



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Survey on College Parent Experiences March 14, 2007**

### Purpose and Methodology

College Parents of America, with the assistance of Student Advantage LLC, conducted the second in what is expected to be an annual survey of current college parent experiences among the organizations' members and subscribers. The main purpose of the survey is to:

- Gauge (and in future years track) the level of parental involvement during their children's college years;
- Determine the level and types of communication between parents and their college-age children; and,
- Identify some major parent concerns and the depth of these concerns during these years.

We believe that the results have implications for colleges and universities as they determine whether and how to involve parents in a way that encourages them to feel that they are part of the college community. The results also provide a national benchmark for individual colleges and universities making an assessment of their own performance from the perspective of parents on these issues.

The online survey was conducted using the web-based tools provided by SurveyMonkey. An invitation to participate was sent out via e-mail to roughly 41,000 College Parents of America members and subscribers and the Student Advantage database. The College Parents of America database was sent the invitation on February 23, 2007; the same survey was sent out to parents in the Student Advantage database a week later on March 2nd. A reminder was sent out to the College Parents of America list on February 26, 2007 and March 1, 2007. The survey protected the anonymity of those participating in the survey, but did not allow more than one response from an individual IP address. More than 1700 parents (1727) provided responses to the survey, and the survey was closed on March 6, 2007 at 10 a.m.

The College Parents of America and Student Advantage databases include parents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia; respondents came from each of those states and D.C.

preliminary results of the survey were released in mid-March in Boston, Massachusetts at the annual conference of Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI).

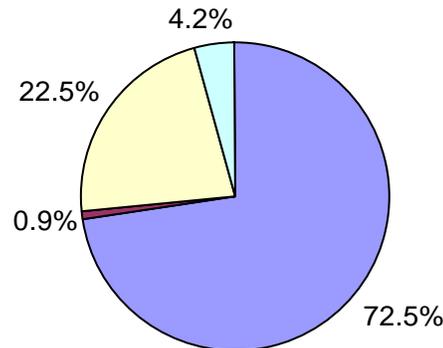
## Overview of Results

### 1. Communication Levels and Types Between Parents and Students

Consistent with the results from last year, the overall level of communication between parents and their sons or daughters was very high. More than one in three parents are in contact with their student at least daily or more than once a day (30.7%). Almost three out of four parents communicate at least two or three times per week (72.5%). Only a tiny fraction communicate once a month or less (0.9%).

Of note, 33% of mothers communicate with their child at least daily, compared to 20% of fathers.

**How often do you typically communicate with your son or daughter while they are at college?**



■ 2-3 times per week or more ■ About once a month or less □ About weekly □ 2-3 times per month

What tools do parents use to communicate? Cell phone is clearly the mode of choice, with 82% of respondents saying that they use a mobile connection to either very frequently or frequently stay in touch, as opposed to the much lower figure of 25% who use a landline phone connection. In fact, one-half of all respondents (50%) say that they either rarely or never use a regular landline phone.

About 45% of mothers talk with their child “very frequently” on the cell phone, compared to 32% of fathers.

E-mail is popular too, according to the survey, with 50% using it either frequently or even more often. However, Instant or text messaging is not as popular among parents as their children, with only 28% of parents claiming to use instant or text messaging frequently or very frequently; a clear majority of 53% claims to use Instant or text messaging rarely or not at all.

The parents of those attending private 4 year colleges appear to use Internet-related technology more frequently to communicate with their children than the parents of those attending public 4 year colleges.

For example, 30% of private college parents use instant or text messaging either “very frequently” or “frequently,” compared to 25% of public college parents. While 35% of those private college parents “never” use instant or text messaging, the number is higher for the parents of those attending public college, which is 42%.

The same trend emerges when looking at e-mail use. For example, 55% of private college parents use e-mail “very frequently” or “frequently” compared to 47% for public college parents. Only 9% of private college parents “rarely” or “never” use e-mail, compared to 15% of public college parents.

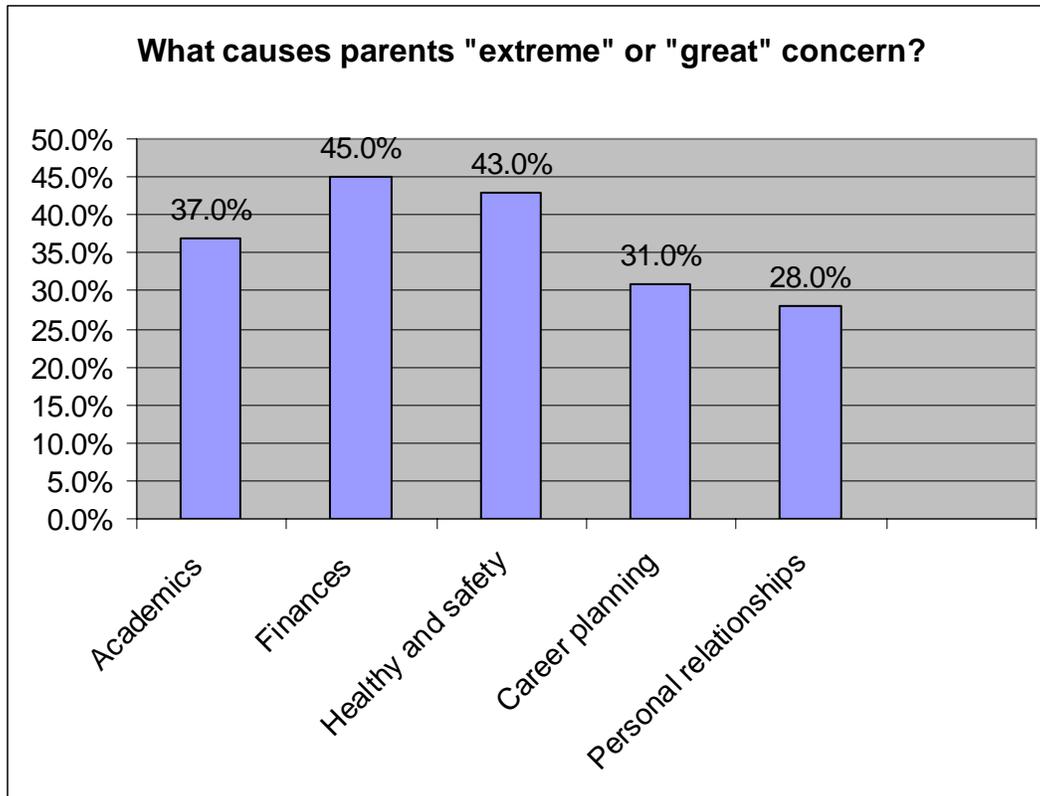
The U.S. Postal Service appears not to be busy in college towns anymore: only 5% of parents utilize regular mail frequently or very frequently, and 63% either rarely or never utilize “snail” mail at all.

Not all communication is electronic, as parents like to visit in person, from the beginning and continuing throughout their child’s collegiate experience. Ninety percent (90%) attended a parent orientation, while more than 70% say that they visit campus at least once or twice a semester. Both of these numbers are down slightly from a year ago.

## 2. Parental Concerns and Student Requests for Assistance

The College Parents of America survey also tried to get at the question of concerns among parents regarding their children, and more than one in three parents (36%) say that “Academics” is of “extreme” or “great” concern. Last year, “academics” was the top concern of parents. However, that now trails:

- Finances (45%); and
- Health and Safety (43%).



Mothers tend to express greater concern than fathers on “health and safety” issues, with 13% of fathers expressing “extreme” concern on health and safety, compared to 18% for mothers.

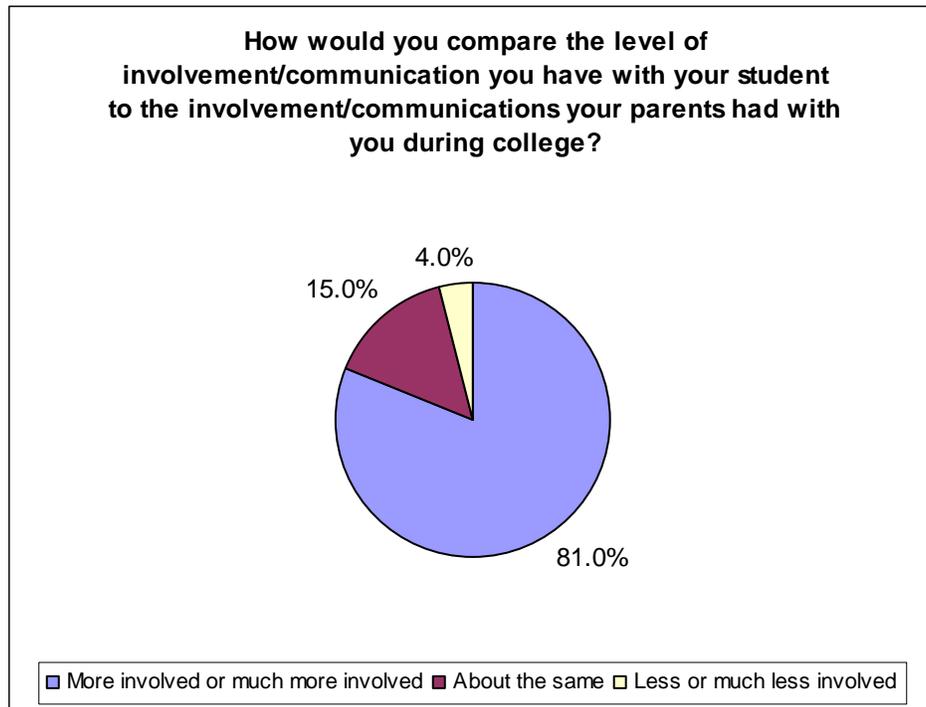
When asked, however, the pointed question of “this year, on which topic has your student most requested advice or assistance from you?” finances are again cited as the most-asked about topic with 33% responding that they provide “very frequent” or “frequent” advice, followed by academics and health and safety, both at 14%. Health and safety concerns have risen in the last year; only 5% of parents mentioned that as the topic of most requested advice or assistance in last year’s survey.

A higher percentage of public university parents provide either “very frequent” or “frequent” advice on finances (36%), compared to 29% of private college parents.

Also, the larger the school, the more the advice provided on career planning. If the school was over 10,000 students, 62% of parents provided “very frequent advice,” “frequent advice,” or “some advice.” For schools sized between 2000 and 5000 students, 53% of parents provided “very frequent advice,” “frequent advice,” or “some advice.” For smaller schools under 2000 students, the number went down to 47% providing advice on this topic.

### 3. Comparing Perceived Levels of Involvement Between Today’s College Parents and ‘Yesteryears’

When asked, “How would you compare the level of involvement/communication you have with your student to the involvement/communications your parents had with you during college?” more than eight in ten parents (81%) say they are “more” or “much more involved” in their child’s life at college than their own parents were with them. Only 4% say that they are “less” or “much less” involved.<sup>1</sup>



Interestingly, 84% of fathers believe they are “much more involved” or “more involved” than their parents, compared to 70.5% for mothers.

#### 4. Interaction and Satisfaction Levels with School Communications and Activities Involving Parents

The overall level of parental satisfaction with the school’s communications for parents and guardians was good (80.2% were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied”), but a not insignificant minority of parents, 19.8%, expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the schools’ efforts (albeit down from 26% the year before).

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the percentages for this question are different than appears in the full text of the results in SurveyMonkey because 11% of those responding indicated that the question was “not applicable” to them. These 190 responses were deleted from the calculation. The most likely reasons in our opinion that this group answered “not applicable” was that these parents either did not attend college themselves or their parents had passed away by the time of their college experience.

The 80.2% satisfaction level constitutes a 6% improvement over the 74% mark from the year before.

Private college parents tend to be somewhat more satisfied with the schools' level of communications. 85.1% of private college parents are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the school's communications for parents, compared to 76.4% for public university parents.

If a school has a parent relations office, the overall satisfaction levels go up to 96% (with 40% "very satisfied"). If a school has a parent e-mail list serv or discussion board, satisfaction levels are also very high, with 95% answering "satisfied" or "very satisfied." In fact, 49% are "very satisfied" and only 4% are "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the school's communications if these tools are offered. It is worth noting that only 326 respondents indicated that their school provides this service. Satisfaction levels ("very satisfied" or "satisfied") are also high if a school offers an electronic newsletter for parents (94.4%).

Further research may be needed to understand fully why certain parents are either satisfied or dissatisfied with how they are included in the school community, but the schools overall appear to be doing a better job of involving parents and communicating more effectively with them.

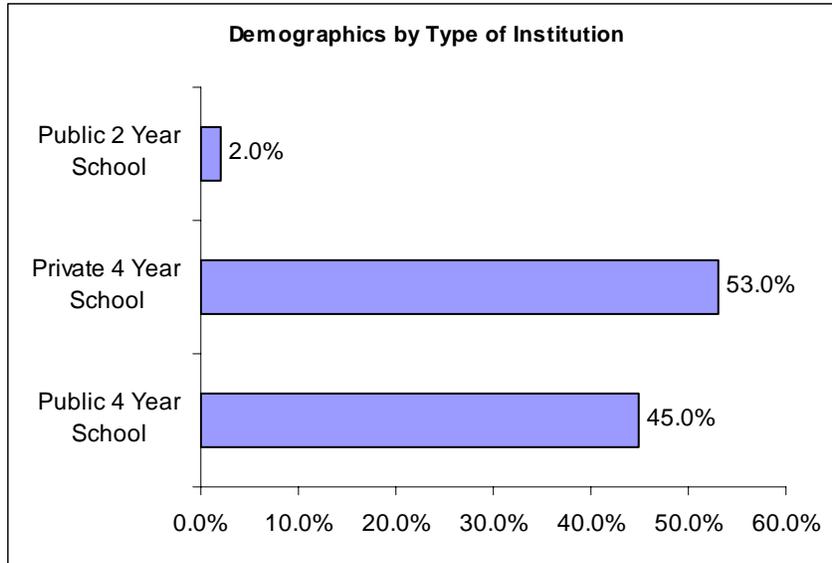
In terms of how parents interact with schools, a very high percentage -- more than 90% -- of survey respondents attended a parent orientation session (if offered by the school).

A "parent-oriented web site" appears to be a common "parent-related information or service" that colleges and universities provide, with 51% of parents identifying this tool as something that the school has made available. About 40% of the parents responding indicated that their child's school provides an electronic newsletter geared to parents. About 1 in 3 (31%) indicated that their child's school has a dedicated Parent Relations Office.

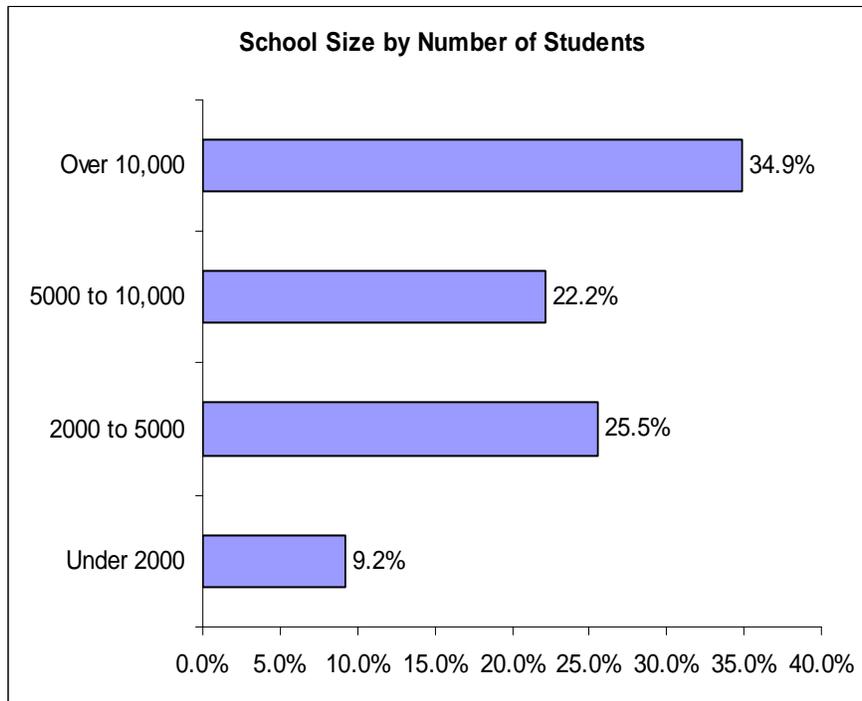
## 5. Demographic Information

The survey generated responses from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The vast majority are parents of freshmen or sophomores. Given this weighting, this survey will help to serve as benchmark data that can be tracked over the next couple of years and beyond.

In terms of the types of colleges and universities the children of those responding attend, 45% attend public 4-year institutions; 53% attend private 4-year institutions, with only 2% attending public 2-year schools.



As far as the size of schools reflected in the survey results, 35% of the children of those responding attend schools with over 10,000 students, 22% at schools between 5,000 and 10,000, 25% attend schools between 2000 and 5000 in size, and only 9% attend schools smaller than 2000 students. The remainder of parents did not know the size of their child's school.



### Further Information

For a copy of the survey questions and detailed breakout of responses, please see:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=343272271484>

For more information related to the mission and activities of College Parents of America, please visit [www.collegeparents.org](http://www.collegeparents.org) or e-mail [info@collegeparents.org](mailto:info@collegeparents.org).