



Survey of Current College Parent Experiences March 30, 2006

Purpose and Methodology

College Parents of America conducted the first in what is expected to be an annual survey of current college parent experiences among its members and subscribers. We believe it to be the first national survey of its type.

The main purpose of the survey was 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 on March 16, 2006 via e-mail to roughly 40,000 College Parents of America members and subscribers. The survey protected the anonymity of those participating in the survey, but did not allow more than one response from an individual IP address. A regular weekly column written by the President of College Parents of America and distributed via e-mail also provided links to the survey. More than 800 parents (839) provided responses to the survey, and the survey was closed on March 27, 2006.

Results of the survey were released on March 30, 2006 in Boston, Massachusetts at the annual conference of Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI).

Overview of Results

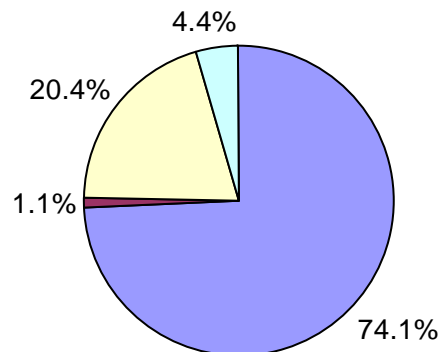
1. Communication Levels and Types Between Parents and Students

The overall level of communication between parents and their sons or daughters was very high. Almost 10% (9.4%) indicated that they communicated more than once a day in some way with their son or daughter while they are at college or university. One out of every three parents (34%) communicated with their child either daily or more than once a day.

Additionally, 74% of those parents responding communicated with their son or daughter at least two or three times a week.

Only 1% of those responding communicated with their child once a month or less.

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

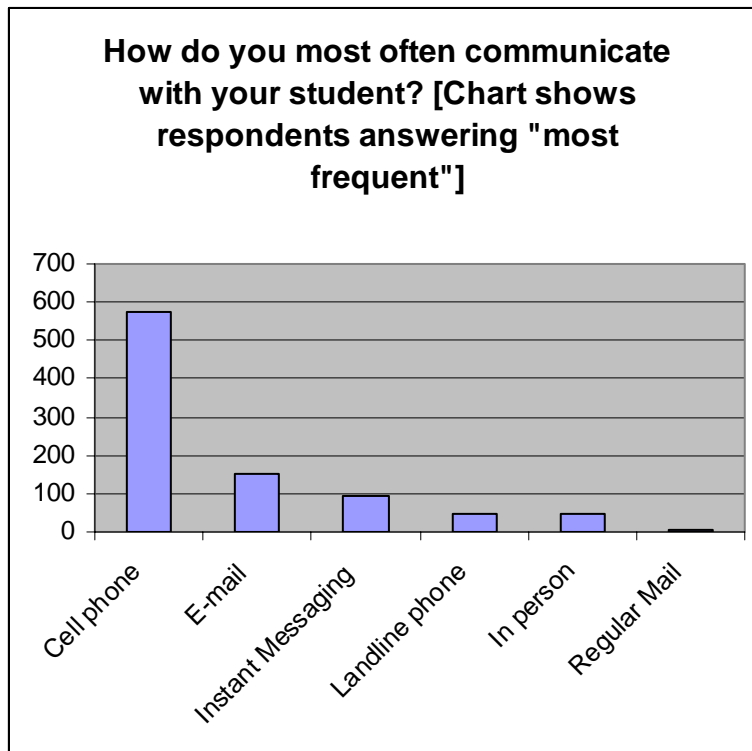


■ 2-3 times per week or more ■ About once a month or less □ About weekly □ 2-3 times per month

What tools do parents use to communicate? Cell phone is clearly the mode of choice, with 90% of respondents saying that they use a mobile connection to frequently stay in touch, as opposed to the much lower figure of 26% who use a landline phone connection. In fact, more than one-half of all respondents, 52%, say that they either rarely or never use a regular landline phone.

E-mail is popular too, according to the survey, with 58% using it frequently. However, Instant Messaging (IM) is not as popular among parents as their children, with only 29% of parents claiming to use instant messaging frequently; a clear majority of 54% claims to use IM rarely or not at all.

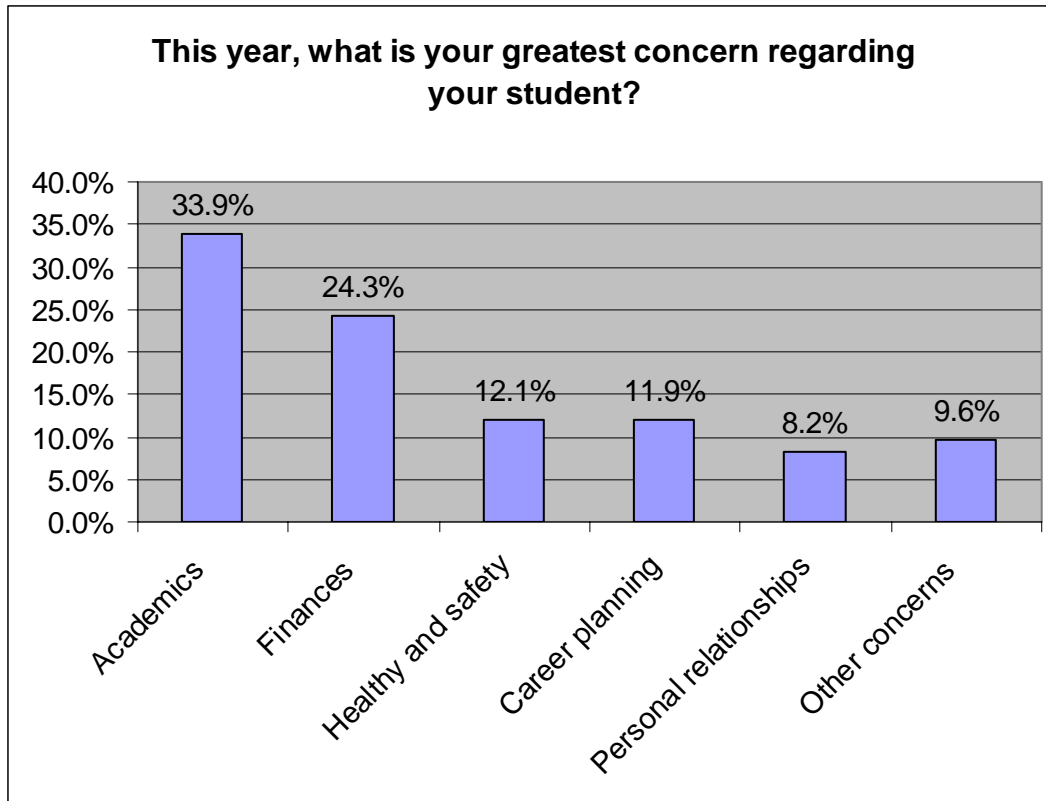
The U.S. Postal Service appears not to be busy in college towns anymore: only 7% of parents utilize regular mail frequently, and 69% either rarely or never utilize “snail” mail at all.



Not all communication is electronic, as parents like to visit in person, from the beginning and continuing throughout their child’s collegiate experience. Ninety (90) percent attended a parent orientation during their child’s freshman year, while 75% say that they visit campus at least once or twice a semester, with 17.5% visiting at least once a month or more.

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 “academics” topped the list, with 34% -- or more than one in three parents -- citing that topic as the area of greatest concern, followed by “finances” at 24% and “career planning” and “health and safety” both at 12%. Looking at some cross-tabulations by anticipated graduation year, these issues appear to vary in significance somewhat over time. For example, as one might expect, “career planning” appears to rise in significance as graduation approaches.



When asked, however, the pointed question of “this year, on which topic has your student most requested advice or assistance from you?” then the order shifts, with finances cited as the most-asked about topic at 35%, and academics at 19%. Health and safety concerns don’t seem to be brought up much by the students, as only 5% of parents mentioned that as the topic of most requested advice or assistance.

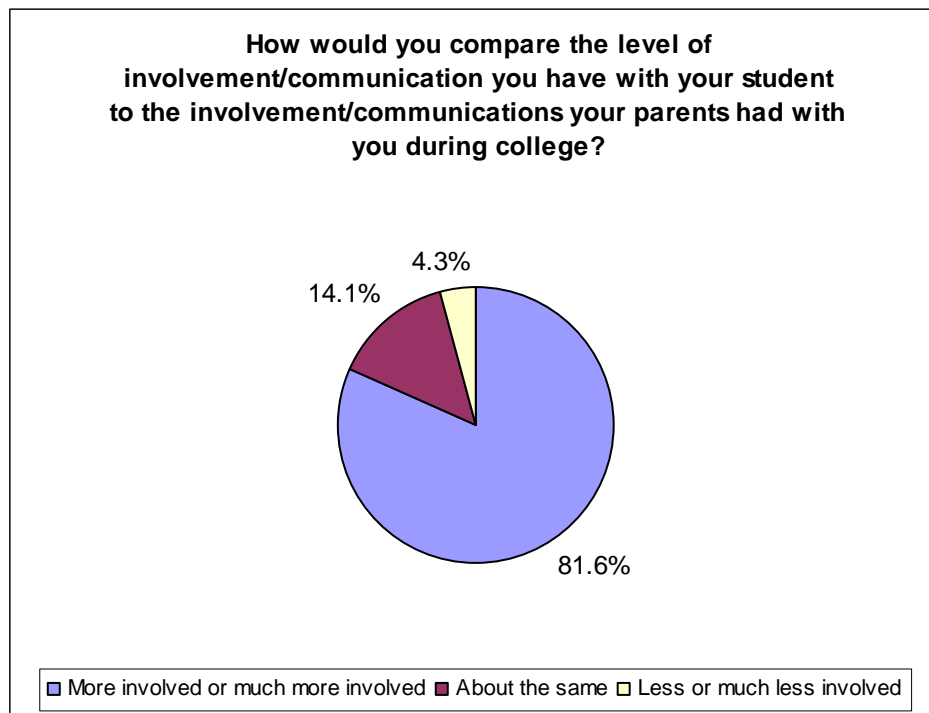
3. Comparing Perceived Levels of Involvement Between Today’s College Parents and ‘Yesteryears’

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 half (53%) of the parents responding indicated they were “much more involved.”

The numbers are even more dramatic when those answering “much more involved” and “more involved” are added together, totaling 82% of valid respondents.¹

¹ Please note that the percentages for this question are different than appears in the full text of the results in SurveyMonkey because 10% of those responding indicated that the question was “not applicable” to them. These 82 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.

Only about 4% of parents responding indicated that they were either “less involved” or “much less involved” than were their parents with them during their college years.



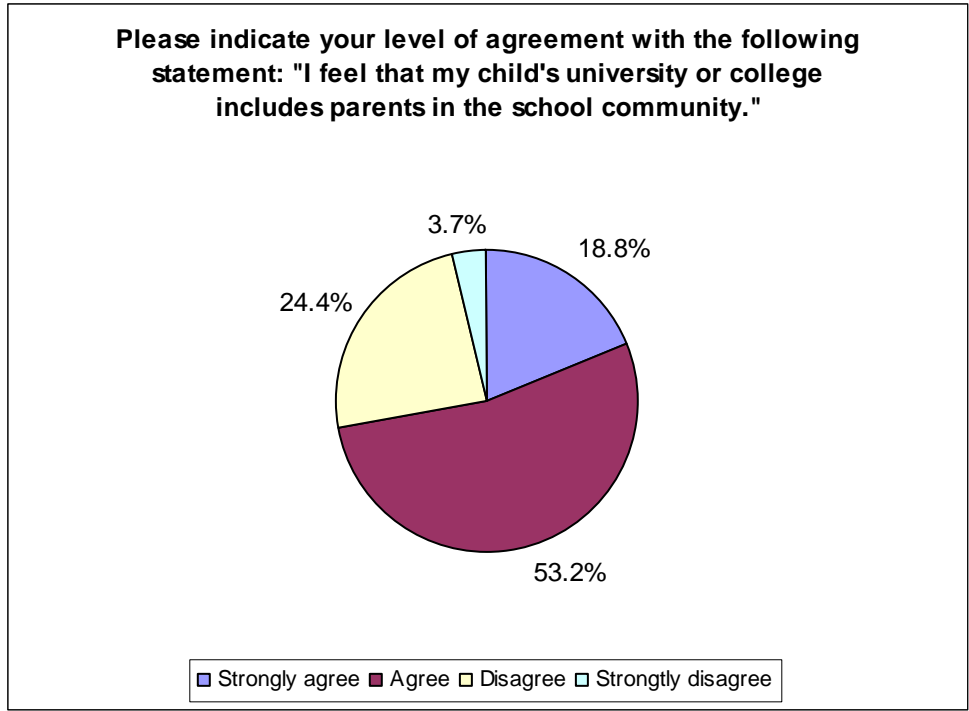
The responses to this question confirm a very significant broad trend related to heightened parental involvement during their child’s college years. Many of the more detailed data gleaned from this survey are consistent with this “megatrend.”

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, but a not insignificant minority of parents – more than 1 in 4 -- expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the schools’ efforts.

Specifically, more than 74% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the schools communications with them. However, 26% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Somewhat tracking the level of satisfaction with communications figures above, almost 72% of current college parents either strongly agree or agree with the following statement: “I feel that my child’s college or university includes parents in the school community.” Again, however, more than a quarter (28%) either disagree or strongly disagree that their child’s university or college “includes parents in the school community.” 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.



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 the most common “parent-related information or service” that colleges and universities provide, with 61% of parents identifying this tool as something that the school has made available. Almost half (47%) of the parents responding indicated that their child’s school provides an electronic newsletter geared to parents. About 1 in 3 (34%) indicated that their child’s school has a dedicated Parent Relations Office.

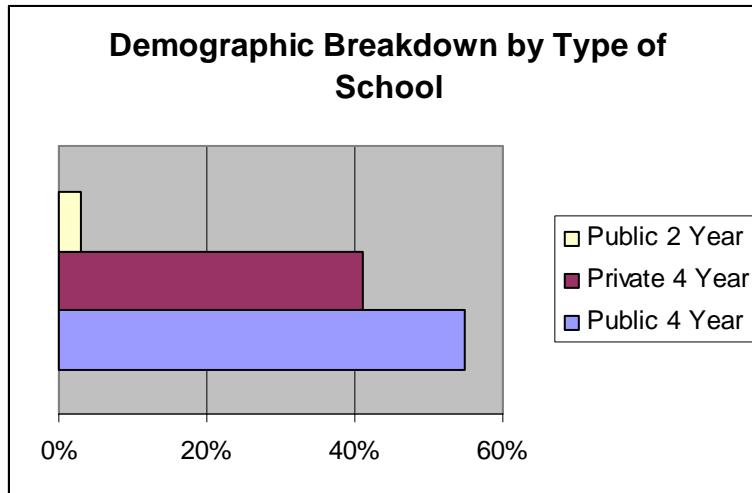
Close to half (47%) of parents indicated that even if their school had a Parent Relations Office, that they had had no contact with it.²

5. Demographic Information and Cross-Tabulations

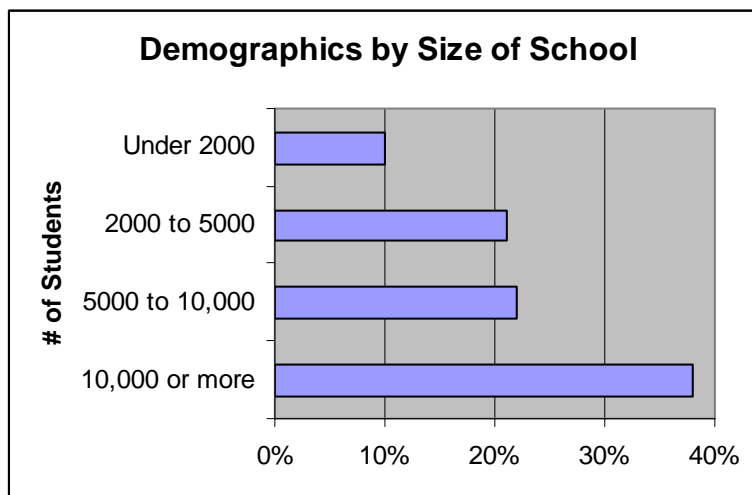
The College Parents of America Survey on Parent Experiences generated responses from 49 out of 50 states and the District of Columbia. The vast majority are parents of freshmen or sophomores. Given this weighting, this survey will help to serve as benchmark data that can be tracked over the next couple of years and beyond.

² On the question related to contact with the Parent Relations Office, 154 respondents indicated that this question was “not applicable.” Our assumption is that a Parent Relations Office did not exist for these respondents at their child’s college or university. We have therefore eliminated these respondents from the calculation.

In terms of the types of colleges and universities the children of those responding attend, 55% attend public 4-year institutions; 41% attend private 4-year institutions, with only 3% attending public 2-year schools.



As far as the size of schools reflected in the survey results, 38% of the children of those responding attend schools with over 10,000 students, 22% at schools between 5,000 and 10,000, 21% attend schools between 2000 and 5000 in size, and only 10% attend schools smaller than 2000 students. The remainder of parents didn't 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=189438261639>

For more information related to the mission and activities of College Parents of America, please visit www.collegeparents.org or e-mail info@collegeparents.org.