

**National Survey of
College and University Parent Programs**
Survey Conducted Spring 2005

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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Abstract

Parents of undergraduate students have become a major constituency of colleges and universities in recent years. Increasingly, parents are invited to take part in admissions events, orientation programs designed specifically for families, welcome activities when first-year students start school, and family weekends. Fund-raising and development campaigns target parents of current and past students. Families are encouraged to participate in parent councils or parent associations. Special communications, including newsletters, handbooks, e-mail listservs, and Web sites, are designed for parents and family members. In addition, parents are asked to serve as volunteers for campus events and to lobby legislators on behalf of higher education.

As parent services spread among colleges and universities, more institutions are looking for information on trends related to the types of services provided, issues concerning the cost and expertise necessary to adequately staff a parent program, and the benefits and potential pitfalls of providing parent services and accommodating parent involvement. This report, the result of the second national survey of parent services conducted by the University of Minnesota Parent Program, addresses those trends and issues.

Introduction

A review of recent higher education news sources suggests that parent services are an emerging trend among colleges and universities. Today's college parents, the literature suggests, are more involved with their students' lives, and educational institutions are recognizing the role parents can play in student success. In 2003, a survey of college and university parent programs was conducted by the University of Minnesota to establish a baseline of services and programming provided nationally to families; this survey report updates the data and provides a glimpse of the changes that have occurred over the past two years.

As we summarized in the 2003 survey (posted online in pdf format at <http://www.parent.umn.edu/ParentProgSurvey.pdf>), the foundation of current parent/college relations is formed upon federal legislation enacted in 1974, which gave college students the authority to monitor their own educational records (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 [FERPA]). Under this act, college and university students were given ownership of their educational records, including grades, class schedules, attendance, and financial records. If parents wanted access to those records, they were required to obtain permission from their child or provide proof that they claimed their child as a dependent for federal tax purposes. After FERPA was introduced, the message to parents of an entire generation was that their college-age students were adults, and communication from the institution would be with the students, not with their parents.

During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, however, higher education administrators, staff, and faculty began noticing increased involvement from parents of their students. FERPA has been questioned and challenged by parents, and some adjustments to the restrictions have been legislated. Many institutions have responded to demands for parent involvement by altering their restrictive messages and, in many cases, even welcoming parents into the collegiate community.

Beginning with the admissions process, American colleges and universities now routinely include parents in admissions tours. Some institutions direct admissions information sessions specifically to parents, and efforts are made to address common parent concerns throughout the recruitment phase. Increasingly, admitted students who go to New Student Orientation bring their parents along for Parent Orientation sessions. Colleges and universities have re-introduced the Parent or Family Weekends that were known to

generations past as Mothers Weekend and Fathers Weekend, giving parents a reason to come to campus once or twice a year. Meanwhile, educational institutions have developed communications especially for parents. Parent newsletters, listservs for parents, Web sites for parents, and even chat rooms keep family members posted year round about what's happening on campus. Telephone hotlines and e-mail services address parent questions about topics ranging from roommate assignments to financial aid, health and safety, and career planning.

Programming at national student affairs conferences in recent years suggests that parents are a hot topic for discussion among student services and student development staff. The American College Personnel Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and National Orientation Directors Association all regularly include presentations and workshops on serving parent audiences or responding to parent involvement. An organization dedicated specifically to parent services, Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI), has held annual conferences for the past seven years at its home institution, Northeastern University in Boston; its membership is now international as Canada and the United Kingdom have begun to explore and provide parent services.

Prior to the 2003 survey, conversations among parent programming staff at student affairs and APPI conferences led to a hypothesis that the emphasis and extent of parent services varies from college to college, and that the direction of the parent program at most campuses is influenced strongly by which department oversees the institution's parent program. The previous survey, then, was conducted to determine

- “best practices” among college parent programs
- emerging trends related to services and program structure
- the influence of departmental placement within the institution on services provided to parents
- any discernible trends in the qualifications, experience, and pay scale of parent staff/administrators; in addition, we were interested in career goals of staff/administrators currently working in parent services

In the 2005 survey, we refined several of the questions with the hopes of obtaining more accurate and useful information, while continuing to seek insights on best practices; emerging trends; impact of organizational placement of parent services; and trends in parent staff qualifications, experience, pay scale, and career goals.

Method

In March 2005, an invitation to participate in the National Survey of College and University Parent Programs was sent by e-mail to 401 colleges and universities. The schools contacted were identified as institutions providing services to parents and family members of undergraduate students. A list of addresses was obtained from Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI), a national organization serving collegiate parent programs, housed at Northeastern University. APPI originally built its mailing list from members of the National Orientation Directors Association; over the years, additional addresses were added when schools requested information from APPI. The APPI list was used to check institutional Web sites to confirm whether parent services were actually offered and to attempt to identify a contact person for the parent services. A supplementary list of addresses was obtained by performing a comprehensive search of college and university Web sites to find institutions that appeared to have parent programming in place.

The survey was posted online and conducted through surveymonkey.com, a Web-based survey source that allows for simple tabulation and cross-tabulation. The survey remained open for two months, and one reminder was sent to non-respondents in April, noting the deadline for completing the survey.

A total of 186 institutions completed the survey, a response rate of 46.4 percent. This response rate is considerably higher than the results of our 2003 survey, when a mailed questionnaire generated a 23 percent return rate. The improved return rate may be due to a combination of the ease of completing the survey online, a better mailing list, greater effort to direct the invitation to a specific individual on each campus, and background work confirming that schools receiving the invitation actually do provide parent services.

When appropriate, results of the 2005 survey have been compared to previous data. In addition to the 2003 survey, we have data from a survey conducted in 1999 by a masters degree candidate, Madhu Bhat, in the College of Education and Human Resources at the University of Minnesota. The 1999 project identified programming and services then being offered to parents at a number of colleges and universities. Although direct comparisons of programs and services between the three surveys may not be entirely accurate, we have used the two previous surveys to track general changes over time in parent programming.

Many of the questions in the survey were open-ended, and they solicited a range of comments from respondents. Consequently, in this report, we are not including tabulations for statistical significance.

Survey Results

The survey questions focused on six major areas.

- Organizational structure of the program
- Program “demographics” (history, institutional characteristics)
- Staffing of the office
- Services and programming provided, including “best practices”
- Budget
- Advice and general comments from respondents

Taken as a whole, the results provide a sense of the scope of parent services and the many variations in program structure in different institutions.

Organizational Structure

As was noted in the 2003 survey, parent programs may be found in any of several different organizational units at a college or university. At about half of the schools (52.2 percent), parent services are part of an Office for Student Affairs, Dean of Students, Student Life, Student Development, or the equivalent. Just over a quarter (25.5 percent) are in an Advancement, Foundation, or similar fund-raising office. Another 6 percent are in an Alumni Office or the equivalent, and 5.4 percent are in an Institutional Relations/Public Relations or similar office. A small number are in Enrollment Management (3.8 percent) or Academic Affairs (2.2 percent). Labeled as “Other,” 4.9 percent of the respondents say they report to the president, to multiple offices, to admissions/registrar, or to a New Student Programs office.

The chart below shows that the number of offices reporting to Student Affairs remains much the same as in 2003, but advancement/alumni-based programs have declined somewhat, with small gains appearing in enrollment management, institutional/public relations, and the catch-all category, “other.” (*Note:* In 2003, Advancement/Fundraising and Alumni were combined in a single category. For comparison purposes, we have combined those offices in this chart.)

Chart 1: Office or Department Where Parent Services Report

<i>Name of Office/Department</i>	<i>2003 Survey</i>	<i>2005 Survey</i>
Academic Affairs	4.9%	2.2%
Advancement/Fundraising/Alumni	37.8%	31.5%
Enrollment Management	n/a	3.8%
Institutional Relations	2.4%	5.4%
Student Affairs	52.4%	52.2%
Other	2.4%	4.9%

Note: In 2003, Advancement/Fundraising and Alumni were combined in a single category. For comparison purposes, we have combined those offices in this chart.

The reporting structure results change significantly, however, when colleges and universities are categorized into public or private institutions. At public institutions, more

than two-thirds (68.4 percent) of parent programs are in a Student Affairs department. No other reporting category in public institutions has more than 8 percent of the total, with Advancement/Fundraising at 7.6 percent; Enrollment Management at 6.3 percent; Institutional Relations at 6.3 percent; Alumni Association 3.8 percent; and Academic Affairs at 2.5 percent. The remaining 5.1 percent are categorized as other.

Among private colleges and universities, on the other hand, the most frequently cited home for parent services is Advancement/Fundraising (42.9 percent); 36.7 percent are in Student Affairs; 5.5 percent are in Institutional Relations; 5.5 percent in Alumni Affairs; 2.2 percent in Academic Affairs; 2.2 percent in Enrollment Management; with the rest (5 percent) being housed in other offices or departments.

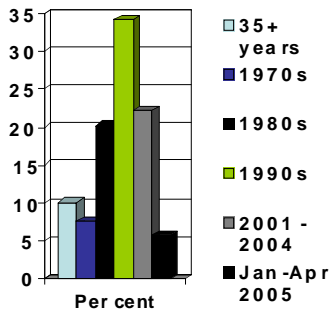
Chart 2: Comparison of Parent Program Placement, 2005

<i>Placement</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>
Academic Affairs	2.5%	2.2%
Advancement/Fundraising	7.6%	42.9%
Alumni	3.8%	5.5%
Enrollment Management	6.3%	2.2%
Institutional Relations	6.3%	5.5%
Student Affairs	68.4%	36.7%
Other	5.1%	5.0%

Program Demographics

Parent services appear to be spreading among colleges and universities. Although about 10 percent of the institutions responding have had a parent program continuously since before 1970, most have added parent services since 1990. If recent data is a predictor, the trend is likely to continue. In this survey, nine schools reported that they had developed a parent program within the first four months of 2005 (January through April).

Chart 3: When Did Schools Start Parent Services?



<i>Year</i>	<i>Percent of respondents</i>
35+ years	10.1%
1970s	7.6%
1980s	20.2%
1990-2000	34.2%
2001-2004	22.2%
Jan-Apr 2005	5.7%

Slightly more private institutions than public schools were represented in the survey (53.5 percent of respondents represent private colleges and universities.) Very few of the

respondents are from two-year schools (1.2 percent); this result undoubtedly is tied to the fact that we found very few two-year schools to survey about their parent services. The APPI list included few two-year institutions, and a Web search of two-year colleges did not reveal evidence of parent services. A slight majority of respondents in the 2005 survey are from four-year institutions (56.8 percent), and 42 percent are from graduate/professional-degree granting universities.

More small schools are represented in the survey than mid-sized or large schools: 38.2 percent of respondents describe their institution as small; 36.9 percent say their schools are mid-sized; and 25.3 percent self-describe as a large school.

The survey list and the respondents are heavily weighted toward the eastern portion of the nation. More than one-third of the responses come from the northeast section of the country (36.9 percent).

Chart 4: What Region of the Country Do You Represent?

<i>Region</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Northeast	36.9%
East Coast	6.5%
Southeast	11.3%
South	3.6%
Midwest	18.5%
Central	1.2%
Great Plains	0.6%
Southwest	7.1%
West Coast	4.8%
Northwest	3.6%
Other	6.0%

It is challenging to appropriately designate the various regions of the country, and respondents are not necessarily in agreement regarding the definitions we used. Among the respondents who selected “other,” three indicate that their institutions are “national” or that they have campuses in different regions; one identifies the appropriate region as Mid-Atlantic; one specifies West; one Mountain West; one Rocky Mountain; and one New York City. Two of the respondents are from Canada.

Staffing of Parent Offices

In the majority of colleges and universities, the person responsible for parent services does not dedicate full-time responsibility to working with parents. In fact, less than one-fifth of the respondents (18.6 percent) indicate that they work full-time as parent staff. Nearly two-thirds (62.8 percent) work half-time or less in the role of parent services; 10.9 percent work with parents more than half-time but less than three-fourths time; 7.7 percent work with parents more three-fourths time but less than full time. This does not mean, however, that 62.8 percent of parent program staff *work* half-time or less; it indicates only that parent services take up 20 or fewer hours of their time per week. Many parent staff appear to have multiple responsibilities.

Just as departmental designations in higher education vary from one institution to the next, the person responsible for parent services might be addressed by any of a number of different titles. The most common designation is “director” (42.3 percent), with others working as assistant director (4.9 percent) or associate director (6 percent). Several are “coordinators” (13 percent). Other titles range from vice president, dean, associate vice chancellor, associate vice president, assistant vice president, associate dean, and assistant dean, to administrator, assistant to the dean, liaison, officer, specialist, manager, administrator, and event planner, graduate assistant, administrative assistant, and staff assistant.

The level of experience of the staff who work with parent services ranges from no time at all (the position had not yet started or the staff person had been on the job less than two weeks) to 25 years. Although the average time in the position is just under 4-1/2 years (4.46 years), the average is affected by both the number who have been in the position for a very short time and by those who have been in the job for many years. The mode (most frequent value) is less than one year: about 25.7 percent of those who answered the question had been in the position one year or less. The median falls within the 3 year mark, so just over half the respondents (52.2 percent) have been in the position three years or less, and just under half (47.8 percent) have been in the position more than three years. These levels of experience are not surprising, given the number of institutions that have recently added parent services.

An interesting consideration is whether parent services are seen as entry-level, mid-level, or senior positions in the departments in which they are located. Most parent program staff have a masters degree or higher, but roughly 40 percent have a bachelors degree or less. Compared with the 2003 survey, notably fewer parent staff have a masters or higher.

Chart 4: Educational Background

<i>Highest degree earned</i>	2003	2005
High school	0	3.6%
Associate	0	0.6%
Bachelor	31.3%	37.1%
Master	60.0%	49.1%
Ph.D.	8.8%	9.6%

The differences may, however, be attributed to a smaller response or a very different pool of respondents in 2003. Further education is the goal of more than a quarter of parent program staff, with 28.1 percent indicating they are currently enrolled in a program to obtain a higher education degree.

Overall, parent program staff seem to be a stable group in terms of planning to stay at their institution or to stay in their current position; 29.2 percent say they plan to retire from their current position or have no current plans to change jobs. Another 9.1 percent indicate they would like to continue working in parent services, but under improved circumstances, such as having parent services transition to a full-time position, seeing institutional commitment to an improved budget, or working in parent services at another institution. About 28.4 percent say they expect to stay at their current institution but hope for a higher position; 11.5 percent would like to continue in higher education but at another school with a better position; 13.8 percent would like to move to something else altogether; and 7.7 percent have no definite career track.

Survey respondents reported vastly different salaries, from a low of less than \$30,000 to highs above \$100,000. Half make \$49,000 or less while half make \$50,000 or more. The upper ranges—more than \$80,000—tend to be administrators who hold titles such as Dean of Students, Vice President, or Vice Provost, and who may oversee parent services, but working with parents is not their primary job. Among full-time parent program directors, the majority (80 percent) earn less than \$60,000.

Chart 5: Parent Staff Salaries

<i>Salary Range</i>	<i>Percent in Range</i>
Less than \$30,000	9.9%
\$30,000 - \$39,000	21.2%
\$40,000 - \$49,000	19.3%
\$50,000 - \$59,000	22.4%
\$60,000 - \$69,000	11.2%
\$70,000 - \$79,000	5.0%
\$80,000 - \$89,000	5.0%
\$90,000 - \$99,000	2.5%
\$100,000 or above	3.7%

Among those who are earning \$50,000 or more, the time spent working in the field of parent services is longer than the overall average. Whereas the average length of service in the position for all respondents is roughly 4-1/2 years, for those making \$50,000 or more, the average longevity is just under 7-1/2 years (7.44 years).

In general, higher levels of education tend to result in a higher salary.

Chart 6: Median Salary Based on Educational Level

<i>Highest Degree Earned</i>	<i>Median Salary</i>
Bachelors	\$40,000 - \$49,000
Masters	\$50,000 - \$59,000
Doctorate	\$80,000 - \$89,000

A disparity is noted, however, when comparing where the parent program staff member reports. When the staff member reports to a student affairs office, he or she is much more likely to have a higher level of education and a lower salary than a counterpart who reports to a foundation or fundraising office.

Chart 7: Median Salary Based on Reporting Structure

<i>Reporting Structure</i>	<i>Median Salary</i>
Student Affairs	\$40,000 - \$49,000
Foundation	\$50,000 - \$59,000

Chart 8: Educational Level Based on Reporting Structure

<i>Reporting Structure</i>	<i>% with Masters or Higher</i>
Student Affairs	76.7%
Foundation	42.1%

There is no clear career path into parent services. The field continues to be an emerging profession in higher education, and the individuals who work in parent offices represent a wide range of employment backgrounds. Broadly speaking, parent program staff tend to have an undergraduate educational background in liberal arts, management, or education/human development. Of those who specified their undergraduate major, 72.7 percent indicated a major that falls within a liberal arts category (most notably psychology, sociology, anthropology, communications/journalism, English/literature, languages, political science, history, and the arts). At the graduate degree level, education/human development is the leading category, with nearly two-thirds (65.2 percent) holding masters degrees in a field related to these topics (primarily student development/student personnel, higher education administration, or counseling). Of those with a doctorate-level or professional degree, 80 percent had a degree in education or counseling.

Work history falls largely within the general field of higher education, with experience in student affairs the dominant employment background. Previous jobs include positions in orientation, housing, counseling, and career services, among others. Several (11.4 percent) indicate they previously worked in admissions, and another 11.4 percent formerly worked in alumni positions. Those whose job responsibilities are primarily in fundraising most often have a background in development, business, or marketing. Other work histories include journalism/communications, event planning, and public relations.

When asked what work experience had been most helpful in preparing them for their current job, respondents cite their direct work with parents and students in areas such as orientation, housing/residence life, admissions, and financial aid; fundraising backgrounds; work in an alumni association; and counseling. They note as helpful the positions they have held that allowed them to develop specific skills such as communications, board development and volunteer management, public relations, programming, counseling, customer service, and event planning. They also say that the ability to deal with all kinds of people and all kinds of issues is very important, and several say that being a parent was the best training.

In terms of where they expect their current job to lead, respondents indicate that the skills they are learning now provide experience that will apply to a variety of careers. Those who work in advancement/fundraising note that their fundraising efforts with parents could obviously apply to other fundraising positions or could lead to a position as the senior advancement/fundraising officer at their school. Staff members who work in student affairs frequently note that they are generalists, and their experience could benefit any student affairs or student development office. Ten percent of those responding indicate that they are on track for a senior student affairs position, and another 19.5 percent indicate they could work in any number of student affairs offices.

Their skills are also applicable outside of advancement or student affairs, however. Ten percent indicate they could move to an event planning position; another 10 percent say they are qualified for marketing and public relations positions. Still others note that their experience could serve as a background for an administrative position, admissions work, non-profit management, customer service, volunteer management, counseling, communications, or a position heading an alumni office.

Services and Programming

Respondents were asked to identify the types of parent services and programs offered by their institution. They were further asked to indicate whether the service was provided by their office or by another office at their institution. This additional qualifier was added to clarify a concern that previous surveys were not succeeding in capturing the full extent of parent services in institutions where more than one office works with parents. In fact, three-fourths of the colleges and universities responding to the survey indicated that at least some of the services listed in the chart below are provided by another office within their institution.

Chart 8: Services Provided by Your Office/By Another Office on Your Campus

<i>Service</i>	<i>By my office</i>	<i>By another office</i>	<i>Not provided</i>
Parent Orientation	51%	46%	3%
Parent/Family Wknd	62%	34%	4%
Parent Web site	74%	15%	4%
Print newsletter	39%	16%	55%
E-mail newsletter	48%	17%	35%
Parent chat room	8%	5%	86%
Hotline/parent questions	58%	9%	33%
E-mail/parent questions	85%	7%	7%
Parent handbook	47%	28%	25%
Move-in events	41%	33%	25%
Educational Workshops	42%	17%	41%
Parents Council	53%	7%	40%
Parent Assoc. (fee based)	13%	2%	85%
Parent Assoc. (free)	39%	4%	56%
Fund Solicitation	30%	54%	16%

Comparing institutional parent services provided in 2005 with those noted from previous surveys is not an “apples-to-apples” comparison since the question in previous surveys did not ask what services were provided by other offices at the college or university. Nevertheless, there is some indication that the scope of parent services are changing. In the chart that follows, the percentage of schools providing some of the most common services or events shows a general increase over the past six years.

Chart 9: Parent Services Compared by Year

<i>Service Provided</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2005</i>
Parent Orientation	35%	61.0%	97%
Parent/Family Weekend	43%	74.4%	96%
Newsletter	33%	54.9%	56%
Parents Council/Advisory Grp	5%	36.6%	60%
Fundraising	5%	43.9%	84%
Move-In Events/Welcome	NA	7.3%	75%
Parent Handbook	31%	12.2%	75%

A special note on the changes in parent handbooks: There was a drop in the number of schools producing a handbook in 2003, then a significant increase by 2005. When I mentioned this change at an APPI conference of parent program directors in late spring 2005, the message was that many schools dropped their handbooks as they increased Web-based information, partly to reduce production costs. Parents, however, told the schools they wanted something in print that they could hang onto. Consequently, many of the schools that had dropped the publication have now reinstated it.

The majority of colleges and universities are soliciting charitable gifts and donations from parents. Although less than a third (29.9 percent) raise funds through their own office, another 54.2 percent of schools report that another office at their institution solicits donations from parents. Only 15.8 percent of the respondents indicate that their institution does not call on parents for donations.

A number of schools note that they offer other services and events including sponsorship of scholarships, awards, and grants (8 schools, total); speaker programs (6); organization of volunteer opportunities (5); regional receptions and programs (5); and gift programs and care packages (5).

More than half the respondents (60 percent) noted that their institution now has a parents council/advisory group. This represents a significant increase in advisory groups since 2003 when just over one-third of responding schools (36.6 percent) reported having a parents council. Among private institutions, the number of schools with a parents council jumps to 71 percent. When parent programs report to an advancement/fundraising office, parents councils are present in 81 percent of the institutions.

Selection of parents council members is done very differently at different schools. At some institutions, parents are openly invited to volunteer or apply; at other schools, administrators or admissions staff suggest potential members; a few schools ask for nominations from current council members, campus staff, or administrators; and at one school, the parents council is made up of university employees whose children attend the school. Diversity and demographic representation of the student body is considered at 13 percent of the schools. Parents' ability to contribute financially to the school or program is a primary factor of membership among 26 percent of the institutions that indicated how they select council members.

Self-Identified Best/Weakest Practices

Best practices are broadly defined as those practices that lead to superior performance and that meet desired goals. In general, they are viewed as innovative practices or programs/services that are considerably better than similar offerings by their peers. Ideally, they should be replicable, and they should have measurable outcomes. For this survey, we asked participants to identify their best practice—the service they were most proud of—and their weakest link—the service they felt was currently their weakest. We also asked them to describe why they had selected those choices.

Half of the respondents indicate they are most proud of either their parent orientation or parents/family weekend. Other responses cover the entire list of parent events and services, with the exception of a Parents’ Chat Room.

Chart 11: What Service Are You the Most Proud Of?

<i>Service</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Parent Orientation	25.7%
Parents/Family Weekend	24.6%
Web site for Parents	4.7%
Print Newsletter	1.8%
E-mail Newsletter	9.9%
Chat Room	0%
Hotline/Phone Information	2.9%
Parent Handbook	2.9%
Move-In Receptions/Events	2.3%
Educational Workshops for Parents	1.2%
Parents Council (advisory group)	11.1%
Parents Association (fee-based)	1.2%
Fundraising	2.3%
Other	9.4%

When asked why they selected the service as their most successful, many respondents indicate that they base their choice on “feedback.” The specific term “feedback” is used in many cases, or they say that parents respond favorably to the service or event; they hear good things about it; or “parents like it.” Only about 5 percent mention evaluations when they describe the reason they chose their best practice. Among those who selected an event or parents weekend as their best practice, the justification most frequently noted is that “a lot of people attend” or “attendance has increased.” Those who selected fundraising efforts cite a positive response in the amount of donations.

For some respondents, their “best practices” selection is the only service they currently offer. Others indicate they feel the service or program is comprehensive or educational, although they do not indicate that they have feedback or evaluations to support their contention. A few say “we’ve been doing this program a long time,” or “we do it so well.” Two indicate that the president or vice president attends, and still others say “all

the members of our parents council attend.” Two respondents who mention their e-mail newsletter as their best practice note that they are receiving fewer calls and questions from parents than before initiating the e-mail service.

We also asked respondents to identify the service they felt was weakest.

Table 12: Which Service Do You Feel Is Currently Weakest?

<i>Service</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Parent Orientation	4.8%
Parents/Family Weekend	7.8%
Web site for Parents	18.7%
Print Newsletter	7.2%
E-mail Newsletter	8.4%
Chat Room	8.4%
Hotline/Phone Information	1.8%
Parent Handbook	6.0%
Move-In Receptions/Events	3.0%
Educational Workshops	6.0%
Parents Council (advisory group)	8.4%
Parents Association (Fee-based)	4.8%
Fundraising	4.2%
Other	10.2%

More than one-fourth (28 percent) selected a weakest practice that they do not currently provide. Other common themes among the weakest practices are notations that

- The selected service is provided by another office, so the respondent has no control over it
- There is not enough time, staff, or budget to provide the service adequately
- In services where technology is critical (Web sites, chat rooms, or e-mail listservs), the office does not have the “appropriate” staff.

Among those who selected “other” for this question, about a third indicate that they are not providing any parent services yet.

Putting the best and weakest services into a single chart allows a comparison of where parent programs in general see their strengths and weaknesses.

Table 13: Comparison of Best/Weakest Practices

<i>Service</i>	<i>Best</i>	<i>Weakest</i>
Parent Orientation	25.7%	4.8%
Parents/Family Weekend	24.6%	7.8%
Web site for Parents	4.7%	18.7%
Print Newsletter	1.8%	7.2%
E-mail Newsletter	9.9%	8.4%
Chat Room	0	8.4%
Hotline/Phone Information	2.9%	1.8%
Parent Handbook	2.9%	6.0%
Move-In Receptions/Events	2.3%	3.0%
Educational Workshops	1.2%	6.0%
Parents Council (advisory group)	11.1%	6.0%
Parents Association (fee-based)	1.2%	4.8%
Fundraising	2.3%	4.2%
Other	9.4%	10.2%

Program Budget

We asked respondents for information about their annual budget, excluding salary and fringe. The range spanned from zero allocation to more than \$300,000, with 7.8 percent reporting an annual budget of \$100,000 or more.

Chart 14: What Is Your Annual Budget (Excluding Salary/Fringe)?

<i>Budget</i>	<i>Percent</i>
No line item budget	19.9%
Less than \$10,000	21.2%
\$10,000-19,999	13.7%
\$20,000-29,999	6.8%
\$30,000-39,999	6.8%
\$40,000-99,999	17.2%
\$100,000 and above	7.8%

Those that indicated a zero allocation do not, however, function with no funding. In many cases, there was an indication that they do not receive an institutional budget allocation, but they operate on funds they generate. The operating budget, then, is determined by the quantity, quality, and type of services the program provides and the parent office's success in promoting its services. One large public university, for example, noted that its parent services cost approximately \$325,000-\$330,000 each year, but programming is entirely self-supported. The institution charges a fee for parent orientation and for parents weekend participation, and their parent services operate on funds collected. Other schools rely on membership fees from a parents organization or on fundraising efforts.

Advice and General Comments

As the field of parent services continues to develop, the individuals who take on the role at their institution learn from on-the-job experience and from their colleagues at other colleges and universities. The survey included a number of questions designed to elicit information on how respondents got into the field, where they believe they are headed, and what advice they have for others who are considering working in parent services.

When asked why they chose to work in this field, 26.2 percent indicate that they did not choose the job. They say “it chose me,” it was assigned to them, or it was part of a position they were hired to perform.

Among the reasons respondents identify as why they sought the job are

- They wanted to help parents/students (16.9 percent)
- They wanted to work in higher education or in student affairs (11.5 percent)
- They wanted to represent their institution (9.2 percent)
- It seemed like a “good fit” (6.9 percent)
- They liked the idea of starting a new program (6.2 percent)

Other reasons include enjoying fundraising, being a parent (and therefore understanding the need for parent services), the intrinsic rewards of the position, a chance to advance at the institution, and an opportunity to receive education benefits by working in higher education. Two respondents indicate that they developed an interest in the field as students in a graduate program.

As the knowledge base of parent-college relations continues to grow, parent program staff may benefit by learning from one another. The survey asked how respondents collaborate or network with their colleagues at other institutions; nearly a quarter (24.4 percent) indicate they do not collaborate or network with others, but just over 75 percent say they turn to their colleagues for ideas, information, and support. Conference attendance is cited by just over half of the respondents (52.8 percent) as an important component of networking and information sharing. A little more than a fourth (27.8 percent) e-mail or call their colleagues for information or ideas, and 17.3 percent say they share information with staff at peer institutions. Listservs are noted by 11.8 percent, and others say they learn about parent-college issues at workshops and seminars, by browsing the Web sites of other institutions, or visiting other schools. (Totals are more than 100 percent because respondents provided more than one answer.)

The most commonly cited conferences are Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI, hosted by Northeastern University, Boston, annually during March) and the Parents Fundraising conference, hosted at different institutions annually during the summer. Also mentioned are the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) and National Association of School Personnel Administrators (NASPA). The Parents Fundraising listserv and NASPA parents knowledge community listserv are also listed.

The survey asked respondents to identify any resources they have found useful towards establishing and maintaining a quality parent program. A summary of responses is included in the Appendix, but overall, the list points heavily toward conferences and books.

When asked for advice for someone considering working in parent services, respondents focus on a handful of general topics. Half of the suggestions mention personal characteristics that are helpful in the job:

- Patience
- Service/people orientation
- Sincerity, kindness, helpfulness, compassion, empathy
- Enjoying/loving the job
- Optimism, positive attitude
- Sense of humor
- Flexibility
- Open mindedness
- Diplomacy

One-fourth note the importance of communication skills, including

- Good listening skills
- Good interpersonal/relational skills
- Oral communication/speaking skills
- Writing skills

Nearly one-fourth (22.6 percent) indicate that the position requires a good understanding of parents, focusing particularly on being able to work with demanding parents and high expectations, understanding what it is like to be a parent, and understanding that parents are your “customer.”

A knowledge of the institution, including the ability to garner collaboration and institutional support, is cited by 20 percent of the respondents. They highlight a knowledge of campus policies, procedures, resources, and current affairs at the institution.

Other qualifications include an understanding of college student development, particularly generational issues and parent-student relationships, as well as the stages of student development; organizational skills, notably the ability to multitask; skills for dealing with difficult people; and an interest in professional development and a willingness to stay current in the field. (These totals exceed 100 percent; multiple responses were given to the question.)

A list of all suggestions are included in Appendix IV of this report.

Discussion

The purpose of this survey is not to evaluate the climate or demand for parent services at colleges and universities, nor is it intended to explore the changing relationship between colleges and parents. Those issues are being discussed among higher education administrators and staff members nationally, and the positive and negative views on the issues are frequently published in the popular press as well as in education journals and periodicals.

This survey is intended to measure the changes in parent services at colleges and universities, both in scope and in content. Using benchmarks established through the 2003 National Parent Program Survey, we can see trends developing related to the number of institutions providing parent services, the types of programming provided, and the qualifications of Parent Program staff.

By all indications, the number of institutions offering parent services is increasing, and parent-related information has become more accessible. As the survey reveals, more than one-fourth of the respondents represent schools that developed a parent program since 2001. Finding information on parent services is much less challenging than it was in 2003. The task of developing a list of institutions to participate in the survey was considerably less difficult in 2005 than it was two years earlier. Web site research provided approximately half of the list; indeed, a survey question asking whether there is a parent link on the front page of the school's Web site shows that 78.6 percent of the schools responding provide a parent link.

Not only are institutions adding parent programs and promoting their parent services more publicly, but the scope of parent services is expanding. Colleges and universities that offered only a handful of parent activities in 2003 were providing multiple programs and services for parents in 2005. Activities that were relatively rare or innovative at the beginning of the decade are now standard practice at a majority of schools with parent programs. Parent Orientation programs and Parent/Family Weekends are almost ubiquitous, and nearly all schools are now soliciting donations from the parents of their current students.

The issue of where parent programs should be located within the structure of the institution is still being tested. To a great extent, the placement of the program reflects the primary purpose of the institution's goals for parent involvement:

- When the focus of the program is to help parents develop affinity for the institution, the program tends to be in Admissions or the Alumni Association
- When the focus is to help parents support their student's progress through the college years, the program is usually in a Student Affairs or Academic Affairs office
- When a major component of the program is to raise funds for the institution, it is most likely to be in an advancement/foundation/fundraising office

Staffing for parent services is frequently an add-on to other duties. Moreover, parent services are not necessarily the responsibility of just one office on campus. In many institutions, a parent orientation program will be conducted out of one office, but ongoing parent communications might be done by another office, and fundraising by yet another. While this allows for good program delivery by experts in event planning, fundraising, and communications, it could signal concerns in delivering a consistent message or providing a single contact point for parents.

A predictable professional track is not yet established for educating or training parent program staff, although the 2005 survey did note a change in how personnel came to their positions. Two years earlier, one-third (34.8 percent) of respondents indicated that they had not chosen the job, but it was assigned to them. In 2005, that number dropped to 26.2 percent of the respondents. Another 28 percent of the respondents said they wanted the job in order to help parents or to work in higher education or student affairs (in 2003, approximately one-third specified helping parents or working in higher education/student affairs). The 2005 survey found that 6.9 percent felt that a parent position seemed like a “good fit,” and 6.2 percent were excited about the prospect of starting up a new program.

The reporting structure of the office generally reflects the educational and professional background of the staff member. When the program focus is primarily fundraising, the background of the staff member is usually tied to fundraising; when the program falls into a student affairs office, the staff member is more likely to have an educational or work history in higher education counseling or student affairs.

Further Research/Additional Questions

Future surveys will be helpful in continuing to track program development and to note what services and programming are considered to be standard practice by colleges and universities. This report reveals a couple of unexpected outcomes: the number of parent program staff who devote full time to their positions is relatively small, and the number of institutions that have multiple offices providing parent services is surprisingly large. It will be important to continue exploring that information to see if there is change in either area.

A question about the number of staff in the parent office was not successful in eliciting the information we expected. Although less than one-fifth of respondents indicated that their work with parents was full-time, when we asked how many full-time staff work in the parent office, about three-fourths indicated they have one or more full-time staff in the office. The goal of that question was to determine how many staff members work full time with parents, but it was not worded to reflect the complexity of the offices serving parents. It may be interesting and enlightening to ask a question in future surveys about respondents’ job responsibilities *other than* parent services.

As noted in the 2003 survey, parent services staff and their supervisors are seeking information on the impact of parent involvement and parent services on student success and retention. Since these issues are affected by multiple factors, it may be impossible to

determine with any degree of certainty what the effect of parent services is, but statistically significant information on the correlation between parent involvement and student success would be welcome.

The questions asked about best and weakest practices seem to indicate that evaluation of programs and services may not be routinely determined by formal assessment practices. As parent programs attempt to find their place in higher education, assessment tools will be valuable in justifying the work of the program. Future surveys should inquire about assessment efforts, and it would be helpful to seek examples of assessment tools.

Appendix I—Survey Questions

Instructions: Please help us understand how parent services are delivered at colleges and universities around the country by answering the questions below. If you are not the primary parent program representative for your institution, please provide this Web address to the person who works most closely with your parent services. We are collecting information from a number of parent program staff to establish benchmarks on higher education parent services and the professionals who provide them. This information may be useful to you and your institution as you consider parent programming in the future.

Note: All information collected here is confidential. We will not identify any information with a particular person or institution.

1. Are you the primary staff person/administrator to manage the parent services for your college? (yes, no)
2. What is your title? (open-ended question)
3. What percentage of your time is dedicated to parent services? (half-time or less; more than half-time but less than three-fourths; more than three-fourths but less than full-time; full-time)
4. What area or department do you report to at your institution? (Student Affairs/Student Life or equivalent; Foundation/Advancement/Fund development; Alumni Association; Academic Affairs; University/College Relations; Enrollment management; other [please specify])
5. How long have you worked with parent services? (open-ended question)
6. What parent services does your office/does your institution provide for parents? (Parent orientation; Parents/Family weekend; Web site for parents; Print newsletter; E-mail newsletter; Chat room/interactive listserv; Hotline/phone response to parent questions; E-mail response to parent questions; Parent handbook; Move-in receptions/events [when students first move into residence halls]; Education workshops for parents; Parents council [advisory group]; Parents association [fee-based]; Parents association [free membership]. **Note:** respondents indicated whether each service was offered by their office, by another office on campus, or not provided.
7. Are there any other services offered by your office? (open-ended question)
8. Does your institution solicit charitable gifts/donations from parents of current students? (yes, through my office; yes, through another office; no)
9. How many parent services staff members are in your office? (full-time; part-time; student staff)
10. On the front page of your institution's Web site, is there a link designated for parents? (yes, no)
11. Best practices: Of the services your institution provides to parents, what service are you the most proud of? (parent orientation; parents/family weekend; Web site for parents; print newsletter; e-mail newsletter; chat room or interactive listserv; hotline/phone information; parent handbook; move-in receptions/events; educational workshops for parents; parents council [advisory group]; parents association [fee-based]; parents association [free membership]; fundraising; other)
12. Please describe why you are proud of this service. (open-ended question)
13. Weakest links: Of the services your institution provides to parents, what service do you feel is

- currently weakest? (parent orientation; parents/family weekend; Web site for parents; print newsletter; e-mail newsletter; chat room or interactive listserv; hotline/phone information; parent handbook; move-in receptions/events; educational workshops for parents; parents council [advisory group]; parents association [fee-based]; parents association [free membership]; fundraising; other)
14. Please describe why this weakest link is unsuccessful.
 15. When did your institution first establish your parent program? Some institutions had a parent program historically, but discontinued it for a period of time. Please answer based on your current parent program. (We've had a parent program continuously for more than 35 years' in the 1970s; 1980-1985; 1986-1989; 1990-1993; 1994-1996; 1997-1999; 1999-2000; 2001-2002; 2003-2004; 2005)
 16. If you have a parents council, how do you select council members?
 17. Institutional characteristics: For what type of institution do you work? (public college; private college; public university; private university)
 18. What is the scope of your institution? (two-year, four-year, graduate- or professional-degree granting)
 19. How does your institution describe itself related to size? (small school, mid-sized school, large school)
 20. What region of the country do you represent? How are you usually described? (northeast, east coast, southeast, south, midwest, central, great plains, southwest, west coast, northwest, other [please specify])
 21. Excluding salary and benefits, what is your annual budget for providing parent services? (open-ended question)
 22. What is your educational background—highest degree received? (high school, associate degree, bachelor degree, master degree, doctorate or equivalent)
 23. What was your educational major? (open-ended question; respondents were asked to indicate major at the associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate/professional level)
 24. What is your salary range? (less than \$30,000; \$30,000 to \$39,000; \$40,000 to \$49,000; \$50,000 to \$59,000; \$60,000 to \$69,000; \$70,000 to \$79,000; \$80,000 to \$89,000; \$90,000 to \$99,000; \$100,000 or above)
 25. Are you currently working toward or planning to obtain a higher education degree? (yes, no)
 26. If you are planning to obtain a higher education degree, in what field do you expect it to be?
 27. What work experience did you have before obtaining a job in parent services? (open-ended question)
 28. What prior work has proved most useful in your job in parent services? (open-ended question)
 29. Why did you choose to work in this field? (open-ended question)
 30. Please describe your career goals. In other words, do you plan to retire from this position? Do you plan to move from your current position to a different one at your institution? A job at a different institution? What is your ultimate career goal? (open-ended question)
 31. What kinds of jobs do you feel you would qualify for, based on the experience you've gained from your current job? (open-ended question)
 32. What advice do you have for someone who is considering working in parent services? (open-ended question)
 33. How do you collaborate and/or network with parent program

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- professionals at other institutions?
(open-ended question)
34. What resources—books, articles, Web sites, journals, conferences—have you found useful towards establishing and maintaining a parent program at your institution? (open-ended question)
35. Please include any other comments you may have. (open-ended question)
36. If you would like to receive a copy of the analysis of this survey, please send a message to mbsavage@umn.edu or include your address here. (open-ended question)

Appendix II—Mission/Vision Statements

A request was made for examples of mission/vision statements from institutions with a full parent program. Copied below are a collection of submissions, and where the information is known, the reporting responsibility is indicated in parentheses.

Johnson & Wales University, Providence, Rhode Island (Student Life)

Mission Statement

The PAWS (Parent Ambassadors Working with Students) program is the primary link between parents, their students and the University community. Through important programs and initiatives, PAWS connects parents to other parents to provide support, creates a forum for their ideas and opinions, and recognizes they are a valuable resource within the University.

Hope College, Holland, Michigan (Alumni Association)

Mission Statement

The mission of the Hope College Parent Relations program is to:

- Facilitate communication between parents and the College.
- Develop and nurture meaningful, lasting relationships between parents and the College.
- Sponsor programs and services that will engage parents in the life of the College and endear them to the College's mission.
- Promote the development of the College and its students by encouraging parental support of the Hope Fund and other financial projects.

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas (Student Affairs/Student Life)

Texas Tech Parent Relations Mission Statement

Parent Relations provides activities, programs, services, and facilities designed to enhance student learning and the support and retention of students by meeting the educational, informational, and involvement needs of their parents and families.

Texas Tech Parent Relations Vision Statement

Parent Relations works collaboratively to offer premier parent support and educational programs, and to support the parent association in achieving its mission, toward the end that parents will generously support and actively participate in enhancing the institution's reputation for excellence.

Texas Tech Parent Relations Program Description

Parent Relations provides programs, services, and activities designed to enhance student learning and the support and retention of students by meeting the educational, informational, and involvement needs of their parents and families. Also home to the Texas Tech Association of Parents (Tech Parents), we serve all parents, families and students.

Texas Tech Association of Parents Mission Statement

The Texas Tech Association of Parents provides a unified voice and means for parents to enhance the Texas Tech experience for students and their families, and to support the Texas Tech.

Texas Tech Association of Parents Vision Statement

The Texas Tech Association of Parents will be the strongest parent support organization in the Big 12 through the total membership of all parents of enrolled students and the active participation and leadership of committed parent volunteers.

Lynchburg College, Lynchburg, Virginia (Advancement/Foundation/Fundraising)
Statement of Purpose

The Lynchburg College Parents Association, under the leadership of the Office of Parents Programs and a representative Parents Council, strives to develop and strengthen the bonds between the College and the parents of its students and the serve the needs of those parents. Members of the Parents Council may help with admitted student open houses, parents' orientations and receptions and offer support to the Career development Center by providing internship information or sharing knowledge about their career fields, when requested, with interested students. Parents Council members also solicit gifts from and encourage financial support by parents to the Annual Fund. Programs sponsored by the Parents Association include Parents and Family Weekend, prospective student open houses, and special parent gatherings in various geographical areas.

The Office of Parents Programs acts as coordinator for these activities and serves as a liaison between the College and all organized parents' events. The Office of Public Relations publishes Getting Started at LC with information especially for parents and new students. Parents also receive the Lynchburg College Magazine and can obtain information of special interest to them on the Parents Programs Web site connected to the LC home page at www.lynchburg.edu.

LaSalle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
(Advancement/Foundation/Fundraising)

Mission Statement

The Parents' Association is an organization that provides information and support to current parents, as well as providing parents with a direct link to the Administration. The Parents' Association especially offers parents a special connection with one another and encourages parents to participate in the La Salle community.

Unidentified school

Mission Statement

Parents Council was formed to allow parents to support the College and in turn their sons' and daughters' experiences. Parental support is highly regarded, because it is an endorsement of what the College is doing now to fulfill its mission to: "form a community which supports the intellectual growth of all its members while offering them opportunities for spiritual and moral development." Through the Parents Council, parents can contribute their talents and resources to the College through any of the five sub-committees (Parents Fund, Admissions, Honor with Books, Career and Internship,

Hospitality). Each sub-committee's activities aim to address important needs of students and parents. Through the Parents Council activities, parents stay informed of important issues at the College, meet other families, and provide an important voice in their student's educational experience. The Parents Council meets twice each year: once on Saturday morning of Family Weekend and once in the spring.

Saint Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont

Mission Statement

The Saint Michael's College Parent Program supports the mission and vision of the College through volunteer work and the support of the Saint Michael's Fund.

Biola University, La Mirada, California (Enrollment Management)

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Office of Parent Relations at Biola University is to serve parents of current, future and alumni students by providing education, advocacy and meaningful opportunities to stay connected to the University as we partner to achieve the educational goals of their students.

Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan (Development & Community Relations)

Mission Statement

Parent Relations is a campus-wide endeavor that supports the mission of the college and enriches the Calvin experience for students and their families through communication, programs, events and volunteer opportunities.

Value Statements

1. Parents are important members of the Calvin family and are an essential resource for students and the entire campus community toward maximizing the impact of Christian higher education.
2. Parents and Calvin students are engaged in a critical time of development and change, as young students grow as emerging Christian adults during their years at Calvin. Effective Parent Relations strategies should thoughtfully acknowledge these stages of growth.
3. Campus-wide awareness and ownership of the issues and opportunities regarding parents and families are critical to the success of Parent Relations at Calvin.

Barnard College, New York, New York (Foundation/Fundraising)

Mission Statement

The Barnard Parents Committee (BPC) is made up of a group of current and past Barnard parents and is administered through Barnard's office of Development and Alumnae Affairs.

Committee members help to support Barnard's mission of providing the highest quality liberal arts education, serve as a connection to the College for parents and other family members, and enhance the educational experience for all Barnard students. Overall, BPC members play a role in shaping the future of Barnard.

The Committee is comprised of a lead Committee Chair, co-Chairs corresponding to each student year (first-year, sophomore, junior and senior), and 15 – 20 other current and past parent members. Committee membership is by invitation, and members serve a one-year (renewable) term.

Parent participation also provides students with an important message and model – helping to raise awareness of continuing the Barnard connection through involvement and support after graduation.

William Paterson University, North Haledon, New Jersey

Mission Statement

The Parents Association is a volunteer organization whose purpose is to support William Paterson University. Its members assist the University in its objectives, enlist volunteers for the group's activities, raise funds for priority needs of the University, and enrich the William Paterson experience for students and parents alike.

Saint Johns University, Collegeville, Minnesota (Student Affairs/Student Life)

Mission Statement

Saint Johns Parent Association exists to facilitate the partnership between Parents and University faculty and administration to enhance the educational experience of students. The Parent Association serves parents of current students by keeping them informed about, and involved in, students learning and development.

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

Mission Statement

Providing critical funding support to hundreds of student activities and services, the Parents Program seeks to enrich the education and experience of all University of Virginia students.

Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington (Student Affairs/Student Life)

New Student Services/Family Outreach Mission and Outcomes

New Student Services/Family Outreach fosters student learning and development by supporting new students & family members in their transition to the academic, personal, and social experience of WWU.

Note: *Western Washington University submitted a set of Parent Outcomes for parents of first-year students. As an innovative practice, we include them below:*

Family Outreach/ Learning Outcomes

Focused on assisting students persist and succeed at WWU, family outreach programs and services are provided for the parents and family members of current students with the purpose of:

- Developing an understanding of the academic and classroom opportunities available at WWU and the application of that learning
- Recognizing campus-wide resources that support student success and how to access those services

- Understanding the complex nature of students academic experience and the role they can play as mentors
- Developing an awareness of the political climate that higher education operates in at the state and federal level

Affective Outcomes – Over the course of the students career at WWU, parents and family members should:

- Develop an affinity for WWU
- Develop a feeling of belonging & community

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota (Student Affairs/Student Life)
Mission Statement

The University of Minnesota Parent Program provides communication between the University and parents of our students in order to support student success, generate goodwill for the University, and promote an appropriate role for parents within the campus community.

Note: *The University of Minnesota has developed a set of Parent Outcomes, which can be found at <http://www.parent.umn.edu/about.html>*

Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut (Advancement/Foundation/Fundraising)
Mission Statement

All parents or guardians of Trinity students are lifetime members of the Parents Association. The purpose of the Association is to promote interest in Trinity College and to provide a link between Trinity parents and the administration and faculty of the College.

Appendix III—Recommended Resources

What resources (books, articles, Web sites, journals, conferences) have you found useful towards establishing and maintaining a quality program at your institution? (Numbers below indicate the number of survey participants recommending the resources.)

Conferences and Organizations

- Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI) (30)
- CASE Conferences (11)
- NASPA (8)
- NODA (7)
- Parent Summer Conference (fundraising conference) (5)
- ACPA (2)
- College Parents of America (2)
- Magna Publications audio conferences (2)
- JAA conference, ACHUO, FYE conference, Western States Conference, PaperClip Communications (1 each)

Publications/Journals

- CASE Currents (15)
- Chronicle of Higher Education (3)
- Chronicle of Philanthropy (2)

Publications/Books

- Howe & Straus, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation and Millennials Go to College: Strategies for a New Generation on Campus* (11)
- Savage, *You're on Your Own (But I'm Here if You Need Me): Mentoring Your Child During the College Years* (11)
- Johnson & Schelhas-Miller, *Don't Tell Me What to Do, Just Send Money: The Essential Parenting Guide to the College Years* (8)
- Coburn-Levin & Treeter, *Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understanding the College Years* (4)
- Mullendore & Hatch, *Helping Your First-Year College Student Succeed: A Guide for Parents* (3)
- Weiss, *Parent Programs: How to Create Lasting Ties* (3)
- Keppler, Mullendore, and Carey, *Partnering with the Parents of Today's College Students* (2)
- Mackay & Ingram, *Let the Journey Begin: A Parent's Monthly Guide to the College Experience* (2)
- Steenhouse, *Empty Nest ... Full Heart: The Journey from Home to College* (2)
- Anderson & Basili, *Once Upon a Campus: Tantalizing Truths About College from People Who've Already Messed Up* (1)

- Arrington, *Confessions of a College Freshman: A Survival Guide for Dorm Life, Biology Lab, the Cafeteria, and Other First-Year Adventures* (1)
- Barkin, *When Your Kid Goes to College: A Parent's Survival Guide* (1)
- Brody, *Bringing Home the Laundry: Effective Parenting for College and Beyond* (1)
- Burk, *Donor Centered Fundraising* (1)
- Carter, Izumbo, & Martin, *Stop Parenting and Start Coaching* (1)
- Cohen, *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College* (1)
- Daniel & Scott, *Consumers, Adversaries, and partners: Working with the Families of Undergraduates* (1)
- Epstein, *A Parent's Guide to Sex, Drugs, and Flunking Out: Answers to the Questions Your College Student Doesn't Want You to Ask* (1)
- Frandsen, Frandsen, & Frandsen, *Where's Mom Now That I Need Her?: Surviving Away from Home* (1)
- Hanson, *The Real Freshman Handbook: A Totally Honest Guide to Life on Campus* (1)
- Kastner & Wyatt, *The Launching Years: Strategies for Parenting from Senior Year to College Life* (1)
- Lombardo, *Navigating Your Freshman Year: How to Make the Leap to College Life – And Land on Your Feet* (1)
- Newman & Newman, *When Kids Go to College: A Parent's Guide to Changing Relationships* (1)
- Pasick, *Almost Grown: Launching Your Child from High School to College* (1)
- Ricchini & Arndt, *Life During College: Valuable Advice and Tips for Success* (1)
- Tyler, *Been There, Should've Done That: 505 Tips for Making the Most of College* (1)

Research/Reports

- University of Minnesota's National Parent Program Surveys (5)
- Northeastern University's 10 Best Practices for Parent Programs (2)
- Maguire Research Report for CCCU schools (1)

Other/Informal Sources

- Other schools' parent Web sites (19)
- Individual institutional contacts (3)
- Other parent program directors (3)

Appendix IV—Advice and Comments

What advice do you have for someone who is considering working in parent services?

Note: Comments below have not been edited.

I'm too inexperienced in this new role to offer much advice at this point. My only advice would be to learn as much as possible - gather information from other successful programs and then structure a winning program for your unique institution.

Depends on whether Parent services is about fundraising primarily or about "soft" services. In today's higher education environment, parents expect more involvement and more information on a constant basis. By engaging parents effectively, there is a better chance that parents will also support the institution financially as well.

Make sure your program is clear about what it wants the parameters for parental involvement to be. Also, parents are involved integrally in the lives of our students. We need to accept this and recognize the opportunities we now have for partnering with parents to better help students advance.

They must be able to get along with anybody. Their communication skills should be awesome. They should have a desire to serve others and not to be served themselves.

Be patient and gain an understanding of today's parents - they are demanding for valid reasons - work with it

Involve the campus community in your efforts

Interpersonal skills are a must, patience, organization, a good assistant

I am still new, not much advice.

It helps to have been a parent of a college student

Be prepared to sell. Anticipate anxiety and design programs to eliminate those fears of the families. Once families begin to trust you the rest of the job should be easier.

Know who you are, be confident in your work and abilities, take nothing personally, and have a sense of humor. It takes a special person to work in parent services.

Parents are great because they want to come to the college and see their children. They want to learn about the institution and help in any way they can.

Be patient and thorough

Be able to work with people, calm them down. Sometimes a phone call or email can off-set your entire day. Be flexible. Be outgoing and personable.

Have a love for helping students and their families Understand that parents want to know that their student is being cared for, and let them know how you're going to help (and how you won't be able to help) Never tell a parent, "I can't talk to you." Always let them know what you can do and what you typically do in the situation they are describing. Even if you can't talk about details, you can at least let them know how things are typically done.

A parent program will not work without a strong, dedicated group of current parents willing to work hard.

Raising money from parents comes secondary to connecting and understanding parents

Be Patient!

From my experience, parents are intensely interested, and greatly appreciative (there's that word again) of the services provided.

This is a great career choice - love what you do and do what you love

It is a great experience working with parents - there are many challenges, but they are great people!

Are you diplomatic? Patient? A Multi-tasker? Then proceed, if not...re-assess.

Build a network of support around campus.

Be compassionate

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This is a customer service job, but you also must not be afraid to say no to overzealous parents when they overstep bounds. Diplomacy is key.

Must have patience -- you do a lot of hand-holding, listening, and informal advising. And some parents can truly try your patience.

Develop your listening skills, always follow-up and follow through--you are on the front line representing your institution and you make lasting impressions. You won't always be able to deliver what a parent asks. Encourage parents to empower their students in resolving problems; it's part of their education. Regular forms of communication to parents will make your life much easier.

Make sure you have a budget and staff resources; get to know what interests/concerns parents have

To be extremely people and service oriented

Listen

As in most fields, planning and organization skills are useful. In addition, anyone interested in this field needs to have the ability to empathize with parents who call wanting to vent a frustration, to respect privacy, and to enjoy working with people.

Often times parents just need someone initially to listen to their frustrations and concerns. It is then important that you have a great deal of information about your institution to serve as a valuable resource to address their concerns. It's also helpful to explain in general terms to parents some of the developmental issues their child may be facing and that it may be pretty normal for them to be going through this particular experience. I also think it's valuable to help parents see that you are working toward the same goal as they are in helping their child have a growing, positive experience, but that means helping them start to make decisions on their own. Finally, you will never get through to some parents. Be as helpful as you can, don't get defensive and always offer your availability for future conversations if they wish. Then let it go and don't take it personally.

It is very rewarding, but parents have high expectations of their children's schools so managing expectations can be difficult.

Pay attention to generational changes.

Have excellent written and oral communication skills. Be able to work well with volunteers and ensure they have meaningful involvement. Strong leadership skills. Proven budgeting skills, especially in a government organization. Ability to build collaborative relationships across campus.

specialization areas are good, but try to gain outside experience as well by serving on a variety of committees or volunteer for different events

Have an open mind. Parents may sometimes seem overly-involved, but it is their child and often their money being spent at college.

Have an understanding of how your institution views parents in terms of the broader University community. Understand how parent relations and parent development interact and effect each other.

Know your student and parent populations. Stay current through journals, books and conferences.

It takes a lot of time and effort to organize volunteers. Also, volunteers come and go as their students graduate so you are always looking to fill spots.

Obtain commitment from your institution for parent programs. It needs to be a campus-wide effort in order to be successful.

Be patient and though the work is sometimes hard and long, the rewards are great.

Be calm, listen, innovation, be prepared to answer the same question over and over.

Counselor training is important because you have to be aware that what you are hearing is one person's reality, not necessarily other peoples and you are not there to argue.

Get involved with APPI; learn as much as possible from other institutions who have established "best-practices." Be ready to work with a demanding audience (parents)!

It is a very service oriented job. Must also be able to multi-task, be resourceful, and personable.

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Do it! Parents are great people. The job forces you to sharpen your listening skills.

Be true to yourself and realize that 1) you are not going to get rich; 2) you are going to work very hard and 3) you are not going to make everyone happy all of the time.

Make sure that you will be able to devote a significant amount of time to work on parent programming.

Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. Parents are a constituency that are associated with and interested in virtually every department on campus, from dining services to the career center. I found it very helpful to have a fundraising background as well.

Being a parent oneself is valuable in understanding the concerns and desires of parents. Listening to parents and then trying to find solutions to their problems is very important.

Have fun, learn from your peers, seek out Web sites of other parent programs

Enjoy it! Parents are really passionate about the place that their students are going to school. For the most part that is a really good thing!

It is important to be understanding, put yourself in their shoes, know when to draw the line between educating parents about the institution and its policies, practices, and programs and doing everything for them, and remember that as an educator we must help students in their personal and professional development.

Do it!!
It is a good idea to stay abreast of the various workshops and conferences in order to continuously exchange ideas and information.

Provide programs and services based on parent interest, not necessarily what you think parents would be interested in attending.

I think it takes a bit of maturity and experience as a parent to be able to relate well with parents and their needs and expectations. Anyone going into this job needs to enjoy working with a broad variety-I mean VERY DIVERSE- of people. Interpersonal skills are mandatory. There is also a lot of programming involved in my work as director of Parents and Family Weekend- so you also need to be able to juggle many activities at once- and enjoy the many different tasks that may crop up unexpectedly. An open mind and a sense of humor is absolutely essential!

Student development/higher education background is most helpful. Learn everything you can about transitions for both students and parents. Research your own institution's parent population. Keep in mind that student success is your ultimate goal. Remember that you're educating/informing/involving the student's #1 advisors. Be prepared to work in the midst of change and confusion. Re-check your listening skills, patience, resilience, and perseverance.

The key is good interpersonal skills...communicate...under promise but over deliver!

Be patient...parents need folks like us to help them learn how to be "successful parents" of "successful" college students....most do not know how! Enjoy your work or find something else to do...If you are continually frustrated by parental involvement with their college aged students - maybe parent programs is not the job for you ...I really do not think these parents are going away very soon.

Learn the art of Patience, listen more than you speak, and have a positive attitude.

Because of the relationship between parents, students, and university policies, the role a Parent Services organization plays is somewhat challenging. Because of FERPA and other federal regulations, Parent Services usually walks a gray line in terms of their on-campus involvement.

Listen to the parents. Remember they have a personal investment in what they are saying, and you can't get all tied up in each situation; but you can quickly get an idea of problems, challenges, etc., by just listening to their concerns.

Be willing to bite your tongue a lot, as parents can be completely unreasonable.

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You MUST be willing to listen to ideas/thoughts/comments, you must be really invested in your org/college, and try to always fill your emails/calls with enthusiasm-- people pick up on that right away.

Make the move today! Parents are an extremely invested constituency with lots of potential!

Be sincere that you want to help parents not just deal with parents. Working with parents takes patience and perseverance. They are not always regarded highly amongst faculty and staff. Make sure you work with an administration where there is buy-in for serving parents from the top - down. Counseling skills, detailed organization, event planning, public speaking are essential skills.

Working with parents is very different, in many ways, from working with students. A person must be willing to reach out to parents, a good listener & up to date on campus resources. It is particularly important to establish ongoing, working relationships with departments on campus for referrals.

Be patient, and don't take it personal when parents are upset and frustrated.

Develop a partnership with all offices in the student affairs area. Keep up with any issues, events and activities happening in your university community.

I have not been in parent programs long enough to give advice.

Patience is a virtue. Inundate them with information. Be proactive.

Have a friendly voice and be willing to hear just about anything. Working with people is a plus. You must be a good listener.

Don't do it unless you love it

Be organized. Be patient. Be empathetic but understand thoroughly your own -- and your institution's -- philosophies on working with families.

Be patient.....parents need a lot of TLC and are coming from a million different perspectives....it's a tender time for parenting

Understand what the current mind set of parents today. They are not the parents of a few years ago. The dynamics of parents and university relationships are vastly changing. New needs and concerns must be addressed.

Put yourself in the parents' place!

Be flexible, non judgmental, have a good listening ear, research daily, be a positive and proactive person -- maintain a good attitude ... NETWORK constantly and know the University, its customs and people. Collaborate and be a true team player. Do not count on it being a 40 hour work week -- sometimes it is 24/7. Love students and their parents - be a good mentor to a younger person. Volunteer across campus to promote the office and programs. Above all -- love what you do and feel confident in yourself that you are doing a good job -- as sometimes those warm fuzzies may be few and far between - except for parents.

Put yourself in the parent's shoe.

Find a department that traditionally services many parents to begin working with parents right away.

Be a positive, optimistic person. Don't be overly sensitive.

Parents are people first & are not helicopters! They are just doing what the educational system has told them to do from preschool: be involved, know your child's teachers, advocate for your child.

Have a clear understanding of the expectations.

Parents are an undervalued fund raising resource.

Have tons of patience.

Parents are a group that need a lot of attention. They expect call backs right away and you need to keep the volunteers busy. Parents love to help out and are great Ambassadors for an institution. They are fun to work with, but they do require a lot of attention.

Stay as up to date with the student perspective as possible as it helps relate to the parents.

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Orientation Leaders in college is a good start to understand the complexities of working with parents. Admissions, housing, advising and internships are very useful for considering a career in parent services.

It's a wonderful field with an enormous amount of potential. The parents you work are generally so thankful to have an advocate and a contact person at the University that cares about them and their student. Current demographic trends show that the relationships that students have with their parents are only going to strengthen in years to come, so that should keep parent services offices busy!

You should have an outgoing personality and be up on current affairs at your school

I'm not sure I'm qualified to answer that question...yet. However, you must know your campus. You have to know the product you are selling and you have to know your customer.

Start drinking heavily.

Take a deep breath, always have an "exit" line, a sense of humor, and a "half-full" philosophy of life.

Be passionate and patient

Have an understanding of college parents' concerns. Be willing to be a liaison to parents and the college. This is a "customer service" position with a bit of listening and counseling attached.

know your university and understand students

The skills learned in this area: relational skills, visioning and articulation skills, developing people skills and event skills (budgeting, planning, executing) are extremely transferable to many jobs.

Get a counseling background, know a lot about the institution, build relationships throughout campus, practice patience and celebrate the parents and family members are interested in their students' educational journeys.

Remember that they are the customer and as the saying goes, the customer is always right, especially when they are buying something for \$20k+.

Even though you are working with an external group, you are ultimately impacting student learning and that's what it is all about.

Learn how to write. Learn how to listen.

Be patient and expect the unexpected.

Be organized. Have patience. If you don't enjoy getting to know people this is not the department for you. Parents often feel lost when their children leave home and they sometimes look to you for personal support.

Be service oriented, embrace FERPA principles and expect the unexpected!

Secure funding before creating a program

It is not enough to know the current generations issues, you have to know how they became their issues. Looking to the parents is the best place to find this answer.

It helps to be a parent -- we can be a very needy bunch. Excellent in communications -- it's key to involvement and support. Ready and willing to do LOTS of cold calling for giving and other involvement. Committed to the fact that parents really are the customer, too (like the student) and need to make their experience a very positive one.

In dealing with conflict or stressful situations that you have two (or more) sides to every situation and to gather as much information in a timely fashion to better assist yourself in decision making. Develop clear policy's and guidelines that are published to help guide the office and prevent "loop-holes" that can create difficult situations. I've found most of our parents are very nervous and scared as they didn't attend College themselves and this is the first experience they've had on a college campus. I tend to give parents more information than they might need, but I feel it helps them feel secure in any decision they need to make.

You must be a good listener, compassionate, understanding and knowledgeable of college policies and procedures.

you must understand your institution and the institutional resources and what students ACTUALLY do. have some fundraising skills

Be kind, helpful and generous with everyone with whom you come in contact and keep your sense of humor. Parents are people, too, and they want to know that you care, really care, about their concerns. They can tell if you're faking it. So be sincere and show that you really do care about them. Treat others as you would like to be treated and you'll do fine.

Parents are generally very appreciative of any services we offer, and they are wonderful to work with. When they are upset, however, it's usually because they're afraid for their student's health or well-being. It's good to consider, when you're working with an angry parent, whether the motivating factor is fear.