National Survey of
College and University Parent Programs
Survey Conducted Spring 2011

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Abstract

This report, summarizing the fifth national survey by the University of Minnesota Parent Program, builds on longitudinal information about parent/family services at colleges and universities. The surveys are conducted biennially to track best practices in services and programming, changes and developments in the field, costs for providing parent/family services, and experience levels of the professionals who work with parents and families of college students.

Executive Summary

The 2011 National Survey of College and University Parent Programs provides evidence that parent/family programs are increasing in both number and scope in higher education. Although the concept of parental involvement at the college/university level dates back nearly a century (Stewart 2010), the growth of parent/family services as we know it today has been increasing since the 1970s and ballooning since the beginning of the 21st century. Nearly a third (31.8%) of programs responding to the survey were established just within the past five years.

The services and events provided for parents and family members have also grown. More institutions are now offering a greater range of services, and offices that have been working with parents longer than a decade are providing a particularly extensive menu of services.

As colleges and universities have developed emergency notification systems in recent years, parents have been included as a targeted audience of those systems. Institutions now are routinely including parents in their email notifications, text messaging, and website updates in the event of a campus emergency.

The survey shows that parent/family services are relatively low budget programs . Nearly two-thirds (63.4%) of the programs represented in the survey have either no formal budget, or an annual budget (excepting salary and fringe) of $25,000 or less. The median salary for parent/family professionals with a masters degree is between $40,000 and $49,000. This represents a decrease in median salary from 2007 and 2009 salary ranges ($50,000 to $59,000).

Looking at reporting structures and areas of responsibility for parent/family services, we find significant complexity. Most institutions have multiple offices assuming responsibility for different events and services for families. Nearly half (46.7%) of respondents, for example, said their institution's parent orientation is handled by an office other than the responding program; a third said parent/family weekend was organized by another office; nearly a third (30.2%) reported that move-in events are implemented by another office; and half (47%) said fundraising was under the responsibility of another office.

Introduction

During the two years since the National Survey of College and University Parent Programs was previously conducted, parent/family services have matured as a profession within higher education. The Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals (AHEPPP) introduced a newsletter and a journal, and its membership now includes more than 100 colleges and universities. AHEPPP, which evolved out of Northeastern University's annual conference (Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement, or APPI), hosted its first national conference in November 2010, drawing nearly 100 participants. The association is planning a second national conference for 2012, with four regional drive-in conferences on the calendar for fall and winter 2011.

AHEPPP joins other professional organizations and conferences in serving parent/family professionals: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education's (NASPA) Parent and Family Relations Knowledge Community, National Orientation Directors Association's (NODA) Parent & Family Network, and an annual Parent Fundraising Conference all promote learning and sharing opportunities on the topic of working with parents and families.

In addition to professional associations, parent/family services was approved as a functional area by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in 2010. AHEPPP serves as the member association with representation in the CAS consortium.

As our previous surveys have indicated, family involvement during the college years has continued to increase over time. Simultaneously, research is showing that college students and recent graduates have been postponing many characteristics of adulthood, such as marriage, homeownership, starting a family, or even living independently. The concept of "emerging adulthood" has become more widespread (Arnett 2004), and the subject of family involvement during and after college is a more frequent area of research by graduate students, scholars in the fields of higher education and family social science, and by professional, consulting, and research organizations such as Noel-Levitz, Inc. and Pew Research Center. With significant increases in the cost of college attendance, coupled with reductions in state support of public institutions, more attention is also being directed to how parents and students pay for higher education, as well as how institutions are targeting parents for advancement and fundraising.

Many of the studies being conducted by researchers and organizations add value to the information in this report. A graduate student's investigation, for example, shows that college students and their parents use different communication technologies depending on the reasons for being in touch: when students were simply checking in with their parents, they were more likely to use text messaging, but if they were asking for money, they were more likely to email. Parents continue to follow their students' lead in using technology to communicate; while using Skype and other video message services have been popular for several years for families with a student participating in a learning abroad program, online face-time is becoming a standard touch point for students and parents who are even just a few miles apart. At the same time, some parent populations—such as parents of color or parents who have not attended college themselves—are less likely to use certain forms of communication (Connell & Dworkin 2011).

Understanding these fine points may help parent/family professionals identify the most appropriate message delivery techniques for different types of messages and for different parent audiences.

When the National Survey of College and University Parent Programs was first conducted in 2003, it was based on a hypothesis that the emphasis and extent of parent/family services varies from college to college, and that the direction of the program at most schools is influenced strongly by which department oversees the institution's parent program. The first of these surveys, then, were conducted to determine

- best practices among college parent/family programs

- emerging trends related to services and program structure

- the influence of departmental placement within the institution on services provided

- any discernible trends in the qualifications, experience, and pay scale of parent/family staff; in addition, we were interested in career goals of staff/administrators currently working in parent services

Subsequent surveys have included questions to determine more accurate and useful information, while continuing to seek insights on basic events and services that were increasingly ubiquitous, such as family weekend and parent orientation programming. Questions were added to identify perceptions of best practices and weakest areas; emerging trends; and more specificity regarding impact of organizational placement of parent services. In the 2011 survey, we included questions to reflect the focus of the newly adopted CAS standards. These included questions about whether the work of the program was guided by student development outcomes or assessment, as well as a question about collaboration with other offices on campus. Several open-ended questions from past years were deleted to shorten the survey and simplify analysis; these were limited to questions that had not seen significant changes in responses in recent years.

Method

The survey was posted online in February 2011, and parent/family program staff were invited to participate through a message sent to AHEPPP members. To ensure participation by parent/family professionals who are housed in fundraising and advancement office, an invitation was posted on the LinkedIn site for the Parents Fundraising Conference. In addition, the NASPA Parent and Family Relations Knowledge Community invited its members to respond to the survey. The survey authors also used a list of higher education staff who have contacted them in recent years, seeking information about establishing parent/family services or about the longitudinal study. That list includes approximately 150 addresses. A total of 211 colleges and universities participated in the 2011 survey.

The survey was conducted through UMSurvey, an online survey tool managed by the Office of Information Technology at the University of Minnesota. Data was collected over a period of nearly three months with reminders sent to AHEPPP members and Parent Fundraising Conference LinkedIn members. The survey was also announced and participation was invited during the annual NASPA conference and its pre-conference workshop for parent/family professionals.

In analyzing the survey results, responses were compared with data from previous national surveys (2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009). Several new questions were added this year, and some were deleted:

- New questions for 2011
    1. Do you routinely guide your work with parents/families using any of the following? We provided a list of choices (vision statement, mission statement, student development or learning outcomes, development or learning outcomes specific to parents/families, assessments or surveys of parents and family members, input from a Parent Board or Council, input from students). An open-ended "other" option was also included.
    2. How often does your program distribute information to parents/families, collaborate with other offices, and provide information to faculty members about parents/families? (options: Daily; weekly; monthly; every few months; once a year; never)
    3. How do you distribute information to parents/families during a campus emergency? (open-ended question)
    4. What kind of tracking/assessments do you routinely conduct? We provided a list of five choices (Logs of email/phone questions; participant surveys following an event; satisfaction surveys; assessments to determine how parents/families use information provided through communications, events, and activities; assessments to determine effect of parental/family involvement on student success, retention, graduation). An open-ended "other" option was also included.

- Deleted questions for 2011
    1. If you have a parent's council or parent's governing board, how do you select its members?
    2. If you checked multiple funding sources, please estimate the percentage that comes from each source.

3. What work experience did you have before obtaining a job in parent services?
4. What prior work experience has proved most useful in your job in parent services?
5. What kinds of jobs do you feel you would qualify for, based on the experience you've gained from your current job?
6. What advice do you have for someone who is considering working in parent services? Note: This question was changed to "What conferences, resources, or information would you recommend to someone new to the field of parent/family services?"
7. What are the most effective media for delivering professional information to you?
8. What other resources or information have been helpful for you in your work with parents?

The survey report does not include tabulations for statistical significance.

Results

A primary goal of conducting longitudinal surveys of parent/family programs is to collect information on the changing scope and developing trends in college and university services to parents of their students. The major areas of focus continue to be:

- Organizational structure
- Program demographics
- Staffing of the office
- Services and programming provided
- Budget
- Advice and general comments from the practitioners who are working with parents and family members

Organizational Structure

In 2011, more than half (58.3 percent) of the parent/family programs participating in the survey were located within a student affairs office. The second largest placement was in advancement/foundation/alumni offices (24.1 percent); followed by academic affairs (5.7 percent); enrollment management (4.3 percent); and institutional relations (2.4 percent; Table 1).

There has been a slight shift in placement since 2009. Placement of parent/family offices in a student affairs office decreased by approximately three percent and in academic affairs by about two percent since 2009, while placement in advancement/foundation/alumni offices increased by about six percent. These changes are minor and are likely to be—at least in part—the result of increased efforts to survey more private college and university programs and to a greater effort to collect data from fundraising professionals.

Table 1: Placement of Parent/Family Services; 2003-2011

Office/Department	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
Student Affairs	52.4%	52.2%	54.7%	61.4%	58.3%
Advancement/Foundation/Alumni	37.8%	31.5%	31.8%	17.8%	24.1%
Academic Affairs	4.9%	2.2%	1.6%	7.3%	5.7%
University/College Relations	2.4%	5.4%	4.2%	1.5%	2.4%
Enrollment Management	n/a	3.8%	4.7%	5.4%	4.3%
Other	2.4%	4.9%	3.0%	6.6%	5.2%

Placement appears to be affected by the classification of institutions as public or private. In 2011, student affairs-based offices remained the top placement at public colleges and universities, with 74.1 percent of parent/family programs placed in a student affairs office. Student affairs offices have consistently remained the top placement for public institution (Table 2). Student affairs and advancement/foundation/alumni offices have remained the top two placements for private institutions over time, but there have been notable shifts between the two offices. In 2007, private institutions housed more parent/family programs in advancement/foundation/alumni offices than in student affairs, but these

numbers changed dramatically in 2009, when more parent/family programs were housed in student affairs than in advancement/foundation/alumni. In 2011, parent/family offices at private institutions were placed relatively evenly in student affairs offices and advancement/foundation/alumni offices (Table 3). Again, this may be due in part to greater efforts to collect data from fundraisers who work with parents.

Table 2: Placement for Public Institutions; 2007- 2011

Office/Department	Public 2007	Public 2009	Public 2011
Student Affairs	73.6%	71.6%	74.1%
Advancement/Foundation/Alumni	15.4%	3.4%	8.1%
Academic Affairs	2.2%	8.8%	6.3%
University/College Relations	2.2%	0.7%	2.7%
Enrollment Management	5.5%	6.8%	6.3%
Other	1.1%	5.4%	2.7%

Table 3: Placement by Private Institutions; 2007-2011

Office/Department	Private 2007	Private 2009	Private 2011
Student Affairs	34.5%	46.8%	42.1%
Advancement/Foundation/Alumni	50.5%	35.1%	43.2%
Academic Affairs	0%	3.2%	5.3%
University/College Relations	6.9%	3.2%	1.1%
Enrollment Management	3.5%	3.2%	1.1%
Other	4.6%	8.5%	7.4%

Program Demographics

Since the 1970s, there has been an increase each decade in the number of parent/family programs being established (Figure 1). Very few institutions reported having had a parent/family program before 1970 (1.4 percent); 4.7 percent of programs were introduced during the 1970s; 8.5 percent in the 1980s; 17.1 percent in the 1990s, and 52.2 percent since the year 2000 (Table 4).

Table 4: When Did Schools Start Parent/Family Services

Year	Percent of Respondents
Before 1970	1.4%
1970-1979	4.7%
1980-1989	8.5%
1990-1995	8.1%
1996-1999	9.0%
2000-2005	20.4%
2006-2011	31.8%

Figure 1: When Did Schools Start Parent/Family Services
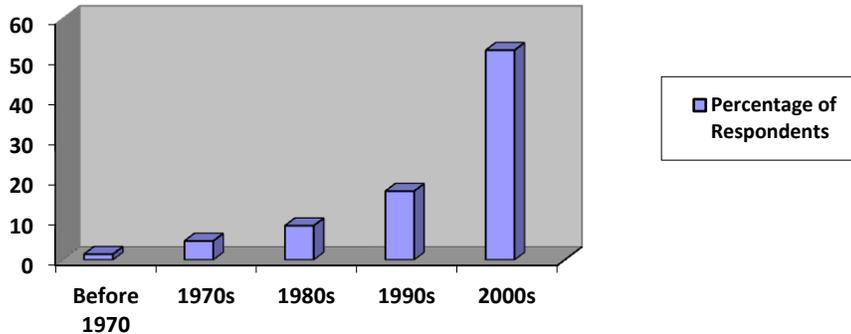
Just over half (53.1 percent) of the survey responses came from public institutions; 45 percent came from private institutions; and 1.9 percent came from a different type of institution (e.g. Service Academy; tribal college). Most respondents represented four-year institutions (64.9 percent), with another 33.2 percent designated as graduate or professional institutions. Only 1.9 percent of respondents came from two-year institutions.

Respondents' institutions were fairly evenly split in self-described size; 33.2 percent were from small schools, 37.9 percent were from mid-sized schools, and 28.9 percent were from large schools. Self-described small schools were more likely to be private (87.1 percent), while mid-sized schools and large schools were more likely to be public (65.0 percent and 88.5 percent, respectively).

The survey asked respondents to report their state, and we assigned them to one of the seven regions[1] designated by NASPA (Table 5). As in 2009, institutions were heavily weighted toward the eastern and middle portions of the nation, which include Regions II, III, and IV-E.

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[1] NASPA Regions: **Region I:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island. **Region II:** Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands. **Region III:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia. **Region IV-E:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, Ontario. **Region IV-W:** Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wyoming, Manitoba, Saskatchewan. **Region V:** Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Alberta, British Columbia. **Region VI:** Arizona, California, Hawaii.

Table 5: Region

Region	Percent
Region I	8.5%
Region II	12.8%
Region III	28.4%
Region IV-E	15.2%
Region IV-W	7.6%
Region V	4.7%
Region VI	9.0%

Staffing Parent/Family Offices

We asked respondents if they were the primary contact person responsible for managing parent/family services at their institution. Most respondents (90.5 percent) replied "yes."

At a slight majority of institutions, respondents worked half-time or less (53.1 percent) on parent/family services. This has decreased since 2009, when 61.8 percent of respondents spent half-time or less working in this area. The number of respondents working full-time in parent/family services has risen to 30.3 percent in 2011 from 22.9 percent in 2009, and respondents working more than half-time but less than full-time has remained somewhat consistent at 16.6 percent.

The person responsible for parent/family services was addressed by a variety of titles. The most common title was director (38.0 percent), followed by associate or assistant director (23.2 percent), and coordinator (14.2 percent). Other titles included associate or assistant dean, program manager, dean, liaison, and graduate assistant.

The level of experience also varied among respondents. Nearly half (49.8 percent) reported working with parents/family services for one to five years; 17.2 percent had worked with parents/family services for less than one year; 18.7 percent had worked with parents/family services for six to ten years; and 14.3 percent had worked with parents/family services for eleven or more years.

After an increase of educational level of parent/family program staff in 2009, it has dropped back in 2011. The percentage of staff with a bachelor's degree or less has risen slightly to 33.9 percent in 2011. Further, the percentage of staff with an advanced degree decreased from 2009 to 2011. In 2011, 56.5 percent had a master's degree and 9.6 percent have a doctorate or equivalent degree (Table 6).

Table 6: Educational Background

Highest Degree Earned	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
High school	0	3.6%	1.7%	1.2%	1.4%
Associate	0	0.6%	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%
Bachelor's	31.3%	37.1%	36.6%	24.0%	32.5%
Master's	60.0%	49.1%	52.0%	59.5%	56.5%
Doctorate or equivalent	8.8%	9.6%	8.0%	13.6%	9.6%

When asked to describe career goals for the next five years, 38.3 percent responded that they have no definite plans; 16.4 percent planned to move to a different position at their current institution, 7.5 percent planned to move to a similar position at a different institution, and 15.9 percent planned to move to a different position at a different institution. Further, 2.0 percent planned to leave higher education and 7.5 planned to retire from their current position. Additionally, 7.5 percent had "other" plans, which included remaining in the current position until goals are reached, advancing within the program they are currently in, or completing a higher degree.

The number of respondents who were currently working towards or planning to obtain a higher degree rose from 2007 to 2009, but remained relatively steady in 2011 at 27.5 percent. Of those currently working towards or planning to obtain a higher degree, most were earning a degree in higher education or higher education administration (38.2 percent), educational leadership (18.2 percent) or student affairs (7.3 percent). As may be expected, those who are working toward a higher degree are more likely to expect to change jobs within the next five years (Table 7).

Table 7: Career Goals by Degree Attainment

	Currently working towards a degree (N=52)	Not working towards a degree (N=141)
Move to different position current institution	21.2%	15.6%
Move to a similar position at a different institution	11.5%	5.7%
Move to a different position at a different institution	32.7%	9.9%
Leave higher education	3.8%	1.4%
Retire from position	0%	16.3%
No plans	19.2%	45.4%

The salary of respondents ranged from less than $30,000 to $100,000 or above. Nearly three quarters of respondents (70.3 percent) earned between $30,000 and $69,000. Only 3.4 percent earned less than $30,000 and 3.9 percent earned $100,000 or above (Table 8).

Table 8: Parent/Family Staff Salaries

Salary Range	2005	2007	2009	2011
Less than $30,000	9.9%	5.2%	3.4%	3.4%
$30,000-$39,000	21.2%	16.3%	13.6%	20.0%
$40,000-$49,000	19.3%	24.4%	26.8%	23.9%
$50,000-$59,000	22.4%	21.5%	17.4%	13.7%
$60,000-$69,000	11.2%	12.2%	9.4%	12.7%
$70,000-$79,000	5.0%	9.3%	10.2%	9.8%
$80,000-$89,000	5.0%	7.6%	7.2%	7.8%
$90,000-$99,000	2.5%	1.7%	3.4%	4.9%
$100,000 or above	3.7%	1.7%	8.5%	3.9%

When examining salary by highest degree earned, the most obvious finding was that respondents with a doctorate or equivalent degree earned substantially more than those with a bachelor's or master's degree. In 2011, the median income for respondents with a bachelor's degree was between $40,000-$49,000 and $50,000-$59,000; the median income was $40,000-$49,000 for those with a master's degree and $80,000-$99,000 for those with a doctorate or equivalent degree. While the median salary of respondents with a bachelor's or master's degree has remained relatively stable since 2007, it has risen consistently for those with a doctorate or equivalent degree (Table 9).

Table 9: Median Salary by Educational Level

Highest Degree Earned	Median Salary 2007	Median Salary 2009	Median Salary 2011
Bachelors	$40,000-$49,000	$40,000-$49,000	$40,000-$49,000 to $50,000-$59,000
Masters	$50,000-$59,000	$50,000-$59,000	$40,000-$49,000
Doctorate	$60,000-$69,000	$80,000-$89,000	$80,000-$89,000 to $90,000-$99,000

Further differences in salaries were found based on reporting structure. Respondents reported earning a significantly higher salary if they were in an advancement/foundation office ($60,000-$69,000 to $70,000-$79,000) than in a student affairs office ($40,000-$49,000). Staff in student affairs offices, however, had higher levels of education; more respondents have a master's degree or higher if they report to a student affairs office (80.3 percent), compared to those that report to an advancement/foundation office (34.0 percent).

Of those who specified their major at the bachelor's degree level, many named a degree in a social science field, such as sociology, psychology, or child development. Several other respondents named a degree in business, communications, or education. At the master's level, most respondents who specified a major named a degree in higher education administration or college student personnel. A few others named degrees in communications or education. Finally, nearly all who specified a major at the doctorate/professional level named a degree in higher education administration or college student personnel.

Services and Programming

There have been notable changes in the services provided by parent/family programs since 2009. In general, programs were offering a greater range of services than previously. Just a few services have decreased since 2009—fewer schools are now providing print newsletters and educational workshops—while the percentage of programs that offered email newsletters, hotline/parent questions, move-in events, parents council, parents association, regional programming, and fundraising have increased, in some cases by more than 10 percent (Table 10).

Table 10: Differences in Parent/Family Services; 2009-2011

Service Provided	2009-2011 differences
Family Day/weekend	+1.6%
Parent Orientation	-0.9%
Parent Website	+0.9
Print Newsletter	-5.5%
Email Newsletter	+12.1%
Hotline/Parent Questions	+14.2
Email Response	+1.7
Handbook	-0.1%
Welcome Week/Move-in	+10.2%
Educational workshops	-5.3
Parents Council	+9.9%
Parents Association	+4.4
Regional Programming	+9.6
Fundraising	+7.7%

When comparing services over the past eight years, it is possible to see trends in programming over time. Most notably, a few services increased in 2011 after a decrease in 2009, including family day/weekend, parents council, and fundraising (Table 11). These tend to be services that are most common to programs housed within an advancement or fundraising office (advancement/fundraising offices are generally more likely to schedule parents weekend, organize parents councils, and plan fundraising drives), and the change may be attributed to the effort to solicit responses from more programs housed in these areas.

A similar trend was found for parent/family programs that had a link for parents on the front page of the college or university website; after a 15 percent decrease in 2009 to 66.5 percent of institutions providing a front-page link, there was an increase to 71.8 percent providing a link on the institution's front page in 2011.

Table 11: Parent/Family Services; 2003-2011

Service Provided	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
Family Day/weekend	74.4%	96.0%	94.9%	89.8%	91.4%
Parent Orientation	61.0%	97.0%	95.2%	97.1%	96.2%
Print Newsletter	54.9%	56.0%	54.3%	41.1%	35.6%
Parents Council	36.6%	60.0%	65.4%	52.5%	62.4%
Fundraising	43.9%	84.0%	85.2%	74.8%	82.5%
Welcome Week/Move-in	7.3%	75.0%	73.8%	73.0%	83.2%
Handbook	12.2%	75.0%	78.6%	76.1%	76.0%

Since we first began to survey in 2003, there have been growing numbers in the percentage of programs that provided all services listed, with the exception that print newsletters are being phased out. This increase in the scope of programming may be a reflection of the surge of parent programs that occurred in the 1990s and 2000s. Older programs that are more established may have greater capacity to add services

than newer programs. Table 12, which displays the differences in services provided between programs established in the 1990s and programs established in the past five years, shows that programs that have been around longer are more likely to provide a greater number of services than those established more recently. The decrease in print materials, on the other hand, likely reflects the need to conserve funding (print is more expensive than online information) as well as a trend in parents' migration to technology.

Table 12: Services Offered in Comparison to When Programs Were Established

Service Provided	1990s	2007-2011
Parent Orientation	100%	96.2%
Family Day/weekend	100%	91.4%
Parent Website	100%	95.2%
Print Newsletter	34.4%	35.9%
Email Newsletter	97.2%	90.3%
Facebook/SNS	63.6%	56.5%
Hotline/parent questions	77.1%	75.4%
Email/parent questions	100%	97.1%
Parent Handbook	82.4%	76.0%
Move-in events	91.4%	83.2%
Educational Workshops	69.7%	55.2%
Parents Council	76.5%	62.4%
Parent Association	78.1%	62.2%
Regional Programming	71.9%	62.8%
Fundraising	82.4%	82.9%

Respondents were asked to specifically indicate which parent services were provided by their own office and which were offered by another office at the institution, which creates a clearer picture of the complexity regarding how institutions provide parent/family services (Table 13).

Table 13: Services Provided by Your Office; Another Office

Service Provided	By My Office	By Another Office	Not Provided
Parent Orientation	49.5%	46.7%	3.8%
Family Day/weekend	58.4%	33.0%	8.6%
Parent Website	86.5%	8.7%	4.8%
Print Newsletter	27.8%	7.7%	63.4%
Email Newsletter	76.8%	13.5%	9.7%
Facebook/social networking page	50.8%	5.8%	43.5%
Hotline/parent questions	63.1%	12.3%	24.6%
Email Response	89.5%	7.7%	2.9%
Parent Handbook	59.0%	17.0%	24.0%
Move-in events	53.0%	30.2%	16.8%
Educational Workshops	41.7%	13.5%	44.8%
Parents Council	49.5%	12.9%	37.6%
Parent Association	49.7%	12.4%	37.8%
Regional Programming	38.2%	24.6%	37.2%
Fundraising	35.5%	47.0%	17.0%

Along with the services listed above, respondents identified several additional services that were provided by their office. The most common additional services were sibling events, grandparent events, separate mom's and dad's weekends, gift packages for students, parent appreciation notes, webinars and online chats, emergency notification, parent volunteer opportunities, and parent/family calendars.

Respondents were asked to report how often, other than in crisis situations or in response to a parent's specific question, they distributed information to parents and families, collaborated with other offices on campus, and provided information to faculty members and staff about parents and families. Nearly three quarters of the respondents reported that they distributed information to parents and families monthly or more frequently(73.6 percent); and about the same number collaborated with other offices monthly or more frequently (71.8 percent). Only about one quarter, however, reported that they provided information to faculty or staff monthly or more frequently (24.3 percent; Table 14).

Table 14: Frequency of Material Distribution and Collaboration

	Daily	Weekly/A few times a month	Monthly	Every few months/ Once a year	Never
Distribute information to parents/families	2.9%	25.8%	44.9%	24.4%	2.0%
Collaborate with other offices	16.8%	40.1%	14.9%	28.3%	0%
Provide information to faculty and staff	4.2%	12.7%	7.4%	53.4%	22.2%

When it came to distributing information to parents/families during an emergency, most respondents indicated using an electronic format, such as email (64 percent), website updates (34 percent), or a social networking site (Facebook or Twitter; 9 percent). Other respondents reported using phones for either emergency text messaging (23 percent) or recorded messages and calls (15 percent). Another 9 percent reported that the institution uses an emergency notification system, but did not specify how messages were sent on these systems.

Respondents were asked what resources they used to guide their work with parents. The top three resources named by parent/family program staff were assessments or surveys of parents/families (62.1 percent); a mission statement (50.7 percent); and input from a parent board or council (47.4 percent; Table 15).

Table 15: Methods Used to Guide Work With Parents/Families

Guide	'Yes' responses
Vision statement	24.6%
Mission statement	50.7%
Student development/learning outcomes	33.6%
Parent development/learning outcomes	39.8%
Assessments or survey of parents/families	62.1%
Input from parent board or council	47.4%
Input from students	19.9%

Nearly two-thirds of programs used assessments to guide their work; we further asked what kinds of tracking, assessments, evaluations, or surveys were routinely conducted by the respondent. The majority (69.2 percent) named participant surveys following an event. Other methods included satisfaction surveys, measuring parent/family satisfaction with communications, events, and activities (52.6 percent); logs of email and phone questions (37.0 percent); assessments to determine how parents/families use information provided through communications, events, and activities (27.5 percent); and assessments to determine effect of parental/family involvement on student success, retention, graduation (10.0 percent).

Self-Identified Best/Weakest Practices

Since 2007, respondents have consistently reported that the services they are most proud of are their parent orientation (28.7 percent), family day/weekend (14.9 percent), and email newsletter (13.9 percent). There have been no notable changes since 2009, however, respondents were given the option of 'Facebook/other social networking site' for the first time. Just 1.5 percent indicated that this was the service they were most proud of (Table 16).

When asked why they were most proud of a service, several indicated that they had received the best feedback from parents about that service or that it was well attended. Other responses included that there was considerable involvement and partnership from parents and staff, the service helped parents feel connected to the institution, or that it offered comprehensive activities and events.

Table 16: What Service Are You the Most Proud Of?

Service Provided	2007	2009	2011
Parent Orientation	27.4%	31.0%	28.7%
Family Day/weekend	20.0%	16.3%	14.9%
Parent Website	6.3%	3.3%	4.5%
Print Newsletter	1.7%	1.3%	1.0%
Email Newsletter	8.6%	13.0%	13.9%
Facebook/social networking page	n/a	n/a	1.5%
Hotline/parent questions	2.3%	2.5%	1.0%
Parent Handbook	5.1%	7.9%	5.4%
Move-in events	1.1%	1.3%	1.5%
Educational Workshops	1.7%	2.1%	0.0%
Parents Council	8.0%	7.9%	7.4%
Parent Association	5.7%	3.8%	3.0%
Regional Programming	n/a	1.3%	3.0%
Fundraising	5.1%	2.1%	5.9%
Other	6.3%	5.0%	5.9%

The services that respondents chose as weakest were more dispersed among all services than the services that were chosen as the best. In 2011, respondents named parent website (19.7 percent), Facebook/social networking site (10.9 percent), and parents association (9.3 percent) as their weakest services. Even though parent website remained the service that most respondents indicated as the weakest, the percentage of respondents who chose this decreased from 24.5 percent in 2009 (Table 17), which may indicate that programs are developing strategies to improve their websites or receiving more technical support.

When asked why they considered a service weak, many respondents replied that they did not have this service, or that the service was new and underdeveloped. Further, respondents chose a service as weak because they didn't feel that they had the resources, support, or time necessary to maintain the service, or that the service needed to be updated. Respondents also indicated that a service was weak if there was a lack of interest or participation from parents.

Table 17: Which Service Do You Feel is Currently Weakest?

Service Provided	2007	2009	2011
Parent Orientation	4.7%	6.1%	6.2%
Family Day/weekend	6.5%	7.0%	6.7%
Parent Website	26.0%	24.5%	19.7%
Print Newsletter	4.7%	1.3%	1.0%
Email Newsletter	7.1%	6.1%	7.8%
Facebook/social networking page	n/a	n/a	10.9%
Hotline/parent questions	2.4%	1.3%	1.0%
Parent Handbook	5.9%	3.1%	2.6%
Move-in events	1.8%	3.1%	5.2%
Educational Workshops	10.7%	3.9%	8.3%
Parents Council	8.3%	5.2%	7.3%
Parent Association	6.9%	14.0%	9.3%
Regional Programming	n/a	9.6%	7.3%
Fundraising	4.1%	5.2%	2.6%
Other	4.1%	1.7%	4.1%

In Table 18, the best and weakest services were placed together, allowing a comparison of where parent programs in general saw their strengths and weaknesses.

Table 18: Comparison of Best/Weakest Practices 2011

Service Provided	Best	Weakest
Parent Orientation	28.7%	6.2%
Family Day/weekend	14.9%	6.7%
Parent Website	4.5%	19.7%
Print Newsletter	1.0%	1.0%
Email Newsletter	13.9%	7.8%
Facebook/social networking page	1.5%	10.9%
Hotline/parent questions	1.0%	1.0%
Parent Handbook	5.4%	2.6%
Move-in events	1.5%	5.2%
Educational Workshops	0.0%	8.3%
Parents Council	7.4%	7.3%
Parent Association	3.0%	9.3%
Regional Programming	3.0%	7.3%
Fundraising	5.9%	2.6%
Other	5.9%	4.1%

There were some minor differences in best and weakest practices between public and private institutions, although differences were not as extreme as in years past. Parent orientation was named the best service

by the most respondents for both types of institution, but somewhat more private (32.2 percent) than public (26.9 percent) did so. More public than private institutions named family day/weekend (18.5 percent vs. 11.1 percent) and email newsletter (15.7 percent vs. 11.1 percent) as the best service. More private than public institutions named parents council (12.2 percent vs. 3.7 percent) and fundraising (10.0 percent vs. 1.9 percent) as the best service (Table 19). Parent website was named as the weakest service by most respondents from both public and private institutions; slightly more private (21.7 percent) than public (18.9 percent) named this as the weakest. More public than private schools named parents council (9.4 percent vs. 4.8 percent) and parents association (10.4 percent vs. 7.2 percent) as their weakest service, while more private than public named Facebook/social networking page (12.0 percent vs. 9.4 percent) as their weakest service (Table 20).

Table 19: Best Practices 2011 for Public and Private Institutions

Service Provided	Public	Private
Parent Orientation	26.9%	32.2%
Family Day/weekend	18.5%	11.1%
Parent Website	6.5%	2.2%
Print Newsletter	0.9%	1.1%
Email Newsletter	15.7%	11.1%
Facebook/social networking page	0.9%	1.1%
Hotline/parent questions	0.9%	1.1%
E-mail response to parent questions	3.7%	1.1%
Parent Handbook	6.5%	4.4%
Move-in events	1.9%	0.0%
Educational Workshops	0.0%	0.0%
Parents Council	3.7%	12.2%
Parent Association	4.6%	1.1%
Regional Programming	0.0%	6.7%
Fundraising	1.9%	10.0%
Other	7.4%	4.4%

Table 20: Weakest Practices 2011 for Public and Private Institutions

Service Provided	Public	Private
Parent Orientation	6.6%	6.0%
Family Day/weekend	5.7%	7.2%
Parent Website	18.9%	21.7%
Print Newsletter	1.9%	0.0%
Email Newsletter	6.6%	9.6%
Facebook/social networking page	9.4%	12.0%
Hotline/parent questions	0.0%	2.4%
E-mail response to parent questions	0.0%	0.0%
Parent Handbook	3.8%	1.2%
Move-in events	6.6%	3.6%
Educational Workshops	8.5%	8.4%
Parents Council	9.4%	4.8%
Parent Association	10.4%	7.2%
Regional Programming	5.7%	9.6%
Fundraising	1.9%	2.4%
Other	4.7%	3.6%

Program Budget

When asked about their annual budget, excluding salary and benefits, the most common response was that their program had no formal budget (35.0 percent). A small percentage, however, did report a budget of more than $250,000 (2.5 percent; Table 21). These are most likely programs at large institutions, and the budget is likely to include costs for student orientation as well as parent orientation. There have been no significant changes in budget responses since 2007.

Table 21: Annual Budget

Budget	Percentage
No formal budget	35.0%
Less than $10,000	13.2%
$10,001-$25,000	15.2%
$25,000-$50,000	14.7%
$50,000-$100,000	12.2%
$100,000-$250,000	7.1%
Over -$250,000	2.5%

Nearly three-fourths (71.1 percent) of respondents reported that their funding came from college/university allocation. Other funding sources included donations and gifts (19.9 percent), funds from events (18.5), and parent/family memberships (7.6).

A little less than 10 percent of respondents reported that the parent/family program at their institution required a membership fee from parents. This fee varied greatly by institution. Some charged a one-time

fee to cover four years, which ranged from $50 to $150, while others charged an annual fee that ranged from $10 to $75. Other institutions reported that most services were free, but a fee provided additional benefits or that parents were charged for certain events.

Advice and General Comments

When asked why they chose the parent/family field as their profession, many respondents replied that they did not choose the job; it chose them. They said they ended up in the field because it was part of a position or it developed from a previous position. In addition, several said that they were asked to work with parents/families, that they were appointed to the position, or that they were interested in the opportunity or challenge of working in this field. Finally, a number of respondents replied that they worked in this field because they enjoy it and find the work rewarding.

When asked what professional organizations they belonged to and what conferences they have attended, nearly half (48.4 percent) of the respondents named National Association of Student Personnel Administrators/Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA). Another 40 percent named Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals (AHEPPP); 20.0 percent named the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA); 18 percent named Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE); and 15.8 percent named American College Personnel Association (ACPA). The Parent Fundraising Conference was named by 8.4%.

In order to learn more about conference attendance, we asked what factors influence the decision to attend a conference. The most important factor to respondents was information about program sessions (69.2 percent), followed by cost (68.7 percent), location (60.0 percent), timing of the conference (52.6 percent), and the keynote speaker (16.6 percent). Networking opportunities were an additional factor that influenced conference attendance. When asked further about the timing of a conference, respondents indicated that they would be most likely to attend a conference in November (28.0 percent), February (21.9 percent) or March (21.4 percent).

Respondents were further asked what conferences, resources, or information they would recommend to someone new to the field of parent/family services. The top three organizations named were AHEPPP (46 percent), NASPA (23 percent), and NODA (18 percent). Respondents additionally suggested connecting with colleagues in the parent/family field (10 percent).

Discussion

The survey has been conducted over the past decade as a way to chart the development of parent/family program services as a profession in higher education. By all indications, the field is changing over time, with more institutions putting emphasis on the family's impact on student success and recognition that good parent relations can benefit the institution. Creating a parent/family program is a first step, but institutions are asking more of the professionals who work with parents. Programming and services are more diverse and comprehensive, and technology continues to impact the services parent professionals are expected to provide.

Although there has been increase in the percent of respondents indicating they work full-time with parents and families, the majority of staff still divide their time between parent contact and other responsibilities. Institutions also split parent/family relations among offices, and sometimes along separate reporting lines. A continuing concern is the effect on parents of these divided responsibilities. The benefits of assigning experts to do the various tasks of communication, event planning, fundraising, technology, and assessment may be offset by a lack of consistent messaging and confusion about who parents should contact with their questions.

It is promising to see that nearly two-thirds of programs use some kind of assessment to guide their work. A new question added this year indicates that the majority of parent/family programs are structuring their services intentionally, using surveys and assessment in planning and review. Many also indicated that their programs are guided by a mission statement (50.7 percent) and input from a board or council (47.4 percent). Less impressive, though, is evidence that assessment is generally based on participant surveys and satisfaction surveys conducted shortly after events rather than research to determine results over time and impact of parental involvement on student success.

Further Research/Additional Questions

As we consider questions for this survey in the future, as well as research in the field of parent/family programs, the topic of assessment is itself of key interest. The most significant area for improvement in the profession may lie in assessment. Although some 60 percent of programs say they distribute evaluations following specific events or activities, very few seem to be conducting comprehensive assessment to determine how their services are used or long-term outcomes from events and programming.

Satisfaction surveys seem to be the norm, conducted at the end of an event or shortly thereafter. More helpful information would come from determining whether parents take away learning that they can apply later in parenting their student. Just 10 percent of programs make an effort to determine effect of parental/family involvement on student success, retention, and graduation. Evidence that parent/family services impact student development and social/academic success and persistence would address the value of funding and growing parent/family programs.

It is also notable that only about one quarter of programs reported that they provide information to faculty or staff on a frequent basis (24.3 percent provide information monthly or more frequently). Information on why programs are not in more frequent contact with faculty and staff, and ideas for successful communication with faculty and staff, would be beneficial.

References

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Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. Are you the primary staff person/administrator to work with parents or most closely manage the parent services at your college? (yes; no)
2. What is your title? (open-ended question)
3. What percentage time is your position overall (not just related 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 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)
5. If your position includes duties besides parent/family services, what other responsibilities do you have? (open-ended question)
6. Please describe how parent services are staffed at your institution (Number of full-, part-time, and/or student staff)? (open-ended question)
7. 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])
8. How long have you worked with parent services? (Less than six months; six months to one year; one year; two years; three years; four years; five years; six to ten years; eleven to twenty years; more than twenty years)
9. Do you routinely guide your work with parents/families using (check all that apply): (A vision statement for parent/family services; A mission statement for parent/family services; Student development or learning outcomes; Development or learning outcomes specific to parents/families; Assessments or surveys of parents and family members; Input from a Parent Board or Council; Input from students; Other [please describe])
10. What parent services do your office/does your institution provide for parents? (Parent/family orientation; Parents/Family weekend; Web site for parents; Print newsletter; E-mail newsletter; Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking site for parents/families; Hotline/phone information; E-mail response to parent questions; Parent/family handbook; Move-in receptions/events [when students first move into residence halls]; Educational workshops for parents; Parents/family council [advisory group]; Parents/family association/organization; Regional programming [meetings/programs/student send-off events away from campus]; Fundraising. Note: respondents indicated whether each service was offered by their office, by another office on campus, or not provided.
11. Are there any other parent services or events offered by your office? Please specify. (open-ended question)
12. Of the services your institution provides to parents, what service are you the most proud of? (Parent/family orientation; Parents/family weekend; Web site for parents; Print newsletter; E-mail newsletter; Facebook/social networking site; ; Hotline/phone information; Parent handbook; Move-in receptions/events; Educational workshops for parents; Parents/family council [advisory group]; Parents/family association; Regional programming [meetings/programs/student send-off events away from campus]; Fundraising; other)
13. Please describe why you are proud of this service. (open-ended question)

14. Of the services your institution provides to parents, what service do you feel is currently weakest? (Parent/family orientation; Parents/family weekend; Web site for parents; Print newsletter; E-mail newsletter; Facebook/social networking site; ; Hotline/phone information; Parent handbook; Move-in receptions/events; Educational workshops for parents; Parents/family council [advisory group]; Parents/family association; Regional programming [meetings/programs/student send-off events away from campus]; Fundraising; other)

15. Please describe why you feel this service is weak. (open-ended question)

16. Does your parent program require a membership fee from parents? (yes; no)

17. If yes, what is the fee? (open-ended question)

18. Other than crisis situations or in response to a parent's specific question, how often does your parent/family program: Distribute information to parents and families; Collaborate with other offices on campus; Provide information to faculty members and staff about parents and families? (Daily; weekly; monthly; every few months; once a year; never)

19. How do you distribute information to parents/families during a campus emergency? (open-ended question)

20. What kinds of tracking, assessments, evaluations, or surveys do you routinely conduct? (Logs of email and phone questions; Participant surveys following an event; Satisfaction surveys, measuring parent/family satisfaction with communications, events, and activities; Assessments to determine how parents/families use information provided through communications, events, and activities; Assessments to determine effect of parental/family involvement on student success, retention, graduation; Other [please describe])

21. When was your parent program established? Some institutions had a parent program historically, but discontinued it for a period time. Please answer based on your current parent program. (Before 1970; 1970-1979; 1980-1989; 1990-1995; 1995-1999; 2000-2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011)

22. For what type of institution do you work? (Public college; Private college; Public university; Private university)

23. What is the scope of your institution? (Two-year; Four-year; Graduate- or professional-degree granting)

24. How does your institution describe itself related to size? (Small school; Mid-sized school; Large school)

25. In what state or province are you located? (open-ended question)

26. On the front page of your institution's Web site, is there a link designated for parents? (yes; no)

27. Excluding salary and benefits, what is your annual budget for providing parent services? (No formal budget; less than $10,000; $10,001-$25,000; $25,000-$50,000; $50,001-$100,000; $100,000-$250,000; Over $250,000)

28. Where does your funding come from? (Check all that apply) (College/university allocation; Generate funds from donations and gifts; Generate funds from parent memberships; Generate funds from events; Other)

29. What is your educational background - highest degree received? (High school; Associate degree; Bachelor degree; Master degree; Doctorate or equivalent)

30. What was your educational major? (open-ended question; respondents were asked to indicate major at the associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate/professional levels)

31. Are you currently working toward or planning to obtain a higher education degree? (yes; no)
32. If yes, in what field? (open-ended question)
33. 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)
34. Why did you choose to work in the parent/family field? (open-ended question)
35. Please describe your career goals in the next five years (I plan to move to a different position at my current institution; I plan to move to a similar position at another institution; I plan to move to a different position at a different institution; I plan to leave higher education; I plan to retire from my position; No definite plans; Other [open-ended])
36. What professional organizations do you belong to, and what conferences/workshops do you attend? (open-ended question)
37. What factors influence your decision to attend a conference? (Check all that apply) (Location; Keynote speaker; Cost; Details about program sessions)
38. You indicated that the timing of a conference influences your decision to attend. What month of the year would you most likely attend a professional development conference? (January-December)
39. What conferences, resources, or information would you recommend to someone new to the field of parent/family services? (open-ended question)
40. Please include any other comments you may have. (open-ended question)
41. 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: Recommended Resources

What other resources or information have been helpful for you in your work with parents?

Conferences and Organizations

Association of Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals (AHEPPP) (62)

Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) (31)

National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) (28)

Annual Parent Fundraising Conference (13)

Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) (6)

National Research Center for the First-Year Experience (5)

Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI) (4)

College Student Educators International (ACPA) (4)

University Parent Media (4)

PaperClip (2)

Generic conferences/workshops (3)

Other: Academic Impressions, Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), Parent Program Summit, Texas Christian University Conference, (1 each)

Publications

Books specific (college parenting, college student development; advising in higher education) (10)

Online Sources

Listservs/emails (6)

Webinars (2)

Research/Reports

Research—general

University of Minnesota's National Parent Program Survey (6)

Informal Sources

Networking with colleagues (11)

Websites and materials from other institutions (5)

Parents (1)