resources, offices of parent and family programs are growing on college campuses nationwide. Marjorie Savage and Chelsea Petree (2013), faculty members at the University of Minnesota, started researching university services for parents in 2003. In 2013 they again surveyed over 500 parent program directors, receiving 182 responses. According to their national survey, 61% of the existing offices started after 2000 (Savage & Petree, 2013). Offices for parent programs have varying responsibilities, including managing family weekends, organizing parent orientation, and communicating to parents through a variety of means such as websites, email newsletters, and Facebook pages.

Parent and family programs most often report through the division of student affairs (53%) or alumni and development divisions (26%). Other programs report through academic affairs, enrollment management and university relations. Parent programs at public institutions are more likely to report through student affairs (72%) than advancement offices (8%); at private institutions the programs are more equally balanced between the two divisions with 35% in student affairs and 37% in advancement (Savage & Petree, 2013).

The University of Minnesota has an established program for parents and family members. A branch of the division of student affairs, its concentration on parent programs started in 1993 and has developed into the current parent and family program office. The office has a clearly articulated mission and statement of support. "We want

students to be successful, feel supported as students and individuals and to be part of the University of Minnesota community. We are partners with [parents]” (University of Minnesota, n.d.). The office’s website highlights the importance of family involvement in college student development and college success. Their events, publications, and activities support their mission and vision. A robust office that includes several staff members, the office publishes many important resources for parents, including a *Trouble-Shooting Guide: Parent Involvement vs. Parent Interference*.

Housed within the division of alumni and development, both the office of parent engagement at Bates College and the office for parents and families at Colgate University focus on parent giving. Their office staffs schedule events for annual parent and family weekends. Both programs have active websites and email list-serves that distribute information important to parents, such as impressive career statistics.

In addition to programming and building philanthropy among parents, the offices that report through student affairs also seem to assist more with parent education and strategic communication. The office of parent programs at the College of William and Mary, directed by an associate dean of students, created guiding principles that include facilitating and advocating for the role of family involvement in community development and individual student success, as well as providing resources and activities that connect families with each other and with the college community (The College of William and Mary, n.d.). William and Mary’s parent programs staff members are prepared to assist in talking with parents who have concerns about their students, answer questions regarding policies and practices, and contact parents when students are experiencing emergencies.



Regardless of where the responsibility for parents lies within university structure, it is important that the division of student affairs has a policy for parent involvement and close working relationships with the responsible professionals. It is equally important that the entire university faculty and staff understand the parent vision statement and know where to direct parents who have concerns or wish to become more involved in their student's education.

***Strategy 5: Role for Parents on Campus***

*Create several meaningful and purposeful responsibilities for parents as they become a part of the campus community.*

Accustomed to having an active role in their high school students' lives, parents want a role in their college students' lives as well. Universities can assist parents unsure of exactly how to define their new role by sharing examples of how parents can help universities in achieving their educational goals for students. Somers and Settle (2010a) estimate the percentage of helicopter parents on college campuses as 40 – 60%, so it is inevitable that parents will become involved on college campuses. As revealed in the survey results detailed in Chapter Three, 44% of campus administrators communicate with parents weekly. This gives administrators the opportunity to shape parent involvement by educating parents on the most productive type of involvement.

When confronting hyper-involved parents, colleges should not block their efforts (which only fuels resentment). Instead, the solution is to channel parental energy, encouraging parents to involve themselves in certain areas of college life while giving the college jurisdiction over others. This will allow the school to satisfy the demands of parents while still fulfilling its role as an institution. (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 90)

Texas Tech University encourages parents to become involved on campus.

“Research studies have shown that the more parents are involved, the more likely it is a student will remain enrolled and proceed to graduation” (Texas Tech University, n.d.).

From the parent and family relations website, parents have access to a list of involvement opportunities that includes attending orientation and family weekend, registering for the parent and family newsletter, joining the parent’s association, sending care packages, making contact with other Texas Tech parents, and volunteering at campus events.

***Parent associations.*** Savage and Petree’s (2013) National Survey of College and University Parent Programs, discussed above, also asked program directors about specific roles for parents. Over two-thirds of the offices surveyed had parent associations (69%) or parent councils (66%) (Savage & Petree, 2013). Although each institution defines roles of these organizations differently, *associations* typically signify organizations that encourage parental involvement and *councils* describe leadership and advisory boards. The parent association at Texas Tech works closely with the parent and families program office to plan events and encourage parent involvement and parent volunteerism (Texas Tech University, n.d.). Some groups, like the parents leadership council at Brown University, are more focused on philanthropy.

The Parents Leadership Council is comprised of a group of dedicated Brown parents who seek to make a difference in the Brown community by serving as goodwill ambassadors for the University. Philanthropists at heart, council members often give generously to several University priorities. (Brown University, n.d.)

Regardless of the focus, parent organizations are an excellent source of information for student affairs administrators. It is imperative for parent organization leaders and student

affairs administrators to be equally focused on the university mission and to collaborate on institution goals.

***Parents as fundraisers.*** The percentage of parent program offices that coordinate fundraising activities has grown from 44% in 2003 to 82% in 2013 (Savage & Petree, 2013). The trend to target parents in fundraising campaigns is increasing. Clarkson University created a comprehensive plan for engaging parents, thereby increasing donations from parents. "Parent fundraising opens up new opportunities for Clarkson to engage with parents. Their efforts help us upgrade the services we provide our students and allow us to connect the student-body experience with the parents' experience" (Meyers, 2004, para. 4). Clarkson administrators engage the parents' association in designating fundraising projects targeted to meet student needs. Parent volunteers manage the program and funds raised by parents go directly to that special project. Requesting additional funds from parents who already contribute \$59,000 annually in tuition and fees is challenging and has the potential of creating additional expectations from those parent donors. Therefore it is important that development officers collaborate closely with the division of student affairs regarding campaigns to solicit funds from parents so that the two divisions can work together to manage parent expectations and address potentially challenging parent situations. For example, while overseeing academic support services, I worked closely with development officers who were targeting the family of a student with a disability to fund an important department initiative. I was concerned that the family might be perceived as "purchasing" academic accommodations. To avoid creating this perception, we decided that we would nurture

the relationship with the family but not make any requests for donations until after the student graduated.

*Parents as an appropriate university resource.* Many of the parent offices cited in this chapter offer transition resources for parents, encouraging parents to step back and allow students to solve problems independently during college. The student audience needs to hear this message as well. As noted in Pizzolato and Hicklen's (2011) research, 44% of their student respondents involved their parents when making decisions. Students appreciate and expect their parents to continue to be involved in their college lives. "The vast majority of parent involvement in this study was [child] initiated ... . Even in emerging adulthood, these children enjoy and value parental input" (Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011, p. 680). Universities should encourage students to continue their close parent relationships while also becoming resilient, independent problem solvers. Therefore, in addition to sharing a trouble-shooting guide with parents, it is important to share similar messages with students.

When discussing, listing, or publishing resources for students, institutions should consider including parents in their lists of resource options, with a description of appropriate times to engage parents in ways that support student development.

Instead of ignoring the fact that students solicit advice from parents, university administrators should acknowledge parental support. However, the information about resources should also include examples of times when university professionals, instead of parents, are needed for important advice and action. Hofer and Moore (2010) were surprised to find 19% of their student respondents using parents to edit their college

papers. They were even more surprised to find that these students did not see this parental assistance as inappropriate. This is a good example of an opportunity for parents to help their student develop independence. When emailed that paper to edit, the parent can politely decline the request, recommending the college writing center or other appropriate office as a referral.

“Young people need advice and encouragement to take advantage of the remarkable learning and social opportunities available in college. Parents are often best at providing that support” (Glassner & Schapiro, 2012). Both parents and students are adjusting to this new relationship; therefore it is important to offer advice to both students and parents regarding parents’ new role in the life of their college student.

***Strategy 6: Student Resilience and Independent Problem Solving***

*Create a plan, integrating academic and student life, to build student resilience and progressively increase students’ abilities to solve problems independently and ethically; regularly share that plan with parents.*

***Build student resilience.*** Millennial students are not accustomed to failure and lack the resilience other generations of college students modeled. The Resilience Consortium is a higher-education organization comprising faculty, academic support services, and counseling center personnel devoted to encouraging resilience among college students. The consortium, started by ten “Ivy plus” universities in 2014, “emerged from a shared sense that today’s students encounter unprecedented challenges that require them to exercise capacities for resilience, and that institutions of higher education have an important role to play in helping young people develop

these capacities” (Resilience Consortium, n.d.). The consortium describes resilience “in terms of one’s capacities for persistence, creativity, emotional intelligence, grit, cognitive flexibility, risk-taking, agency, adapting to change, delaying gratification, learning from failure, and questioning success” (Resilience Consortium, n.d.).

The Resilience Project at Stanford University “is a resource that uses personal narratives, programming, and coaching to motivate and support students as they experience the normal academic setbacks that are part of a rigorous education” (Resilience Consortium, n.d.). The project website features videos depicting moments of failure experienced by successful students, faculty, and alumni.

Campus projects through the Resilience Consortium emphasize the importance of failure in the learning process. It is important to “instill a sense of belonging and bravery in students to ultimately change the campus perception of failure from something to be avoided at all costs, to something essential to a meaningful education” (Resilience Consortium, n.d.). Normalizing failure is an important step in encouraging students to take risks and attempt to solve their own problems.

***Increase students’ ability to solve problems ethically.*** The problem highlighted in this study involves a lack of independent problem solving in students and a high dependency upon parents to solve problems for their students. The research reported in Chapter Three revealed that 80% of the student affairs administrator respondents believed parents were too involved in solving problems for their college students. Therefore it is important for universities to create strategies to develop independent and ethical problem-

solving skills in students. Because students learn and grow both inside and outside the classroom, it is important that strategies integrate academic and student life.

Institutions intentionally determine the important learning they expect inside and outside the classroom. “Across all categories, students and campus professionals strongly agree that personal and social responsibility should be a major focus of a college education” (Antonaros, Barnhardt, Holsapple, Moronski, & Vergoth, 2008, p. 3).

Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin developed a curriculum of eight core abilities that are the foundation of the Alverno education. Achieving excellence in arenas such as problem solving, effective citizenship and recognizing value systems are important definitions of success for Alverno students. The eight abilities the college created “empower [students] to successfully solve problems today and tomorrow” (Alverno College, n.d.). Alverno shares the importance of these eight abilities with students and parents early in the admissions process, detailing how these abilities affect the institution’s policies, practices and experiences inside and outside the classroom.

***Sharing learning outcomes with parents.*** Transparency in educational goals for students, such as developing independent problem-solving skills, can help parents feel confident about the institution, therefore potentially discouraging helicopter parenting behaviors. Normalizing student failure for parents is equally important. Julie Lythcott-Haimes (2015) advises parents to assist in building resilience by taking a step back when their children face important decisions. She emphasizes the importance of allowing children to take risks and make mistakes. Based on the helicopter parenting moments witnessed at institutions across the country, parents need assistance in learning how to

take that important step back. Student affairs administrators are uniquely positioned to assist. Transparent educational goals for students, as well as obstacles and challenges faced by students – along with the support provided by the university to tackle those obstacles and reach those educational goals – can be important educational tools.

Showcasing moments of failure in their institution’s most successful college students may help parents feel better when their “perfect” college student discusses personal failures. This might help parents relax their instinctual reflex to act as fixer and allow their college student to make independent decisions. For example, summer orientation at Millersville University has historically included a time for successful upper-class student leaders to share their moments of failure with incoming students and their parents. Each student orientation assistant chooses a pivotal moment in his or her college career to share with the orientation audience. Students describe experiences, such as a semester with a failing GPA or depression due to homesickness, and explain how they were able to turn their situation around with the help and support of Millersville faculty and staff. The impact of this story- sharing session is powerful, especially for parents.

When talking with parents during orientation, the division of student affairs at Lehigh University describes bLUeprint, a distinctive student life curriculum program that operationalizes the university’s core developmental competencies: intellectual development, individual identity development, interpersonal development. “Centers and departments across the division work synergistically to provide developmentally appropriate, sequenced student learning opportunities across foundations for student



success” (Lehigh University, n.d.). Student affairs administrators describe the four-phase learning cycle – discover, explore, connect, and apply – that guides the educational process for students. Parents can interrupt that important learning cycle if they step in to solve their students’ problems. Lehigh parents are encouraged to be partners with the university to help students achieve their educational and personal goals rather than solve problems for their students. In order to assist in building resilience and independence in students, the process of educating parents needs to be ongoing and linked to the “non-fixer” role for parents of college students.

***Strategy 7: Parent Assessment Plan***

*Regularly survey parents to determine their perceptions of college procedures, their expectations for their students’ college experience, and what they need in order to feel valued by the community.*

***Assessing parent expectations.*** Understanding parent expectations is key in encouraging engaged parenting behaviors on campus instead of helicopter parenting behaviors. Expectations of college students’ parents have changed over the last 30 years (Jackson & Murphy, 2005). Before determining how to respond to the increased involvement of parents, it is crucial to understand parental expectations of the college experience and how they intend to be involved when students experience difficulties.

Although I was able to find examples of university surveys assessing parent program services and offices such as admissions and orientation (Savage & Petree, 2012), surveys assessing students’ opinions of parent involvement (Schiffrin et al., 2013), and assessments created to understand university administrators’ views on helicopter parents

(Somers & Settle, 2010a), I was unable to find a survey created with the purpose of understanding parent roles, relationships, and expectations before they became a part of their students' institution. Therefore I created a sample survey, using information gathered in the literature review (Appendix F). The sample survey gathers information about parental expectations for communication, their expectations for staying informed, their knowledge of FERPA, and their expectations for involvement in their students' important decisions

***Surveying parent satisfaction.*** Just as prospective parent expectation surveys can guide university services, parental satisfaction surveys are also instrumental in guiding the work of student affairs administrators. In addition to assessing parent satisfaction for parent programs, universities also need to understand the effectiveness of their different departments. In order to calm helicopter parents and create more positively engaged parents, it is helpful for universities to “verify the responsiveness of key offices” (Somers & Settle, 2010b, p.7). Are office missions, programs and practices in line with the parent vision statement created by university leadership? In order to answer this question and assess university efforts in engaging parents, program assessment practices are essential. Of the parent program directors surveyed by Savage & Petree (2013), 61% indicate that they regularly survey parents and use that assessment to guide services. The College of Saint Rose offers a chance for every parent to give feedback on any type of interaction with staff members. “Approximately two weeks following each phone call, email, in-person contact, an anonymous evaluation is sent to the parent” (Saul & Honor, 2005, p.73). This provides parents with a regular opportunity to give important feedback on the

college's strengths as well as areas that can be improved. The office of parent and family programs at Bowling Green State University "views program assessment as a cornerstone to success, and thus satisfaction-based surveys are created and administered to participants and guests at all major programmatic efforts and special events" (Saul & Honor, 2005, p. 72). Bowling Green staff also conducts parent and family member focus groups at regional meetings. They use this information to direct their work with families.

***Sharing information.*** In addition to gathering information from and about parents, it is important to share the information that emerges with campus partners. When assessing parents' experiences, "if problems are identified, addressing them immediately could prevent a swarm of helicopter parents from descending on the president's office" (Somers & Settle, 2010b, p. 7). The goal is not to "please parents at all costs," but rather to ensure that all campus policies and practices are in line with university goals related to parent involvement in student education. When relaying parent feedback to faculty and staff, it is important to link that feedback and associated suggestions to university goals.

### **Action Plan for Bucknell University**

Managing parent interactions has become a large part of the student affairs administrator's role on Bucknell's campus. The survey findings (Chapter Three) demonstrate this, as does the material I have presented through earlier chapters based on my experience as the chief student affairs officer. Although many aspects of the seven strategies discussed above have been implemented by individuals and departments, a more cohesive and comprehensive approach – widely known and understood – would

assist in managing parent interactions. Mirroring the seven strategies, the following recommendations for action, addressed to Bucknell's chief student affairs officer and other senior leaders, are intended to encourage engaged parenting, discourage helicopter parenting, and develop autonomous, independent problem-solving skills in Bucknell's undergraduate students.

### ***Recommendation 1***

*Create a vision statement, supported by senior leaders, to guide Bucknell's work with parents and ensure that all university policies and procedures consistently reflect that statement.* Before creating the vision for parents, Bucknell should answer the question "Who is responsible for our students?" by determining the students' role in achieving success, the support services the university will and will not provide, and the information that will and will not be communicated to parents.

The president, provost, and CSAO should create a yearlong task force on parent involvement to review the strategies and recommendations outlined in this paper, answer the above questions about student responsibility, and formulate the vision and principles that guide parental involvement at Bucknell. Task force membership should include representatives from student affairs, the university registrar's office, the three academic colleges, enrollment management, the athletics department, communication, development and alumni relations (parents fund and family programs), and finance and administration. Throughout the year of the parent involvement task force's work, task force members should complete the following assignments.

***Create a vision for parent involvement.*** After extensively reviewing student responsibility and parents' roles at Bucknell, the task force should adopt a parent involvement vision statement that guides the work of university professionals. This statement should be understood and accepted by all divisions, offices, and personnel. Clearly shared on multiple divisional websites and publications, the parent vision statement should serve as a guide in student responsibility and parent interactions. Bucknell's division of student affairs created a statement for its work with parents in 2015 (Appendix I). This statement provides a starting point for task force conversations. It is important that the final vision statement be a result of collaboration among multiple offices, shared and agreed upon by the president's leadership team and task force members.

***Review policies and procedures.*** Using the vision statement as a guide, the parent involvement task force should work with departments to review policies and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the university mission and vision for student responsibility and parent interaction.

Bucknell's excused absence policy (Appendix J) is a good example of a policy that should be reviewed because it illustrates the complexity of defining student responsibilities and adhering consistently to policies. Currently, the policy is inconsistently followed. Many faculty require students to provide excuses if they have missed classes or assignments. Failure to produce an excuse may lead to a grade reduction. One result is that many students can be seen waiting at the student health center to be seen by a doctor for the purpose of obtaining an official excused absence

note. Another result is that parents call the dean or faculty member directly to provide a rationale for a student's absence. Is this academic policy in line with the university's vision for student responsibility and parent involvement?

While all offices should be encouraged to review policies and procedures, the task force committee should pay special attention to policies and procedures that often prompt parental concern. This would include the procedures for withdrawals and readmission, review of financial assistance, the leave of absence policy, behavioral assessments, and student grievances.

***Develop a strategic plan for parent interactions.*** At the end of the academic year, the task force committee should produce a report that details the work completed by the committee, along with a strategic plan for the future. This report, directed to the president's leadership team for review, should include details of the above three assignments.

- Vision for parent involvement details should include
  - the statement guiding future work with parents,
  - elements (surveys, focus groups, policy review) used in assessing the current parental interaction issues and concerns,
  - the various types of parental involvement at Bucknell,
  - steps used to create the vision, and
  - steps needed to share the vision widely with the campus community.
- Policy review details should include
  - policies reviewed through the process,

- policy and procedure changes needed, and
- additional guidelines needed to direct parental interaction.
- Strategic plan details should include
  - goals and action steps for creating engaged parental interactions,
  - departments/individuals responsible for reaching goals and completing action steps,
  - resources needed to implement the strategic plan, and
  - strategies to measure the success of each goal.

Following approval from the president’s leadership team, the parent involvement task force report and strategic plan should be transparent to the campus community, presented at faculty and staff meetings, presented to the parents’ board of directors, and available online.

### ***Recommendation 2***

*Continue and enhance communication with parents and families, starting with the admissions process and extending through commencement ceremonies, developing a plan for regular and coherent communication consistent with the vision statement for parents.*

The parent involvement task force – with representatives from the offices of communication, enrollment management, and student affairs taking the lead – should spend considerable time developing a plan for communications with parents and families. It is important that communication policies express the vision statement for parent engagement at different stages throughout a student’s college experience and across departmental offices. The task force’s communication plan should ensure that parents

hear similar messages through the admissions process, orientation, and family weekend. Parents should also be able to expect similar treatment when talking with the admissions office, the office of financial assistance, the academic dean's office, or housing services. Therefore, it is important that offices openly share publications and communication policies and that practices are consistent across divisions.

In 2015 an audit was conducted of information sent to first-year students. The parent task force committee should conduct a similar audit of all information mailed and emailed to parents at every stage in their students' Bucknell experience, establishing clear protocol for information sent to parents as well as the use of parent emails and mailing addresses. Information received from parents and access available to parents should reflect the university's overarching communication goals. The communication plan should also include specific procedures for sharing health and safety information and emergency messages with parents.

***Sharing health and safety information with parents.*** Bucknell has established a practice of involving families in conversations about campus culture, such as sharing the 2011 Campus Climate Task Force Report and subsequent yearly updates. Bucknell should continue to forthrightly address campus concerns, including dangerous drinking behavior, campus safety issues, and health-related practices. Given the close contact this generation of students maintains with their parents, Bucknell should continue to inform parents of campus concerns and negative events that occur on campus. The parent task force should discuss the form of this educational information.

- Should parents receive the same messages as students?



- Should ownership for informing parents be placed on the students rather than the university?
- Should information, depending on type of content, be shared actively through direct email and text messages or passively through websites, social media, and parent newsletters?
- What role should the parents' board of directors play in communication with parents?

Communication policies should be clear and consistently followed and should provide guidance to Bucknell administrators when determining when and how to communicate information to parents. Communication policies should be clearly articulated to parents, so that they know how they will receive important communication.

***Disseminating emergency messages to parents.*** The task force committee should review current emergency protocol (Appendix K) and ensure that procedures support the parent vision statement. Bucknell's emergency communication plan and emergency web page ([Bucknell.edu/emergency](http://Bucknell.edu/emergency)) should be visibly linked to Bucknell sites frequented by families, such as the parent and family programs webpage, and should include instructions that allow parents to remain informed through campus emergencies.

Bucknell created a student emergency email and text alert program, *B-Alert*, sent to Bucknell email addresses and registered cell phone numbers provided by students.

Students have the option to add three cell phone numbers to *B-Alert*, allowing them to include parents in the emergency alert system. This practice is not widely publicized.

The parent task force committee should consider allowing parents to opt-in to emergency

email and text alerts instead of relying on students to add parent cell phone numbers into the system. Regardless of how parents are able to subscribe to *B-Alert*, the process should be clearly communicated to parents and students.

### ***Recommendation 3***

*Create an online parent portal where students can give parents and guardians access to their educational and financial records, using clearly published FERPA policies about sharing information.* In addition to creating a way for parents to access appropriate information about their student, the task force needs to create ways to more intentionally provide FERPA policy and related information to parents. Although Bucknell has publicized FERPA policies and procedures for filing waivers for the release of information to parents, Bucknell does not actively present this information to parents. Although a “parent notification” policy (Appendix L) can be found in the student life section of *The Bucknell Experience: A Guide For Entering Families*, it would be helpful to have an expanded statement more visible in publications and on office webpages regularly accessed by families, including those of admissions, registrar, dean of students, and parent and family programs. Any vision statements created by the committee can be published along with FERPA related information.

***Parent portal.*** Bucknell should create an online portal that gives parents access to appropriate information. This would include information on a son’s or daughter’s academic status, bills or financial assistance, and news about the students’ academic college and major. Parents could be granted individual online accounts, giving them access to university-protected information. The university portal system is similar to

online access available in many K-12 schools; in this case however, students would be required to grant individual access of their educational information to each parent annually.

Several of Bucknell's peer and competing institutions, such as Lehigh, Villanova, and Carnegie Mellon, have created online portals to provide parents with information. The parent task force, guided by the registrar, can design portal access in a way that assists parents with their need for information while still conforming to FERPA regulations as well as the university mission and vision for working with parents. Each office, starting with admissions, would be able to clearly describe FERPA policies and detail the online portal system that allows students to provide parent access to important information.

A Bucknell University online portal would encourage engaged parenting by allowing student-controlled, limited access to information parents were accustomed to having full and easy access to when their children were in high school. Practices similar to those available to parents of high school students are especially helpful to parents of first-generation college students, a population important to Bucknell. Parents unaccustomed to college organization and structure often hesitate to reach out to college administrators for assistance in navigating new systems. A familiar online portal system, highly publicized and easy to access, may assist first-generation college students' parents in becoming appropriately connected to their students' new lives at Bucknell.

#### ***Recommendation 4***

*Create a senior-level administrative role within the provost office or division of student affairs to engage parents in assisting students' educational development.* The value of a parent-focused position with high visibility and access to university leadership is strategic, practical, and symbolic when considering the important role parents play in the lives of their students. Parent communication is an incredibly important yet time-consuming task for senior leaders. Establishing a senior role concentrated on parent initiatives will ensure that parents are offered important educational and emergency information, timely response to concerns, and appropriate attention to parent issues.

This role need not be a new position: these responsibilities could be added to those of an existing position, such as an associate provost or associate dean. Bucknell has strong parent and family programs within the development and alumni relations division. The responsibilities of the director of the parents' fund and family programs include programming, marketing, communications, and outreach related to fundraising. Creating parent-related responsibilities for a senior level administrator would allow for the additional focus of parent education centered on the development of student resilience, autonomy, and independent problem solving.

The parents' fund and family programs personnel have close working relationships with colleagues in enrollment management, student affairs, and academic affairs. A more formal relationship with a single leader of parent initiatives would strengthen programmatic efforts for parents related to Bucknell's educational goals for students. If not already a parent task force member, the new leader of parent initiatives

should join the task force to assist in creating consistent messaging for parents (see Appendix M for sample job responsibilities related to parent initiatives). The new position can include responsibilities for continuing the work of the president's parent initiatives task force, transitioning the task force committee into an advisory board.

***Recommendation 5***

*Build a greater sense of university community among all parents; continue to encourage parents to be engaged in the university's educational goals for students.*

Stronger community feeling among parents and better understanding of university procedures will build confidence in Bucknell, thereby decreasing the need for parents to become overly involved in their student's college experience. All Bucknell parents are automatically members of the Bucknell Parents Association and are invited to become involved in the life of the university by participating in campus and regional programs. The university supports an active parents association board of directors composed of five committees with a philanthropy and leadership focus. Although the parents' association works well in accomplishing its goals of supporting university leadership and enhancing the educational experience for Bucknell students, enhancements to the association can improve effectiveness.

In focus group conversations conducted in fall 2012, underrepresented students – including students of lower-economic status and first-generation students – indicated that their family members did not always feel welcome at parent-centered events due to a perception that events were targeted to and attended by predominantly white parents of higher socioeconomic status. The parents' association board of directors has been

actively addressing this concern. These efforts need to continue, focusing on inclusion and establishing additional approaches for family member engagement. Although Bucknell already encourages parents to be actively involved on campus, all volunteer opportunities publicized are sponsored through the office of development and alumni relations. The close connection with development may discourage parents of lower socioeconomic status from participating.

Parents are engaged on college campuses differently. Students are increasingly coming from family situations different from the traditional two-parent home. When discussing parent involvement on Bucknell's campus, it is important to establish parent involvement policies that do not unintentionally disadvantage students with non-traditional families and students whose parents are not capable of or interested in college level involvement. Bucknell needs to continue to foster a sense of university connectedness and community; success will have important consequences for enrollment and fund-raising as well as for the quality of the Bucknell community.

#### ***Recommendation 6***

*Develop a plan to progressively build resilience and increase students' abilities to solve problems independently and ethically, and regularly share that plan with parents.*

There is a need for enhanced leadership development for students, with an intentional focus on first-year students. Supported by Bucknell's board of trustees, the university has a renewed focus on student leadership development with the creation of new resources within student affairs and the athletic department. In order to build resilience

and ethical problem solving in students, this strong focus on leadership development, broadly defined, needs to continue.

***Increase opportunities for students to build resilience.*** In fall 2014, Bucknell began to administer the student success inventory (SSI) to first-year students. The SSI attempts to measure non-cognitive factors, including resiliency, which contribute to student success in college. Bucknell should continue to administer the SSI, providing intentional programming and support to students based on their scores in the non-cognitive factors. To gain assistance in the establishment of programs that will build resilience in students, Bucknell should become a member of the *Resilience Consortium*. Because of its current success in collaborations between student life and academic affairs, Bucknell has the potential to create a faculty-staff team that can contribute to the resources available on the consortium website. Participation in the consortium will assist in understanding the nature of resilience in the lives of Bucknell students, and develop initiatives to promote persistence, cognitive flexibility, risk-taking, and the ability to adapt to change and learn from failure. Membership in the consortium would also allow Bucknell to develop a “best practices” peer group for comparison of programmatic impacts.

***Increase opportunities for students to develop ethical problem solving skills.*** The concepts of problem solving and ethical reasoning fall into Bucknell’s fifth educational goal: ethical reasoning and social responsibility (Appendix N). Using AAC&U VALUE rubrics as a guide (AAC&U, 2007), rubrics specifically designed to measure problem solving and ethical reasoning should be created specifically for use by

Bucknell student affairs professionals. Such rubrics will give student affairs professionals templates to evaluate the growth and development in each area, a greater understanding regarding which initiatives assist in developing the desired outcomes, and a sense of where efforts should be directed in order to make the largest impact.

***Share information with parents.*** In attempting to redirect helicopter parents, Bucknell needs to intentionally share educational goals, program details, and policies with families. Providing a detailed rationale for the work with students will give parents confidence in university personnel and practices.

### ***Recommendation 7***

*Develop a comprehensive assessment plan to measure success in building engaged relationships with students' parents and families.* The parent task force's assessment plan should include measuring parent expectations, parent satisfaction with university services, and the university's effectiveness in meeting goals related to parents. The assessment plan should be visible within the campus community, reflecting the university's commitment to engaging parents. Comprehensive evaluation should include different formal and informal approaches and qualitative and quantitative methods, and should include a mechanism for sharing information broadly across campus divisions.

***Assess parent expectations.*** Because of the increasingly critical role parents play in their students' lives, and therefore the life of the university, it is important that Bucknell regularly assess parent trends and expectations for their students' college experience. The parent expectation survey I described earlier in this chapter (Appendix



F) would assist in surveying parent trends and expectations of parents of prospective students.

***Assess parent satisfaction.*** The task force should develop a comprehensive process to gather parents' views of services and treatment and share those views broadly with faculty and staff across divisions. In order to understand informal individual experiences with the university, assessment should include periodic questioning of parents who email, call, or visit faculty and staff members. Evaluation of large parent programs such as orientation, family weekend, and commencement should continue annually and should also include assessing the effectiveness of publications and communications targeting parents.

***Measure success in task force goals.*** The task force should include a plan to assess effectiveness of the strategic plan for parent involvement. As part of the assessment process, Bucknell should keep records of examples of engaged versus helicopter parents as well as students' growth in resiliency and problem solving skills. A measure of institutional success in efforts to create engaged parenting includes decreasing over-involved parenting on campus and increasing student resilience and independent problem solving.

## **Conclusion**

Student affairs professionals often debate the customer-service model when discussing student education and parent interaction. There is a difference between listening to concerns and responding based on a set of pre-established principles versus listening to concerns and automatically providing the parent's requested response. When

considering how to respond to Bucknell parent complaints, concerns, and requests, I am reminded of the student campaign sponsored by the division of student affairs: *We Herd You*. Inspired by Bucknell's mascot, the Bison, the division responded to many of the concerns and requests expressed through student surveys and focus groups. Simple requests such as providing staplers by printers and more complex requests such as extending the hours of the recreation center were quickly granted. Each campus change was highlighted on a single poster; more than 40 posters were generated in the first semester of the campaign. Behind the scenes, a process for reviewing requests was closely followed and each request was matched with the university's academic mission and educational goals. Many of the students' wishes were not granted. This was not a campaign to "give the students what they want;" we responded to student feedback within the framework of our academic mission and educational goals.

A similar process is needed to evaluate parent-related issues, concerns, and complaints. Before this process can be started, it is imperative to have clearly articulated parent policies that will guide efforts. The goal is to create engaged parents who do not over-reach, over-react, or become overly involved in their students' decisions, but rather support the developmental growth of autonomous, independent students. The intended result of such deliberate efforts is to reduce the amount of time, energy, and resources needed by student affairs administrators to respond to parents who are inhibiting the developmental growth of their students.

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## Appendix A

### STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS SURVEY ON PARENT INTERACTIONS

1. Which category best describes your position?

- ☐ Academic Affairs/Academic Support
- ☐ Career Services
- ☐ Health & Wellness
- ☐ Housing/Residence Life
- ☐ Multicultural Affairs
- ☐ Student Affairs/Dean of Students
- ☐ Student Conduct
- ☐ Student Activities
- ☐ Other

2. Which category best represents the level of your role at the university?

- ☐ Chief Student Affairs Officer
- ☐ Associate/Assistant Dean or Associate/Assistant VP
- ☐ Director
- ☐ Assistant Director
- ☐ Program Coordinator
- ☐ Other

3. How long have you been in the higher education or health & wellness, profession?

- ☐ 1-4 years
- ☐ 5-9 years
- ☐ 10-20 years
- ☐ Over 20 years

4. Which category represents your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

5. How often do you interact with parents of college students?

- ☐ Less than Once a Month
- ☐ Once a Month
- ☐ 2-3 Times a Month
- ☐ Once a Week
- ☐ 2-3 Times a Week
- ☐ Daily

6. In a typical week, how many parent interactions do you have?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11+

7. How does a parent contact you? Please check all methods that apply.

- ☐ In-person visit
- ☐ Office phone
- ☐ Mobile phone
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Google chat or other instant messenger
- ☐ Text
- ☐ Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- ☐ Other

8. When a parent contacts you regarding a situation, how many separate contacts (emails, phone calls, in-person visits, etc.) are typical for one issue?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-4
- ☐ 5 or more

9. Which of the options below best describe how you feel about your amount of parent contact?

- ☐ I would like less contact with parents (please explain)
- ☐ I would like more contact with parents (please explain)
- ☐ The amount of contact I have with parents is appropriate

10. In thinking about your parent interactions, how often do the following situations occur?

|  | Never                 | Rarely                | Occasionally          | Frequently            |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Students ask their parent to contact you in order to solve a problem | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Parents ask you not to tell their student they contacted you         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| You initiate parent contact  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

11. When parents contact you, how often do the characteristics below describe their tone?

|                       | Never                 | Rarely                | Occasionally          | Frequently            |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Thankful              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Inquisitive           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Concerned             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Frustrated or Annoyed | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Angry                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

12. What percentage of your parent interactions would you characterize as positive/negative?

13. Please indicate how often this type of scenario occurs. A parent calls with a question. Unhappy with your response, the parent contacts your supervisor (or another office) for a more favorable response.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently

14. Generally speaking, how involved are parents in making decisions regarding their college student's lives?

- ☐ Far too little
- ☐ Too little
- ☐ About right
- ☐ Too much
- ☐ Far too much

15. What message do you have for parents of incoming first-year students?

16. Please share one of your most memorable parent interactions.

## **Appendix B**

### **INSTITUTIONS SURVEYED**

Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA

Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA

Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA

Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA

Lycoming College, Williamsport, PA

Moravian College, Bethlehem, PA

Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA



## Appendix C

**TABLE 14. RESPONSES BY GENDER**

|  | Q4<br>Gender | N  | Mean  | Std.<br>Deviation |
|--|--------------|----|-------|-------------------|
| Q3 Professional years<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=1-4 years; 2=5-9 years; 3=10-20 years; 4=over 20 years)   | Male         | 22 | 2.864 | .9902             |
|  | Female       | 48 | 2.708 | 1.0097            |
| Q5 How often Interact<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 6.00 (scale is 1=less than once a month; 2=one a month; 3=2-3 times a month; 4=once a week; 5=2-3 times a week; 6=daily). | Male         | 22 | 3.227 | 1.5409            |
|  | Female       | 48 | 3.292 | 1.7979            |
| Q6 Weekly interactions<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=0; 2=1-5; 3=6-10; 4=11+).  | Male         | 22 | 1.773 | .5284             |
|  | Female       | 48 | 1.875 | .7330             |
| Q8 Number of contacts<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 3.00<br>(scale is 1=1; 2=2-4; 3=5 or more).   | Male         | 22 | 1.773 | .6119             |
|  | Female       | 46 | 1.783 | .4673             |
| Q9 More or less contact<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 3.00<br>(scale is 1=less; 2=more; 3=appropriate).   | Male         | 22 | 2.318 | .8937             |
|  | Female       | 47 | 2.255 | .9434             |
| Q10.1 Students ask parents to call<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | Male         | 22 | 2.682 | .9455             |
|  | Female       | 47 | 2.553 | .9512             |
| Q10.2 Parents ask you not to tell<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).   | Male         | 22 | 2.955 | .9501             |
|  | Female       | 47 | 2.745 | 1.0101            |
| Q10.3 You initiate contact<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | Male         | 22 | 2.091 | .8679             |
|  | Female       | 47 | 1.979 | .7658             |
| Q11.1 Thankful<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | Male         | 22 | 3.273 | .7025             |
|  | Female       | 44 | 3.364 | .7182             |
| Q11.2 Inquisitive<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).   | Male         | 22 | 3.227 | .6853             |
|  | Female       | 45 | 3.222 | .7654             |
| Q11.3 Concerned<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).   | Male         | 22 | 3.682 | .7799             |
|  | Female       | 45 | 3.444 | .8675             |
| Q11.4 Frustrated<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | Male         | 22 | 3.045 | .7854             |
|  | Female       | 45 | 2.889 | .9347             |
| Q11.5 Angry<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).   | Male         | 22 | 2.500 | .7400             |
|  | Female       | 45 | 2.311 | .7331             |

|  |               |           |              |              |
|--|---------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| Q12.1 Positive   | Male          | 22        | 66.682       | 23.5076      |
|  | Female        | 43        | 72.279       | 23.2270      |
| Q12.2 Negative   | Male          | 21        | 36.286       | 25.7529      |
|  | Female        | 43        | 31.023       | 26.5702      |
| Q13 Parents call supervisor<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00<br>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).   | Male          | 22        | 2.409        | .8541        |
|  | Female        | 47        | 2.213        | .8324        |
| <b>Q14 How involved are parents</b><br><b>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 5.00</b><br><b>(scale is 1=far too little; 2=too little; 3=about right; 4=too much; 5=far too much).</b> | <b>Male</b>   | <b>22</b> | <b>3.727</b> | <b>.6311</b> |
|  | <b>Female</b> | <b>46</b> | <b>4.043</b> | <b>.5560</b> |

**Bolded item:** differences of means big enough to achieve statistical significance at P = .05 level.

## Appendix D

**TABLE 15. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ANOVA**

|  |         | N  | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|--|---------|----|-------|----------------|
| Years Experience   | 1-4     | 11 | 32.18 | 19.585         |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 33.92 | 20.034         |
|  | 10-20   | 30 | 37.47 | 19.645         |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 35.29 | 23.542         |
|  | Total   | 70 | 35.50 | 20.351         |
| Q5 How often Interact<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 6.00 (scale is 1=less than once a month; 2=one a month; 3=2-3 times a month; 4=once a week; 5=2-3 times a week; 6=daily). | 1-4     | 11 | 2.727 | 1.9022         |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 3.000 | 1.7056         |
|  | 10-20   | 30 | 3.333 | 1.7486         |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 3.706 | 1.5315         |
|  | Total   | 70 | 3.271 | 1.7103         |
| Q6 Weekly interactions<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=0; 2=1-5; 3=6-10; 4=11+).   | 1-4     | 11 | 1.636 | .8090          |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 1.750 | .6216          |
|  | 10-20   | 30 | 1.900 | .7120          |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 1.941 | .5557          |
|  | Total   | 70 | 1.843 | .6732          |
| Q8 Number of contacts<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 3.00 (scale is 1=1; 2=2-4; 3=5 or more).  | 1-4     | 10 | 1.800 | .4216          |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 1.750 | .4523          |
|  | 10-20   | 29 | 1.793 | .6199          |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 1.765 | .4372          |
|  | Total   | 68 | 1.779 | .5139          |
| Q9 More or less contact<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 3.00 (scale is 1=less; 2=more; 3=appropriate).  | 1-4     | 11 | 2.455 | .9342          |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 2.250 | .9653          |
|  | 10-20   | 29 | 2.379 | .8625          |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 2.000 | 1.0000         |
|  | Total   | 69 | 2.275 | .9217          |
| Q10.1 Students ask parents to call<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).   | 1-4     | 11 | 2.455 | 1.1282         |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 2.417 | 1.1645         |
|  | 10-20   | 29 | 2.483 | .9495          |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 3.000 | .5000          |
|  | Total   | 69 | 2.594 | .9443          |
| Q10.2 Parents ask you not to tell<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 1-4     | 11 | 2.636 | 1.0269         |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 2.750 | 1.3568         |
|  | 10-20   | 29 | 2.828 | .7592          |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 2.941 | 1.0880         |
|  | Total   | 69 | 2.812 | .9893          |
| Q10.3 You initiate contact<br>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).   | 1-4     | 11 | 1.909 | .7006          |
|  | 5-9     | 12 | 1.833 | .8348          |
|  | 10-20   | 29 | 2.103 | .9002          |
|  | Over 20 | 17 | 2.059 | .6587          |
|  | Total   | 69 | 2.059 | .6587          |

|  |                |           |               |                |
|--|----------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
|  | Total          | 69        | 2.014         | .7951          |
| <b>Q11.1 Thankful</b>                                    | <b>1-4</b>     | <b>10</b> | <b>3.100</b>  | <b>.7379</b>   |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00             | 5-9            | 11        | 2.909         | 1.0445         |
| (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally;             | 10-20          | 28        | 3.536         | .5079          |
| 4=frequently).   | Over 20        | 17        | 3.412         | .6183          |
|  | Total          | 66        | 3.333         | .7089          |
| Q11.2 Inquisitive  | 1-4            | 10        | 2.800         | .6325          |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00             | 5-9            | 11        | 3.000         | 1.0000         |
| (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally;             | 10-20          | 29        | 3.379         | .6769          |
| 4=frequently).   | Over 20        | 17        | 3.353         | .6063          |
|  | Total          | 67        | 3.224         | .7349          |
| Q11.3 Concerned  | 1-4            | 10        | 3.200         | .7888          |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00             | 5-9            | 11        | 3.455         | 1.0357         |
| (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally;             | 10-20          | 29        | 3.414         | .9456          |
| 4=frequently).   | Over 20        | 17        | 3.941         | .2425          |
|  | Total          | 67        | 3.522         | .8413          |
| Q11.4 Frustrated   | 1-4            | 10        | 3.000         | .9428          |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00             | 5-9            | 11        | 3.091         | 1.1362         |
| (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally;             | 10-20          | 29        | 2.724         | .8408          |
| 4=frequently).   | Over 20        | 17        | 3.176         | .7276          |
|  | Total          | 67        | 2.940         | .8856          |
| Q11.5 Angry  | 1-4            | 10        | 2.300         | .6749          |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00             | 5-9            | 11        | 2.455         | 1.0357         |
| (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally;             | 10-20          | 29        | 2.241         | .7395          |
| 4=frequently).   | Over 20        | 17        | 2.588         | .5073          |
|  | Total          | 67        | 2.373         | .7352          |
| <b>Q12.1 Positive</b>                                    | <b>1-4</b>     | <b>9</b>  | <b>71.778</b> | <b>19.2274</b> |
|  | <b>5-9</b>     | <b>10</b> | <b>56.000</b> | <b>35.9011</b> |
|  | <b>10-20</b>   | <b>29</b> | <b>78.172</b> | <b>17.0631</b> |
|  | <b>Over 20</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>64.824</b> | <b>21.8496</b> |
|  | <b>Total</b>   | <b>65</b> | <b>70.385</b> | <b>23.2914</b> |
| <b>Q12.2 Negative</b>                                    | <b>1-4</b>     | <b>9</b>  | <b>39.444</b> | <b>27.8887</b> |
|  | <b>5-9</b>     | <b>10</b> | <b>47.700</b> | <b>38.4218</b> |
|  | <b>10-20</b>   | <b>28</b> | <b>23.893</b> | <b>19.4752</b> |
|  | <b>Over 20</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>35.000</b> | <b>23.2325</b> |
|  | <b>Total</b>   | <b>64</b> | <b>32.750</b> | <b>26.2183</b> |
| Q13 Parents call supervisor                              | 1-4            | 11        | 2.000         | .7746          |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00             | 5-9            | 12        | 2.417         | .9962          |
| (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally;             | 10-20          | 29        | 2.207         | .8185          |
| 4=frequently).   | Over 20        | 17        | 2.471         | .7998          |
|  | Total          | 69        | 2.275         | .8381          |
| Q14 How involved are parents                             | 1-4            | 11        | 3.818         | .6030          |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 5.00             | 5-9            | 11        | 3.818         | .6030          |
| (scale is 1=far too little; 2=too little; 3=about right; | 10-20          | 29        | 4.069         | .5935          |
| 4=too much; 5=far too much).                             | Over 20        | 17        | 3.882         | .6002          |
|  | Total          | 68        | 3.941         | .5956          |

**Bolded items:** differences of means big enough to achieve statistical significance at P = .05 level.

## Appendix E

**TABLE 16. COMPARISON OF LEVEL OF POSITION T-TEST**

|   | Level of Role | N  | Mean | Std.Dev. |
|---|---------------|----|------|----------|
| <b>Q3 Professional years</b>  | 1.00          | 49 | 3.1  | 0.8      |
| <b>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00</b>   | 2.00          | 21 | 2.0  | 1.0      |
| <b>(scale is 1=1-4 years; 2=5-9 years; 3=10-20 years; 4=Over 20 years)</b>  |               |    |      |          |
| Q5 How often Interact   | 1.00          | 49 | 3.4  | 1.7      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 6.00 (scale is 1=less than once a month; 2=one a month; 3=2-3 times a month; 4=once a week; 5=2-3 times a week; 6=daily). | 2.00          | 21 | 2.9  | 1.7      |
| Q6 Weekly interactions  | 1.00          | 49 | 1.9  | 0.7      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=0; 2=1-5; 3=6-10; 4=11+).  | 2.00          | 21 | 1.7  | 0.6      |
| Q8 Number of contacts   | 1.00          | 48 | 1.8  | 0.5      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 3.00 (scale is 1=1; 2=2-4; 3=5 or more).  | 2.00          | 20 | 1.7  | 0.5      |
| Q10.1 Students ask parents to call  | 1.00          | 49 | 2.6  | 0.9      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 20 | 2.6  | 1.1      |
| <b>Q10.2 Parents ask you not to tell</b>  | 1.00          | 49 | 3.0  | 0.9      |
| <b>Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00</b>   | 2.00          | 20 | 2.4  | 1.0      |
| <b>(scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).</b>  |               |    |      |          |
| Q10.3 You initiate contact  | 1.00          | 49 | 2.1  | 0.8      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 20 | 1.9  | 0.7      |
| Q11.1 Thankful  | 1.00          | 47 | 3.4  | 0.7      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 19 | 3.1  | 0.8      |
| Q11.2 Inquisitive   | 1.00          | 48 | 3.3  | 0.7      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 19 | 3.0  | 0.9      |
| Q11.3 Concerned   | 1.00          | 48 | 3.6  | 0.8      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 19 | 3.3  | 0.9      |
| Q11.4 Frustrated  | 1.00          | 48 | 3.0  | 0.9      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 19 | 2.8  | 1.0      |
| Q11.5 Angry   | 1.00          | 48 | 2.4  | 0.7      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 19 | 2.2  | 0.9      |
| Q13 Parents call supervisor   | 1.00          | 49 | 2.4  | 0.8      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 20 | 2.1  | 1.0      |
| Q14 How involved are parents  | 1.00          | 49 | 4.0  | 0.6      |
| Mean is calculated on a scale of 1.00 – 4.00 (scale is 1=never; 2=rarely; 3=occasionally; 4=frequently).  | 2.00          | 19 | 3.8  | 0.6      |

**T-TEST GROUPS:** Category 1: CSAO, Assistant/Associate VP or Dean, Director  
Category 2: Assistant Director, Program Coordinator, Other

Green items = differences of means big enough to achieve statistical significance at P = .05 level.

Yellow items = close to significance, but just above (around .10)

## **Appendix F**

### **PARENT EXPECTATION SURVEY**

Knowing more about parent involvement and parent expectations will assist administrators in implementing strategies to build positive parent engagement. In order to gather this information before students start their college career, I created a survey to be administered to prospective students' parents.

***Description and rationale.*** I created a Qualtrics survey intended to be emailed to a sample of prospective parents during the admissions process. Demographic information regarding parents and their students is important to include for comparison purposes. Of specific interest are a parent's gender, ethnic and racial background, socioeconomic status, and education level. The survey also seeks additional details regarding type of high school attended, number of children, and previous experience as a parent of a college student. The literature suggests that the college transition is especially difficult for students with disabilities and by extension, for their parents as well (Hong, 2015). Therefore, I included questions concerning learning disabilities, chronic medical illness, and mobility issues. As demonstrated in the literature review, parents of Millennial students have been controlling decision making for students throughout elementary and secondary education (Lythcott-Haims, 2015). For this study, I was interested in learning more about the level of parents' involvement in solving student problems while their children were still in high school and about their anticipated involvement in college decisions. Additionally, it is important to understand more about the reasons for parent communication and about parents' communication expectations prior to their children's

college matriculation. Campus administrators in this research and nationally give examples of both intrusive, over-involved parenting and moments of parents hiding important health and safety information from university officials (Gregory, 2015). Therefore, this survey assesses parents' current understanding of how and when they will communicate with their student and with administrators at their student's future college. The transition from high school to college can be especially difficult for those students and parents who are not familiar with university structure and who have not personally experienced college (Hoover, 2008; Sedlacek, 2004). Additionally, college campuses, policies, and procedures are very different today, both academically and socially, than they were 20-plus years ago when college students' parents may have graduated. Parents who believe they know what to expect may have difficulties with the reality of current campus life. Therefore, it is important to gather information regarding parents' familiarity with important college policies, procedures, and practices.

***Methods and procedures.*** I recommend presenting the survey to a sample of prospective parents every four years, in order to compensate for changes in student populations and the demographics of families of students applying to college. After reviewing survey results, it is important to share responses and expectations with institution leaders, staff members, and faculty. It is also important to use that information to guide communication strategies for parents. Administrators would be better able to communicate information to parents and correct misperceptions and inappropriate expectations with a variety of educational workshops and informative publications.

## PARENTS OF PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS SURVEY

**Please answer the following questions regarding you and your family**

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender

2. Which category represents your age?

- ☐ Under 35
- ☐ 36-50
- ☐ 51-64
- ☐ 65 or older

3. Which category represents your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ Nonresident alien
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Multi-race

4. Which category represents your highest degree of education?

- ☐ Attended high school
- ☐ Completed high school
- ☐ Attended college or trade school
- ☐ Completed trade school
- ☐ Earned bachelors degree
- ☐ Earned masters/professional degree

5. How many children do you have?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4 or more



6. Do you have children who are currently in or have graduated from college?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Which category represents the total yearly income of your household?

- ☐ Under \$60,000
- ☐ \$61,000 to \$99,000
- ☐ \$100,000 to \$149,000
- ☐ \$150,000 to \$199,000
- ☐ \$200,000 to \$399,000
- ☐ Over \$400,000

**Please answer the following questions regarding your college-bound junior or senior high school student. If you have multiple children currently in high school, please answer the questions focusing on your oldest college-bound high school student.**

8. What gender is your college-bound high school student?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender

9. Which category describes the race/ethnicity of your college-bound high school student?

- ☐ Nonresident alien
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Multi-race

10. Which category describes your college-bound high school student's current high school?

- ☐ Public School
- ☐ Private Independent College-Prep School
- ☐ Private Religious/Parochial School

11. Does your college-bound student have any of the following:

|                        | Yes | No |
|------------------------|-----|----|
| Learning Disability    |     |    |
| Physical Disability    |     |    |
| Chronic illness        |     |    |
| Psychological Disorder |     |    |
| ADD/ADHD               |     |    |
| Autism Spectrum        |     |    |

**Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about your college-bound high school student.**

12. Currently, my son/daughter generally solves problems without intervention from parents.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

13. When in college, I believe my son/daughter will generally solve problems without intervention from parents.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

14. While in college, my son/daughter will be able to regularly attend classes on-time, complete assignments and study for exams without reminders from me.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

15. While in college, my son/daughter will be able to handle disagreements, conflicts, and difficulties with roommates without my intervention.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

16. While in college, my son/daughter will be able to independently manage course registration and other academic procedures without my assistance.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

17. While in college, my son/daughter will be able to independently manage organizational experiences such as completing applications for study abroad, internships, work-study jobs, etc. on time without my involvement.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

**The following questions ask about your participation and influence as your son or daughter applies to and attends college. If your response depends upon the situation, please select the response that most generally applies.**

18. During the college admission process, how often will you assist (or have assisted) your son or daughter by researching institutions and/or contacting admissions offices?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Most of the Time
- ☐ Always

19. How much control will you have regarding your son or daughter's choice of college?

- ☐ No control
- ☐ Some control
- ☐ Quite a bit of control
- ☐ Almost full control
- ☐ Complete control

20. In preparation for your son or daughter's first day of college, do you plan to communicate with staff from the college?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Probably
- ☐ Definitely

21. How much control will you have over your son or daughter's choice of major in college?

- ☐ No control
- ☐ Some control
- ☐ Quite a bit of control
- ☐ Almost full control
- ☐ Complete control

22. During the college years, how much academic advice do you imagine will you give your son or daughter during the course selection process?

- ☐ None
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Quite a bit
- ☐ A large amount

23. When in college, how often do you believe you will assist your son or daughter with homework and/or edit your son or daughter's papers.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

24. How likely is it that you will contact your son or daughter's faculty member directly if you become concerned about a grade received on an exam or paper?

- ☐ Very Unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Very Likely

25. How likely is it that you will contact Housing/Residence Life (or other appropriate office) directly if you become concerned about your son or daughter's residence hall room?

- ☐ Very Unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Very Likely

26. How likely is it that you will contact the Dean of Students/Public Safety (or other appropriate office) directly if you become concerned about your son or daughter's health and safety?

- ☐ Very Unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Very Likely

27. How likely is it that you will contact the President's Office directly if you become concerned about a college policy or practice that you believe is unfair?

- ☐ Very Unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Very Likely

28. How often do you imagine you will communicate (by phone, email, text, etc.) with your son or daughter when in college?

- ☐ Less than Once a Week
- ☐ Once a Week
- ☐ 2-3 Times a Week
- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Multiple times a day

29. What percentage of the communication do you believe you will initiate?

0      10      20      30      40      50      60      70      80      90      100

**Please answer the following questions regarding future college related communication and information sharing.**

30. How familiar are you with how the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) applies on a college campus?

- ☐ Not at all familiar
- ☐ Somewhat familiar
- ☐ Quite a bit familiar
- ☐ Extremely familiar

31. How familiar are you with typical university structure, policies, procedures and paperwork (admissions, orientation, housing, registration, financial aid, etc.)?

- ☐ Not at all familiar
- ☐ Somewhat familiar
- ☐ Quite a bit familiar
- ☐ Extremely familiar

32. Throughout your student's college career, which of the following offices/people do you believe you will most likely contact regarding your student? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Admissions Office
- ☐ Financial Aid Office
- ☐ Bursar/Business Office
- ☐ Registrar's Office
- ☐ My student's academic advisor
- ☐ My student's faculty members
- ☐ Dean of Students
- ☐ Housing & Residential Life
- ☐ Health Center
- ☐ Counseling Center
- ☐ President's Office
- ☐ I have no idea who I would contact
- ☐ I can't imagine ever contacting college officials

33. Based on your understanding of college practices, how do you envision you will receive most of your information regarding your student's college events, activities, and experiences? Please check your top three responses.

- ☐ Directly from my student
- ☐ Publications and letters mailed directly to me
- ☐ College website
- ☐ Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- ☐ By calling or emailing college personnel directly
- ☐ Other

34. Based on your understanding of college practices, how do you imagine you will most likely receive information regarding your student's academic progress and official grades? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Directly from my student
- ☐ From academic warning notices sent to me
- ☐ From midterm grade reports sent to me
- ☐ From end of the term report cards sent to me
- ☐ By accessing online parent portals
- ☐ Directly from my student's academic advisor and/or faculty members
- ☐ Other

## Appendix G

### HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY PARENT AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

#### *Family Notification*

Hofstra University values families as essential partners in guiding our students on their journey toward becoming responsible global citizens. We recognize that students grow and mature when they reflect upon and assume responsibility for their actions and decisions. In accordance with Hofstra's student-centered philosophy, the University strives to communicate and work with students directly while embracing our partnerships with families.

[Hofstra's P.R.I.D.E. Principles](#) establish expectations for student life, in and out of the classroom, and foster skill building in the following areas, among others: critical thinking; independent decision-making; sound judgment; introspection and self-reflection; and logical and ethical reasoning. By giving students autonomy to personally experience and practice these critical skills, families and the University foster an environment for student growth and development.

In accordance with [the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), the University reserves the right to notify families in emergency situations to protect the health or safety of students or others. This may include instances where a student presents a serious risk of harm to self and/or others; hospitalization or hospital transport; official report of a missing student; or serious mental health concerns. In addition, the University may notify parents of students under age 21 in cases of serious or repeated violations of laws or policies regarding alcohol or other drugs.

Hofstra University recognizes that individual instances guide decisions regarding family notification, depending on the nature and severity of the situation. Although students are encouraged to maintain ongoing communication with their families, the University reserves the right to notify families directly and/or to ensure that they have been satisfactorily informed in circumstances such as those listed above. University staff will attempt to communicate with the student before contacting a family member in order to discuss the possible benefits and challenges of notification. The vice president for student affairs or designees use professional judgment when determining whether notifying parents or guardians is essential and benefits student welfare.



## Appendix H

### COLBY COLLEGE STUDENT AFFAIRS DIVISION

#### Framing the Colby – Student – Parent/Family Relationship

From the first day that you sent your student off to kindergarten right through high school graduation, you, as parents and family members, were told that you play an important part of your student's education, and you were encouraged to be actively engaged in it. That will continue to be the case while your student is at Colby. But the shape and nature of your relationship with the College will necessarily be quite different.

**The core philosophy of the Colby–Student-Parent/Family relationship is detailed in the following list:**

- ***We believe in partnering with Parents/Families to support students.*** There is a triad of support for most successful Colby students that consists of the student, advisors from the College, and parents/family members. It is essential that the student is always at the center of the triad and s/he must be the primary communicator and conduit of information to and from advisors and parents/family members.
- ***We will communicate with you about significant issues.*** First, and most importantly, while we do not communicate with families about routine student medical matters, you will be notified about serious health matters - including ER transports for alcohol intoxication. On the academic front, if your student receives course warnings in two or more classes in any given semester we normally send letters to families. Likewise, when a student is facing significant disciplinary charges for alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct we notify families.
- ***We're happy to talk with you about questions or concerns you and/or your student have.*** We understand, appreciate, and encourage your engagement with your student's Colby experience. Members of the student affairs staff are always available to speak with you about matters of process or policy, or to provide counsel on how and where to direct your student for particular kinds of support. What we won't do is discuss the particulars of a matter your student is confronting without his or her knowledge, nor will we concoct a fabricated reason to speak with him/her as a back door approach to get at some other concern. We insist on being forthright and direct with students, and treating them as mature adults.
- ***We always encourage students to communicate with their families.*** Our approach and practice is to work with and treat students like independent adults. Part of that approach is to help students understand that adults need and benefit from support from their families all the time. Accordingly, we always encourage students to communicate with their families about the issues they are confronting.

- ***Your student will almost certainly encounter difficulty in some form during his/her college experience.*** Adversity is part of life and learning to cope with it is an essential life skill. Our job as advisors and teachers and family members is to support and reassure students when they encounter challenges. College actually provides a great setting to make mistakes, and learn about managing difficulty. The stakes are by and large very low and the people in the community care about helping students succeed.
- ***Your direct involvement with your student's academic life at Colby should always go through your student.*** You can address questions about process and support services to your student's advising dean. However, students are responsible for communicating and working with their instructors about course-related issues. Parents/family members should not directly contact faculty about their student's status in a class.
- ***Your direct involvement with your student's co-curricular life (including athletics) should always go through your student.*** Specific details may vary depending on the particular activities and endeavors your student is involved in outside of class but as with academics students are responsible for communicating with the advisors, coaches, musical/theatrical directors, etc. with whom they are working at Colby. Parents/family members should only communicate with these individuals through their students.

## **Appendix I**

### **BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

As a residential, co-curricular environment, Bucknell University centers student learning in all facets of University life. Student learning is broadly defined, including the academic scholarship and personal development that comes with engaging as an independent member of a learning community.

To meet our goal of providing a comprehensive educational experience, we must center the student as the primary agent in all processes and communication to best foster the development of independent and responsible individuals.

Parents and families are able to play a crucial role assisting in this growth by acknowledging the changing levels of support their student may need as they progress through their Bucknell experience.

By holding students accountable for their decisions and effect on others, families and the Bucknell community work together towards the mission of supporting students in becoming productive and responsible members of a global community.

## **Appendix J**

### **BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY POLICY FOR MEDICAL EXCUSES FROM CLASS**

If a student is too sick to go to class, s/he is responsible for notifying the instructor.

If a student is seen in Bucknell Student Health and the doctor determines that s/he needs to be out of class for three days or more, the doctor will call the appropriate Dean's Office so they can notify the student's instructors that s/he will be out.

Doctors will not provide excuses for routine illnesses that don't require a student to miss class.

If a student misses an exam for health reasons, s/he should notify the professor that s/he is ill and go to Bucknell Student Health for evaluation, if needed. If the doctor agrees the student is too sick to take the exam, the doctor will call the academic dean's office and they will send a memo to the student's instructors.

Presenting to Bucknell Student Health alone does not guarantee an excuse from class or from an exam. One must meet significant clinical criteria as judged by a medical professional to warrant missing exams or classes.

## Appendix K

### BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Bucknell has a comprehensive emergency management and crisis plan that it regularly and systematically reviews. This plan includes our capacity to employ a variety of communications tools and systems to inform members of the campus community of emergency- or crisis-related developments.

Bucknell University has a variety of communications tools to alert our students and the campus of emergencies, including:

- Cell phone emergency notification
- An emergency email system that includes everyone on campus and has no opt-out option
- An alerts system built into all faculty and staff computers Windows systems that works like a pop-up notice and gets the attention of all employees at their computers
- The Bucknell switchboard office maintains a log of all phone numbers for the campus and can reach all phones on campus within minutes
- A radio system that connects to our campus events and custodial staff that allows us to spread messages to campus very quickly
- Our Department of Public Safety automobiles have built-in PA systems that can deliver unified messages to campus
- A phone system that allows us to post unified messages to our voicemail system that will force on the light on campus phones
- A phone system that allows us to post unified messages as hold information
- A Bucknell website, as well as customized Bucknell portals for students, employees, alumni, and parents where we can post any information necessary

The University's Department of Public Safety has 14 full-time officers and six part-time officers. They hold police and arrest powers and patrol campus on a regular basis, 24-hours, seven days per week. They are Act 120 certified police officers (meaning they have attended the same municipal police academy as all municipal police officers), and trained in emergency response, CPR, first aid, fire safety, crisis intervention, patrol, and more.

The department also has a close working relationship with the [Buffalo Valley Regional Police Department](#) and the [Union County Sheriff's office](#).

## **Appendix L**

### **BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY PARENT NOTIFICATION**

Parents should be aware that federal law — the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended — limits the information concerning students which the University can make available to third parties, including parents, unless the student's consent has been obtained and/or prior arrangements have been made. Although the University is interested in addressing parent concerns regarding student welfare, it must comply with the provisions of the Privacy Act, also known as the Buckley Amendment. Specific guidelines for when student information can be released is available from the Registrar's Office and can be found in the Student Handbook, which is available online at [bucknell.edu/ StudentHandbook](http://bucknell.edu/StudentHandbook). For more information on FERPA: [bucknell.edu/FERPA](http://bucknell.edu/FERPA)

## **Appendix M**

### **BUCKNELL ASSOCIATE PROVOST/DEAN FOR PARENT INITIATIVES**

#### **Job Responsibilities**

Reporting to the provost/dean of students, the associate provost/dean is an important member of the university's leadership team. In addition to other responsibilities within the division, the associate provost/dean ensures that the division provides resources, services, and programs for parents and family members of undergraduate students that promote a constructive partnership to support student success. In an effort to enhance and strengthen the experience of parents and students, the associate provost/dean will design, execute, and implement a strategic plan for long term development of Bucknell's relations with parents, collaborating closely with the provost's office, student affairs, enrollment management, the academic deans, and development and alumni relations. The associate provost/dean will assess parent and family interests and needs for communication and services. Specific responsibilities include:

- Serve as an advocate for parents and the University, both internally and externally, by facilitating communication and creating a climate that fosters mutual understanding.
- Develop and implement programs and services that inform and educate parents and families about valuable resources, critical issues, and topics relevant to student success.
- Develop academic and student life initiatives to increase student resilience, autonomy, and independent problem solving.
- Work collaboratively with admissions, orientation, and the parents fund and family programs to design and sponsor programs that promote parent and family involvement in the life of the University and create opportunities for participation in their student's experience.
- Design, author, and edit communication that allow families to understand how to support their students' growth and success during times throughout their enrollment that are universal challenges for students
- Serve as a liaison to the parents fund and family programs and volunteer groups of the Parents Association, to develop and implement collaborative strategies, and keep informed on pertinent information.
- Participate in University events highly attended by parents such as admissions open-house, orientation move-in day, family weekend, commencement, and homecoming.
- Provide timely response, information and support to family members who seek assistance via telephone, email, and social media.
- Develop assessment practices to gauge parent expectations, to measure parent satisfaction of services, and to evaluate effectiveness of parent programs and department communication with parents.

## Appendix N

### BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL GOALS

*The goal of a Bucknell education is to transform students through rigorous and sustained academic study supported and enriched by co-curricular and residential experiences.*

To that end, Bucknell University's students will:

1. **Application of Knowledge:** Learn, integrate and apply knowledge and methodological approaches through in-depth study of an academic discipline.
2. **Integrated Thinking & Learning:** Integrate and synthesize a range of knowledge, perspectives and creative methods acquired through study and practice across multiple academic disciplines and diverse educational experiences.
3. **Intercultural Knowledge & Competence:** Develop knowledge and skills for interpreting the commonalities and differences among human societies, including diverse cultural perspectives and traditions within the United States and internationally, to enable living and working effectively in a global context.
4. **Global Learning:** Develop knowledge and skills to identify and respond creatively and effectively to local and global challenges to humans and the natural world.
5. **Ethical Reasoning and Social Responsibility:** Understand the importance of and develop the capacities for self-assessment, ethical reasoning and effective interaction with others so as to act responsibly and to promote justice in professional and communal life.
6. **Critical Thinking:** Develop critical thinking skills to evaluate arguments and address complex issues using techniques including quantitative and qualitative analysis and scientific reasoning.
7. **Communication:** Develop skills in oral and written communication to articulate ideas and arguments clearly and effectively.
8. **Information Literacy:** Develop information literacy and technological competency across disciplines.
9. **Lifelong Learning:** Develop the desire and intellectual skills for lifelong learning.



## Appendix O

### COLLEGE OF EDUCATION HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DELAWARE EDUCATION  
RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware 19716-2976  
Ph: 302/831-4433  
Fax: 302/831-4438

20 December, 1996

Ms. Susan Little-Lantz  
67 W. Greenwich Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18018

Dear Ms. Little-Lantz:

Your recent submission seeking clearance to conduct research involving human subjects has been received and reviewed by the members of the Expedited Review Committee in the College of Education. I am pleased to inform you of their granting of clearance to conduct your research project entitled *"The Role of the University in Supporting Woman Leaders."*

Please know that this clearance is for your conduct of the research as it is described in your proposal of October 1996. Any alteration of the design or implementation of the research described therein would require further review and clearance from this committee. There are just a few issues (all pertaining to informed consent requirements) that we would like you to address. They are:

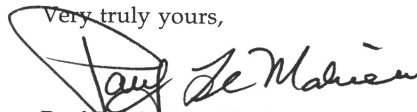
- 1) You confuse anonymity and confidentiality in your assurances to prospective participants. In reality no face to face interviewing (especially taped ones) is anonymous. What you are providing is assurance of confidentiality. This must be clarified in the materials.
- 2) The time frame over which data records will be maintained need to be indicated in your informed consent documents and in doing so warrant your agreement to destroy all records at the appropriate time.
- 3) Finally, you need to indicate on your informed consent documents whom to contact with any questions about the research (the principal investigator) or any concerns or complaints about the manner of its conduct (Dr. Costel Denson, Vice Provost for Research).

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY UNIVERSITY

Ms. Susan Little-Lantz  
Page 2  
20 December, 1996

I wish you well with what looks to be an interesting research undertaking, and hope that you will see it to a successful conclusion. I look forward to receiving notification of the completion of your study and a copy of your report.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Paul LeManieu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "L".

Paul LeManieu, Chair  
College of Education Human Subjects  
Review Committee

Attachment  
PLeM:elm