

Parent Survey 2006

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Research conducted Spring 2006



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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Parent Survey Spring 2006

Executive Summary

The survey, conducted in spring 2006, reveals that parents of University of Minnesota undergraduate students are highly satisfied with the communications, programs, and services the University provides for them. They also indicate that they feel strongly connected to the University's campus community.

This is the fifth time that parents of undergraduates have been surveyed since 1995. During that time, the University has worked to improve the communications, programs, and services it offers to parents. In this year's survey, 98.4 percent of respondents said they were very satisfied or satisfied with the University's communications for parents, and 98.2 percent said they were very satisfied or satisfied with programs and services provided to parents. When asked their level of agreement with the statement, "I feel that the University of Minnesota includes parents in the University community," 97.2 said they agreed strongly or agreed. These numbers reflect an improvement in satisfaction and connectedness rates since the last survey was conducted in 2004, and a continuation of the trend of increasing satisfaction and connectedness as measured since 1995.

There are strong correlations between increasing satisfaction and connectedness rates and the communications, programs, and services provided for parents by the University. Parents who attend Parent Orientation and Parents Weekend are more likely to be satisfied or very satisfied with the University and to feel more connected to the campus community. Those who are aware of and make use of communications tools such as the online video and audio workshops, the online alcohol course for parents, and the biweekly Parents E-mail Listserv are among the most satisfied survey respondents.

The survey showed that parents' concerns evolve over the course of the students' academic careers. During their students' freshman year, they are most concerned with issues of health and safety, followed by academics, finances, and personal relationships. During the students' later years, career planning moves to the forefront, and by senior year, more than 42 percent of parents cite career planning as their number one concern for their student.

Introduction

This is the fifth survey of parents that the University of Minnesota's Parent Program has conducted since the *University Parent* newsletter was established in 1993. The first survey, conducted in 1995, was intended to determine the usefulness of the newsletter. At the time, the University's parent services included a Parent Orientation program, managed by the New Student Orientation office, and the quarterly newsletter, produced by the Communications & Publications unit of the Office for Student Affairs. Reader responses indicated that while parents were satisfied with the newsletter, they wanted the University to provide additional services and programs for parents. Those early survey findings and respondents' comments led to the development of additional parent services and the growth of the University Parent Program.

Based on parent requests and responses to parent surveys, the program has grown from its initial newsletter to include a Parents Weekend, move-in events for parents of first-year students at the beginning of each academic year, a parent contact person, Web site, e-mail listserv, periodic special events and workshops, and volunteer opportunities for parents to help with events on campus or in out-of-state locations. Over the past two years, the University Parent Program has begun videotaping some of its special programs, including workshops addressing issues such as housing, mental health, and learning abroad. These recordings have been turned into video, audio, and podcast versions available for viewing or downloading from the Parent Web site. The program has also begun offering on-line courses for parents, addressing issues such as alcohol abuse and personal finance, with more courses in the works. A weblog—or blog—has also been established to give parents an opportunity to communicate with one another online. The program continues to assess parent attitudes over the years, and has seen a steady increase in satisfaction ratings and in feelings of connectedness to the University.

The purpose of this year's parent survey was both to continue tracking parent attitudes toward the University, as well as to assess parent knowledge of and satisfaction with some of the new services and programs offered by the University Parent Program. New questions were included to determine:

- Whether parents read the e-mail newsletter for parents, and, if so, whether they discuss its contents with their students
- Whether parents are aware of and have used the on-line video and audio workshops for parents, and, if so, whether they have discussed the content with their students
- Whether parents are aware of and have used the on-line alcohol course, and, if so, whether they have discussed its contents with their students
- Whether parents perceive that University faculty or staff members or student organizations and activities have made an impact on students.

Method

The first three times the survey was conducted (in 1995, 1997, and 2002), a questionnaire was mailed to a random sampling of parent addresses, drawn from the newsletter mailing list. In an effort to both conserve funds and increase the total number of responses, in 2004 the survey was for the first time posted online, and an article printed in the *University Parent* newsletter directed parents to a Web link that would take them to the survey. For those parents who preferred to fill out a paper copy of the survey, the newsletter included contact information that would allow them to request a copy of the survey by mail. In spring 2006, the program followed the same method of inviting parents to fill out the survey. As an incentive (and consistent with the method employed in 2004), the University Parent Program said that survey respondents would be entered in a drawing for prizes (a one-night stay at the University's Historic Faculty House, bookstore gift certificates, or a copy of the Parent Program director's book for parents of college students). The spring 2006 newsletter was mailed to approximately 18,500 addresses.

The survey was designed to be simple and to take 15-20 minutes to complete (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of questions). Respondents self-selected from the entire population of parents receiving the newsletter. We received 872 online responses and 6 paper responses, so 4.7 percent of *University Parent* recipients elected to complete the survey, as compared to 3.7 percent (652 out of 17,500 newsletter recipients) in 2004. While the earlier method of mailing the survey to a random sampling of newsletter recipients yielded a greater rate of response (more than 50 percent of the 500 surveys mailed), the online surveys allowed the program to gather more responses.

Only parents who read the *University Parent* newsletter are represented in the survey results; because survey respondents self-selected, we have not calculated statistical significance for the survey results.

Although there may be a concern that parents who do not have Internet access may be less likely to respond, previous (printed) surveys have found that nearly all parents of University of Minnesota students have Internet access, either at home, at work, or both.¹ In both 2004 and 2006, we noted that there were no notable differences between responses gathered online or on paper. Those who responded by filling out a paper survey in 2006 noted concerns about Internet safety, not a lack of Internet access.

¹ The 2006 parent survey found that 100% of the respondents—including those who completed a paper survey--had Internet access. Previous surveys have indicated that Internet access increased significantly each time we did a survey, with 94 percent of parents saying they had Internet access in 2002; in all cases, parents of our students were more likely than others in their demographic group to have access to and use e-mail and Web sites.

The *University Parent* newsletter is mailed primarily to parents of “traditional students”—those who started at the University full time, as new high school graduates, and have remained full-time students. Some parents of transfer students have asked to be added to the mailing list, but those numbers are relatively small.

Results

Related to satisfaction and feelings of connection

Based on a four-point Lykert scale, parents of University students have continued to gain in their levels of satisfaction with the University's programming and communications throughout the past eleven years (see Chart 1).

Levels of Satisfaction

1995 Parent Survey	1997 Parent Survey	2002 Parent Survey	2004 Parent Survey	2006 Parent Survey
2.8165	3.0270	Programming: 3.0178 Communications: 2.9575	Programming: 3.4462 Communications: 3.5055	Programming: 3.5041 Communications: 3.6374

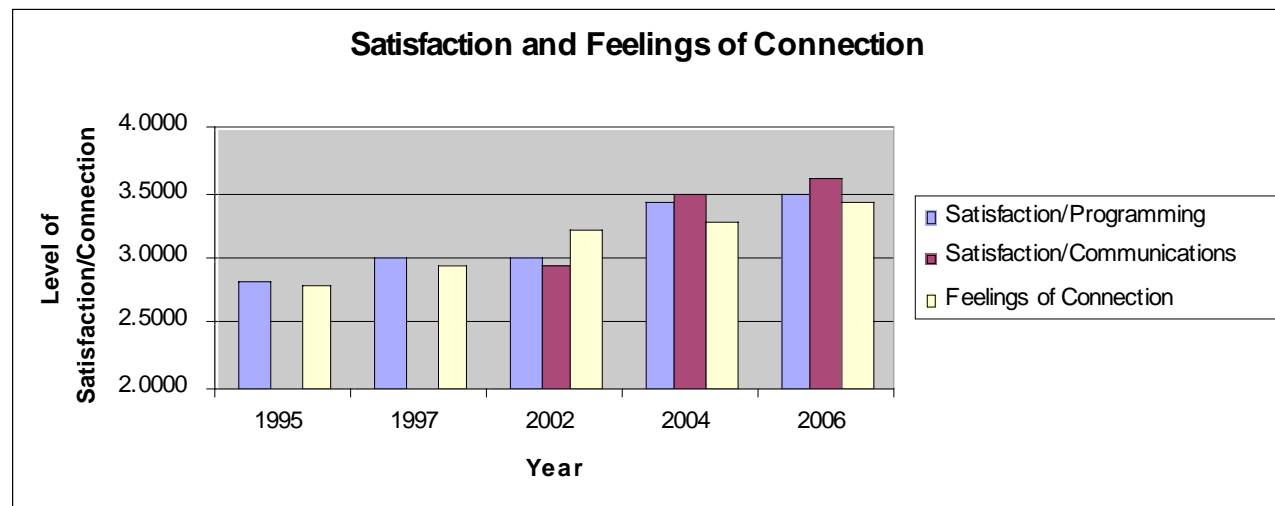
In the 2006 survey, parents who were dissatisfied with the University's parent programs and services voiced some of the same concerns about a lack of access to their students' academic and financial records that 2004 respondents mentioned. FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) information is restricted unless students give their parents permission to access their records. Parents also voiced frustration over their lack of access to the academic and career planning and counseling processes that their students participate in. Respondents who described themselves as dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the programming and services for parents also reported frustration over not just access to records, but also relating to University financial issues and their inability to influence their students' academic decision making.

Each year we have conducted the survey, we have also asked parents whether the University includes parents in the University community. Through the five surveys, there has been a continuing increase in parents' feelings of connection to the University.

Feelings of Connection

1995 Parent Survey	1997 Parent Survey	2002 Parent Survey	2004 Parent Survey	2006 Parent Survey
2.7934	2.9645	3.2174	3.2960	3.4477

Chart 1: Satisfaction with programming and communications; feelings of connection to the University



As in the past, there is a correlation between parents' involvement and their levels of satisfaction and feelings of connectedness with the University. Parents who attended parent programs and events on campus, viewed the online workshops, completed the online course, and discussed topics covered in the newsletter or e-mail newsletter reported slightly higher levels of satisfaction and connectedness with the University.

Attended Parent Orientation

Satisfaction with Programming
3.5170

Satisfaction with Communications
3.6594

Feelings of Connectedness
3.4641

Attended Parents Weekend

Satisfaction with Programming
3.5852

Satisfaction with Communications
3.7026

Feelings of Connectedness
3.5541

Discuss with Student Topics Presented in University Parent Newsletter or E-mail Newsletter

Satisfaction with Programming 3.5237	Satisfaction with Communications 3.6654	Feelings of Connectedness 3.4776
-----------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Viewed or Listened to the Video or Audio Online Workshops and Discussed Content with Student

Satisfaction with Programming 3.5570	Satisfaction with Communications 3.7421	Feelings of Connectedness 3.5438
-----------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Participated in Online Alcohol Course*Registered for Course*

Satisfaction with Programming 3.6220	Satisfaction with Communications 3.7063	Feelings of Connectedness 3.5000
-----------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Completed Course

Satisfaction with Programming 3.5313	Satisfaction with Communications 3.7419	Feelings of Connectedness 3.5313
-----------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Discussed Course Content with Student

Satisfaction with Programming 3.5818	Satisfaction with Communications 3.6727	Feelings of Connectedness 3.4364
-----------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Related to communications

Parents and students are talking to each other on a regular basis. More than two-thirds of parents, or 68.2 percent, report communicating with their student two or more times per week. Only 4.5 percent report communicating less than once a week—half the percentage (9 percent) who reported communicating with their student less than once a week in 2002. A very small percentage of respondents, 0.2 percent, report communicating with their students less than once a month.

Technology continues to make student-parent communications quick and easy; in this year's survey, 95.9 percent of parents reported that their students have a cell phone (a significant increase from 79.2 percent two years ago), and cell phone is the most common way in which parents communicate with their students, with 91 percent reporting that they frequently or very frequently use their student's

cell phone to communicate with them. E-mail is the second most popular method of communication, with 60 percent of parents using it frequently or very frequently to stay in touch with their students (down from 65 percent two years ago). Parents communicate with their students in person, as well, with 20 percent reporting that they frequently or very frequently communicate with their students via this method (down from 28 percent in 2004). Two years ago, 22 percent of parents reported that they frequently or very frequently instant messaged their students—this percentage has fallen to 16 percent overall, with 14 percent of parents of seniors and 16 percent of freshmen reporting using this method. Regular mail usage has declined as well, with only 5 percent (compared to 6 percent in 2004) frequently or very frequently using this method.

The decline in instant message, e-mail, in-person, and regular mail communication can probably be attributed to the growing number of students with cell phones and the availability of inexpensive cell phone calling plans, often offering long distance calling for no extra charge. It is notable that although students and parents are talking to each other on cell phones, 85 percent of parents said that they rarely or never use a regular landline phone to communicate with their student, and only 9 percent said they frequently or very frequently use this method.

Parents are coming to campus more often, with 25.7 percent visiting once a month or more, as compared to 23.7 percent in 2004 and 19 percent in 2002.

We asked parents to compare their own involvement and communication with their college student to the involvement and communication their own parents demonstrated with them while they were in college, and the results were consistent with the survey responses received in 2004. The majority of respondents—78.6 percent—described themselves as more involved or much more involved than their parents had been. Nearly 10 percent believed that their involvement was comparable to what their parents had been. A few respondents, 3.1 percent, described themselves as less or much less involved than their own parents had been. For 7.9 percent of the respondents, the question was not applicable (perhaps because they did not attend college or their parents were not around when they went to college).

Related to programs and services

For the most part, parents are increasingly aware of the programs and services the University makes available to them. The following table shows the changes in parents' knowledge of the following services.

Table 1: Question—Please indicate whether you are aware of the following programs and services for parents. (Percentage indicates those who answered yes.)

Program/Service	Parent Survey 2002	Parent Survey 2004	Parent Survey 2006
Parent Orientation	88%	97%	99%
Parents Weekend	76 %	97%	97%
University Parent Web site	48%	90%	95%
Parent e-mail alert list	35%	76%	73%
Parent Program director	27%	51%	60%
Video and audio workshops online	n/a*	n/a*	72% **
Online alcohol course for parents	n/a*	n/a*	90% **

*The video and audio workshops on the Parent Web site and the online alcohol course for parents have been added to the Parent Program since the 2004 survey was conducted, so parents were not asked about them in surveys prior to this year.

**The survey questions about the video and audio workshops and the online alcohol course were phrased a bit differently than the questions about the first five programs and services. Parents were asked if they had viewed the video or audio workshops, and the three workshops (Housing, Mental Health, and Learning Abroad) were listed separately, with respondents able to answer “yes” or “no” about each separate video. The final item in that question was “I am not aware of the workshops mentioned”; 28 percent replied “yes” to this question, and 72 percent replied “no”. In the question about the online alcohol course, parents were asked whether they had registered for it. About 15 percent replied “yes”, and 75 percent “no”; 10 percent of respondents chose “I am not aware of the course mentioned”. For the purpose of creating the table above, we have assumed that respondents who did not reply that they were unaware of a program or service, were, in fact, aware of it.

In addition to being increasingly aware of the Parent Orientation program, respondents to the 2006 parent survey are more likely to have attended Parent Orientation when their students were freshmen. In this year's survey, 90.5 percent of respondents reported attending Orientation, in comparison to 83.7 percent in 2004 and 69 percent in 2002. We know, however, that the percentage of parents attending Parent Orientation has not reached that level.

Related to parent expectations

One trend present over the past few surveys is that parents are growing less likely to expect their student to work and to contribute towards paying their own expenses. In 2002, 24 percent of respondents said that their student did not work, and in 2004, that percentage grew to 35.6. This year, it holds relatively steady at 36.7, or over one-third of respondents. More than half the parents of freshmen, or 57.2 percent, said that their student does not work, up slightly from 54.6 percent in 2004. The percentage of seniors whose parents reported that they do not work was 18.9 percent in 2006, compared to 11.9 percent in 2004.

As the cost of tuition has increased during the past several years, parents' expectations have decreased regarding the percentage of educational expenses their student will contribute. In 2002, 51 percent expected their student to contribute 25 percent or less of their expenses; in 2004 57.9 percent said their student would contribute a quarter or less of their expenses; and in 2006, the number rose to 59.4 percent who expected their student to contribute a quarter or less of their expenses.

Perhaps related to their expectations about their students working and contributing towards their educational expenses, parents are increasingly expecting their students to graduate in a shorter time. Just four years ago, 58 percent of survey respondents expected their students to graduate in four years or less. In 2004, that was the expectation for 76.3 percent of parents; this year finds 78.6 percent of parents expecting their students to graduate in four years or less. More than 99 percent believe that their student will graduate in five years or less (less than four years, 8.5 percent; four years, 70.1 percent; five years, 20.6 percent; and more than five years, 0.8 percent). While 9 percent of survey respondents four years ago expected their students to take more than five years to graduate, only 1.4 percent of 2004 respondents and 0.8 percent of this year's survey takers had that expectation. It should be noted that the University has made a significant effort in the past few years to promote to students and parents the benefits of graduating in four years.

Similar to what we found in 2004, more than two-thirds of parents, 67.6 percent, say that it is very important for their student to graduate in four or five years; 23.5 said that it was somewhat important; 7.8 percent said that other factors are more important; and 1.2 percent said it is not at all important.

Graduation expectations correlate to parents' attitudes about the university. The parents whose students are taking or are expected to take more than five years to graduate are much less satisfied with parent communications, programs, and services and feel less connected to the University community. Overall, only 1.6 percent of respondents to the survey reported themselves dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the University's parent communications, while 28.6 percent of parents of students taking more than five years to graduate said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The dissatisfied/very dissatisfied rate among parents whose students are

taking more than five years to graduate is also 28.6 percent, compared to 1.8 percent of parents overall. Asked whether they agreed that the University includes parents in the campus community, 42.9 percent disagreed or disagreed strongly, compared with 2.8 of all respondents.

About parent/student concerns

As in 2004, parents were asked about topics of concern to parents, and topics on which their student has requested their assistance or advice. Again, as in 2004, the topics of greatest concern for parents as well as for their students change during the course of the students' college careers. The table below indicates the greatest concerns for parents overall, in order of ranking, and a side-by-side breakdown for parents of freshmen and seniors:

Table 2: Question: This year, what has been your greatest concern regarding your student?

All Parents	Freshmen	Seniors
Health and Safety 22.7%	Health and Safety 27.8%	Career Planning 42.3%
Academics 19.8%	Academics 25.4%	Finances 16.1%
Career Planning 18%	Finances 11.3%	Health and Safety 12.8%
Finances 13.9%	Personal Relationships 8.9%	None 7.4%
Personal Relationships 7%	Career Planning and None (tied) 5.8%	Academics 6.7%
None 5.6%		Personal Relationships 4%
Involvement Opportunities 2.3%	Involvement Opportunities 4.3%	Involvement Opportunities (none)
Other 10.5%	Other 10.7%	Other 10.7%

Issues of health and safety dominate respondents' concerns during their students' first years on campus. Health and safety is ranked the number one issue by 27.8 percent of the parents of freshmen, and remains the number one concern for 24 percent of the parents of sophomores. In the students' junior year, health and safety concerns remain important (though the top spot is taken over by career planning), still cited by 20.1 percent of parents as their greatest concern, but in the senior year health and safety issues are the top concern for only 12.8 percent of parents.

Academics, another area of top concern for parents of freshmen, follows a similar trajectory. Cited as the greatest concern for 25.4 percent of parents of freshmen and 23.1 percent of parents of sophomores, by junior year, parents seem more comfortable that their

students have this area of their life handled. Only 15.1 percent of the parents of juniors and 6.7 percent of the parents of seniors cite academics as their top concern.

The area that changes most significantly as a topic of parental concern during students' college careers is career planning. Only 5.8 percent of parents of freshmen and 15.7 percent of parents of sophomores cite career planning as their top concern. By the students' junior year, this is the area of greatest concern for 23 percent of parents, and by the time students have reached their senior year, 42.3 percent of parents list career planning as their number one concern.

As in 2004, parental concerns about finances seem to bounce around somewhat from year to year. Only 11.3 percent of parents of freshmen and 13.5 percent of parents of sophomores rank finances as their number one concern (compared to 18.3 percent of parents of freshmen and 14.4 percent of parents of sophomores in 2004). During the junior year, this number jumps to 18.7 percent, then falls back to 16.1 percent of parents of seniors reporting finances as their top concern. It is notable that the University's Orientation programming began addressing finances more comprehensively in the summer of 2005, including providing financial aid staff at Orientation to review students' aid packages with parents and students. This may account for the decline in the percentage of parents of freshmen who ranked finances as their number one concern—from 18.3 percent in 2004 to 11.3 percent in 2006

Although finances are not the top concern for parents, it is the issue on which students most often request their parents' assistance or advice.

Table 3: This year, on what topic has your student most requested your assistance or advice?

All Parents	Freshmen	Seniors
Finances 30.6%	Finances 26.5%	Career Planning 40.5%
Career Planning 19.7%	Academics 19.1%	Finances 30.4%
Academics 12.5%	Career Planning 11.4%	Academics 6.8%
None 9.2%	Health and Safety and None (tied) 9.9%	Health and Safety 6.1%
Health and Safety 8.2%		Personal Relationships 5.4%
Personal Relationships 7.3%	Personal Relationships 8.6%	None 3.4%
Involvement Opportunities 1.6%	Involvement Opportunities 2.5%	Involvement Opportunities (none)
Other 10.8%	Other 12%	Other 7.4%

During freshman year, questions about finances are the top concern for more than a quarter, or 26.5 percent, of students, according to their parents. The number of parents reporting that finances are the number one topic of conversation for their students hits a peak of 36.7 percent in the sophomore year, then falls back to 29.5 percent and 30.4 percent for the junior and senior years, respectively. A possible explanation for this rise and fall may be the growing importance of career planning during the junior and senior years..

As we saw with the parents' own concerns, parents report that during their students' college careers, students' concerns about career planning grows steadily from year to year. During students' first year, career planning is the number one topic on which 11.4 percent ask their parents for advice or assistance. Parents of sophomores report career planning is the top concern for 15.7 percent of students, and for parents of juniors, the number rises to 23 percent. By their senior year, students are on the same page as their parents, with 40.5 percent of parents of seniors reporting career planning as the topic their students ask them about most (by comparison, career planning is the top concern of 42.3 percent of the parents of seniors).

Comparing Table 3 to Table 2, we can see that although parents and students share some concerns, such as an increasing emphasis on career planning during the junior and senior year, their concerns are not identical. While parents' foremost concern during the first two years is for their students' health and safety, students are not asking for much advice or assistance in this area. Health and safety questions for parents reach their peak early in the students' college careers, with 9.9 percent of parents of freshmen reporting that this is the topic their students ask them about most. By senior year, that number has fallen to 6.1 percent.

Questions about personal relationships follow a similar trajectory. While 8.6 percent of parents of freshmen report that their students ask them most about personal relationships, by the time they are seniors, it is the most frequently discussed topic for only 5.4 percent.

At no stage during the students' college career is finding opportunities for involvement the top concern for many parents or students. The peak for both seems to be during the students' freshman year, when for 4.3 percent of parents and 2.5 percent of students it is the parents' strongest concern and the topic on which the students' most ask for help or advice.

About student development expectations

The survey asked parents about their expectations related to college student development over the course of the college years.

Table 4: Beliefs about student development during college career

	All Parents	Parents of Freshmen	Parents of Sophomores	Parents of Juniors	Parents of Seniors
Gradual development across all years	47%	42%	44.6%	54.7%	55%
First year most significant	27.8%	36.4%	29.5%	16.5%	16.8%
Later years most significant	14.7%	10%	17.4%	18.7%	16.8%

The survey shows that nearly half of all parents believe that students develop gradually across the years, while more than a quarter of parents believe that the most significant development occurs during the first year. By separating the parents by their students' year in college, we can see the gradual evolution of parents' beliefs. The majority of parents of freshmen, 42 percent, believe that development is gradual across all the years of college. That belief seemed to strengthen gradually for parents as their students progressed through college, as 44.6 percent of sophomores' parents, 54.7 percent of juniors' parents, and 55 percent of seniors' parents shared this opinion.

On the other hand, more than one third (36.4 percent) of parents of freshmen believe that the most significant student development occurs during the first year. That belief weakened over time, with only 29.5 percent of parents of sophomores choosing that option, and by the junior and senior year, only 16.5 and 16.8 percent of parents, respectively, believe that the most significant development occurs during freshman year. The idea that the later years are the most significant ones in student development is only held by 10 percent of the parents of freshmen; in the later years the numbers holding that belief remained stable, with 17.4 percent, 18.7 percent, and 16.8 percent of parents of sophomores, juniors, and seniors, respectively, reporting holding that view.

These findings contrast with those of 2004, when parents of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors followed similar trends as this year, but only 35.3 percent of parents of seniors reported seeing gradual development across the years, 32.9 reported most changes occurring during the first year, and 28.2 percent reporting the most changes occurred closer to graduation.

About demographics

As in 2004, Wisconsin parents are by far the most satisfied with the University of Minnesota. Among all respondents, 65.9 percent indicated that they were very satisfied with communications for parents; 74.5 percent of Wisconsin residents reported that they were very satisfied, as compared to 59 percent of Twin Cities residents and 60.7 percent of residents of Greater Minnesota. Overall, 52.7 percent of parents were very satisfied with programs and services offered for parents; 58.7 percent of Wisconsin parents reported that they were very satisfied, as compared to 46.8 percent of Twin Cities residents and 43.3 percent of Greater Minnesota residents. When asked if they agreed with the statement that the University includes parents in the campus community, 48.1 percent of parents strongly agreed; that number for Wisconsin parents was 55.5 percent, compared to 41.1 percent for Twin Cities residents and 40.4 percent for Greater Minnesota residents.

Table 5: Satisfaction rates by demographic group (tracking “very satisfied” responses)

	All respondents	Wisconsin residents	Twin Cities residents	Greater Minnesota residents
Very satisfied with communications for parents	65.9%	74.5%	59.0%	60.7%
Very satisfied with programs and services for parents	52.7%	58.7%	46.8%	43.3%
Strongly agrees that the University includes parents in community	48.1%	55.5%	41.1%	40.4%

Wisconsin parents also reported lower rates of dissatisfaction with the University. While overall, 1.6 percent of respondents said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the U’s communications with parents, only 0.9 percent of Wisconsin residents reported feeling this dissatisfaction. Twin Cities residents were also less dissatisfied than the average; only 1.2 percent were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Greater Minnesota residents, on the other hand, were more than twice as dissatisfied as the average, with 3.6 percent reporting themselves dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with communications. Wisconsin residents reported half the dissatisfied/very dissatisfied rate (0.9 percent) with programs and services for parents than parents overall reported (1.8 percent). Twin Cities residents also reported a slightly lower dissatisfied/very dissatisfied rating than the average, 1.6 percent. The rate for out state Minnesotans, however, was nearly double the rate for all parents, 3.5 percent. When asked whether they agree with the statement that the University includes parents in the campus community, 2.8 percent of all parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement; only 1.2

percent of Wisconsin residents disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. Here, Twin Cities residents responded more similarly to parents from Greater Minnesota, with 4.0 and 4.3 percent of those two groups disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with that statement.

Table 6: Dissatisfaction rates by demographic group

	All respondents	Wisconsin residents	Twin Cities residents	Greater Minnesota residents
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with communications for parents	1.6%	0.9%	1.2%	3.6%
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with programs and services for parents	1.8%	0.9%	1.6%	3.5%
Disagrees/strongly disagrees that the University includes parents in community	2.8%	1.2%	4.0%	4.3%

Compared to 2004, University of Minnesota alumni reported significantly higher satisfaction with the University (Chart 2). Additionally, in the 2006 survey, alumni were more satisfied overall with the University's programs and services than respondents were as a whole (Chart 3).

As Chart 2 indicates, two-thirds, or 66.7 percent, of alumni reported themselves very satisfied with communications for parents, compared to only 46.7 percent in 2004. The number of alumni reporting themselves very satisfied with programs and services in 2006 are also higher—57.7 percent compared to 40 percent. Nearly half, or 49.5 percent, of alumni strongly agreed that the U includes parents in the campus community, an improvement over 23.3 percent in 2004.

Chart 2: Changes in alumni satisfaction and feelings of connectedness, 2004-2006

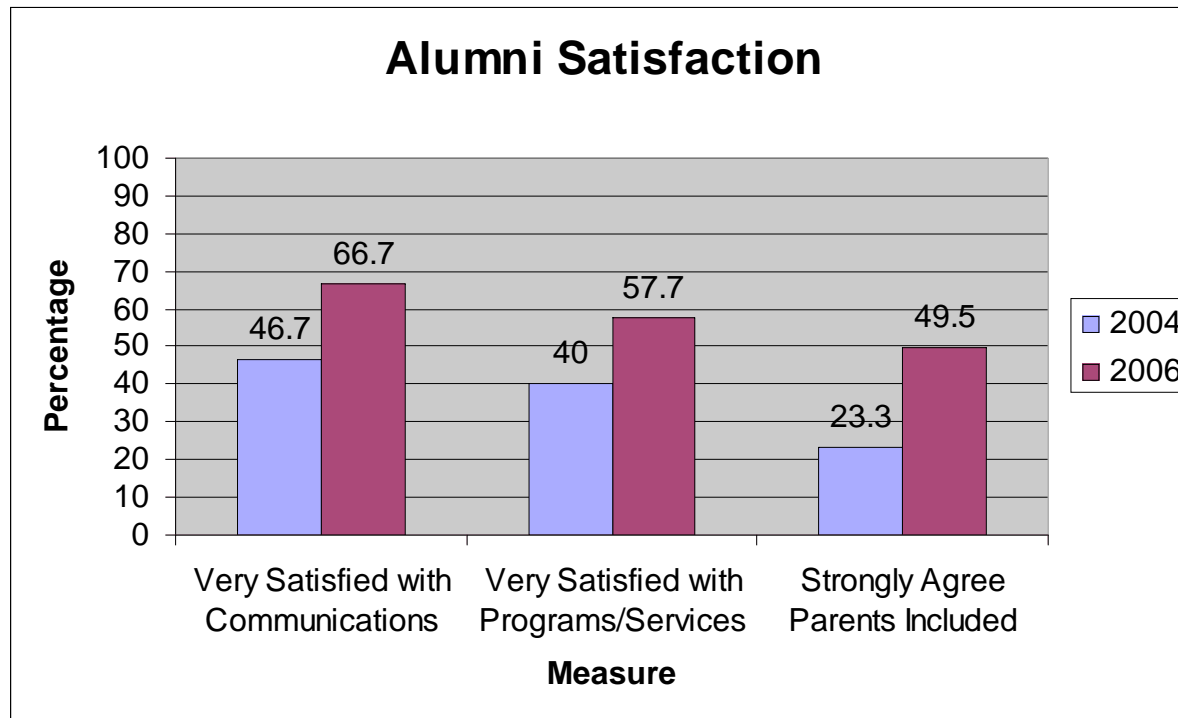
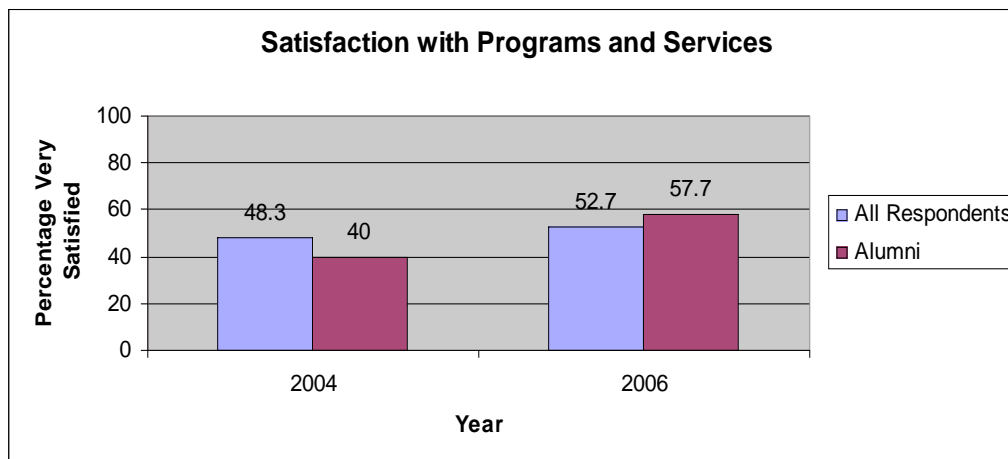


Chart 3 illustrates that the number of alumni reporting themselves very satisfied with the University's programs and services in 2006 is higher than the percentage of all respondents reporting themselves very satisfied.

Chart 3: Satisfaction with programs and services by demographic group



University alumni and Twin Cities residents (a group that often overlaps—70.9 percent of those who identified themselves as alumni live in the Twin Cities) continue to be less likely than other respondents to attend Parent Orientation. While 90.5 percent of all parents who responded to the survey said that they had attended Parent Orientation, only 82.6 percent of Twin Cities parents did (also 82.6 of alumni attended Parent Orientation). While this seems counterintuitive—it would obviously be easier for Twin Cities residents to attend Orientation as they wouldn't need to travel or stay overnight—Twin Cities parents and alumni may feel more familiar with the University and may be less likely to feel it is necessary to attend an Orientation. Twin Cities parents may also believe that if questions or problems arise once their student has begun their freshmen year, they will be able to easily help their student since they are geographically close by. Parent comments seem to confirm this explanation. When asked why they did not attend Orientation, typical responses were “[w]e live in the Twin Cities and know the University fairly well” and “I felt that I know how to get the info I needed. We are right here in the Twin City area, so I could keep in close contact.”

Several other Twin Cities parents indicated that they and their students did not attend Orientation because the student had taken PSEO (Post Secondary Enrollment Option) courses in high school. A typical comment: “My daughter was a PSEO student in high school and so was considered a transfer student for Orientation purposes. I was somewhat disappointed but not devastated to learn that meant there was no Orientation for me.” In this survey, only Twin Cities parents said that their students had been PSEO students, so this might have contributed to the lower overall rate of Orientation attendance among Twin Cities parents. The higher rate of disagreement with the statement about the University including parents in the campus community may stem in part from parents not attending Parent Orientation—one of the primary ways in which the University brings parents into the campus community to discuss how they can help their students succeed.

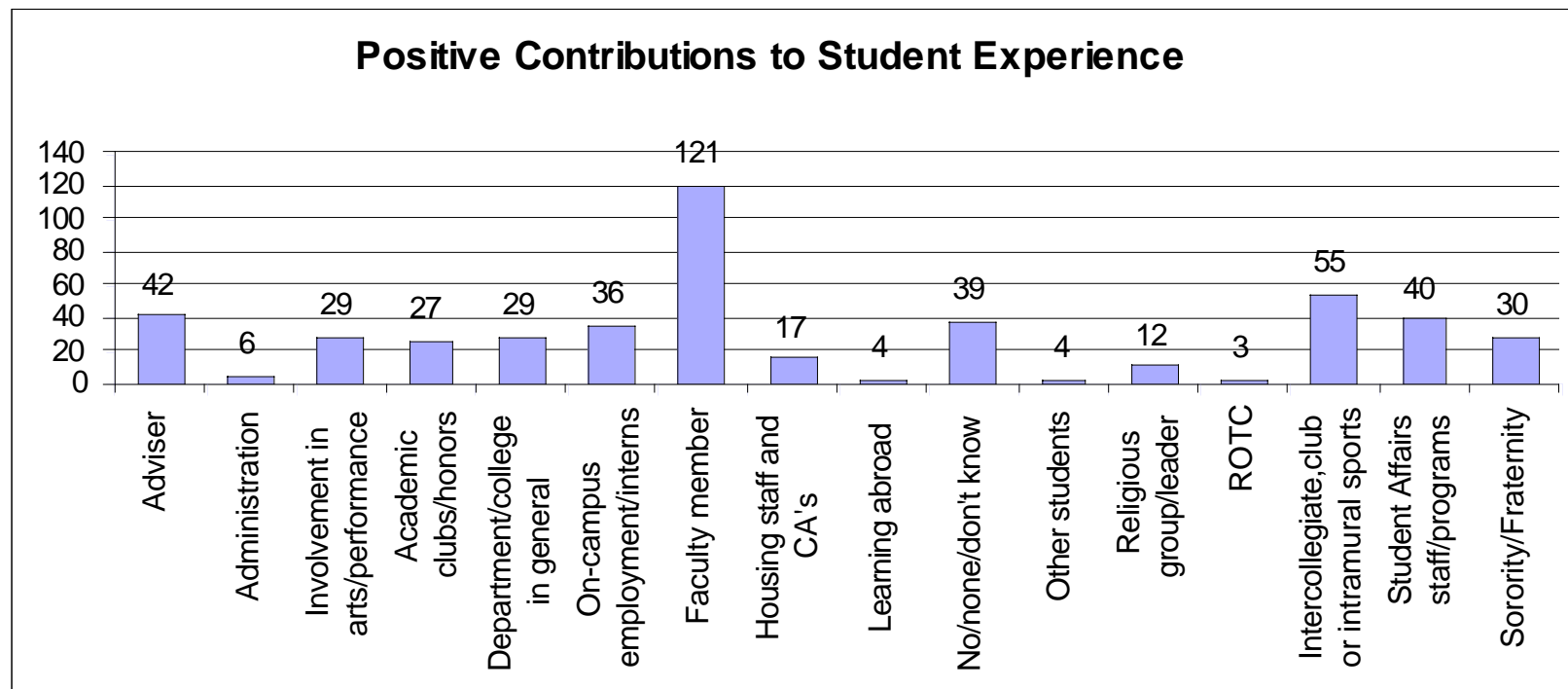
This does not explain why parents from Greater Minnesota are more dissatisfied with the University. Minnesota parents from outside the metro area attend Orientation in numbers slightly greater than the average, 91.5 percent as compared to 90.5 percent.

Related to positive influences on students

The 2006 survey asked parents whether there was a faculty member, staff member, activity, or organization that had made a particularly positive contribution to their students’ experience at the University of Minnesota, and if so, asked them to describe that positive influence.

Nearly 500 parents responded to this question, and they offered a wide range of comments on faculty and staff members, activities, and organizations. The responses have been divided into 16 categories, which are represented on Chart 4 below, showing the number of responses that fit into each category. After the chart, the categories are further defined with parent comments to illustrate the type of response represented. The 16 categories can be largely grouped into two predominant influences: learning experiences inside and outside the classroom. Responses about faculty members, advisers, academic clubs and departments, and Learning Abroad—learning experiences inside the classroom—comprised 45.1 percent of the comments. Responses citing involvement in arts and athletics, on-campus employment, campus organizations and groups including sororities and fraternities—learning experiences outside the classroom—comprised 45.7 percent of the comments (responses citing the University’s administration as an influence were not counted in either category, nor did “I don’t know” or “not that I am aware of” responses).

Chart 4: People and organizations that made a positive contribution to respondents' students' experience



The category with the most responses is faculty members; the 121 comments citing faculty members as particularly positive influences total nearly a quarter of the total 494 parent comments at 24.5 percent. Parents did not always mention specific faculty names; comments such as

“Enjoyed French Professors” and “My student has made positive comments about a large percentage of the faculty” were common.

Other parents had more specific information about faculty and the ways in which they had contributed to their students (names have been removed):

“He had XXX XXXXXX for writing class fall semester and really bonded with her. He registered for her class spring semester for his second writing class. She’s given him great guidance and feedback, since he was considering a Journalism major.”

“XXX XXXXXX, Intro to Psychology professor, really went out of her way to help our son.”

Advisers are another frequently cited (42 comments or 8.5 percent) source of positive contributions to students’ experiences, and are often mentioned as being especially helpful when students are making unexpected changes to their plans or their programs:

“XXX XXXX from IT: XXX really did a great job counseling my daughter; especially when she decided to change her entire schedule around a month before school started.”

“XXX XXXXXX was my daughter’s adviser for COAFES Applied Econ major. She made the choice to switch to CALS and he helped her recognize the importance of doing what she wanted to do, not what she thought others expected of her. He was an outstanding adviser for her as a freshman and I hope he realizes how much he helped her define her career.”

Some respondents (29 comments or 5.9 percent) praised their students’ college or department in general, not identifying particular professors or activities as a single influence:

“Our son is in the Carlson school, and the school overall has done a great job of supporting the new freshmen as a group. Made it seem more like a small college within the big university. Having the students together in the Leadership house in the dorm has been a plus. I don’t recall names, but I know that several faculty, especially the discussion group faculty, have been a good resource beyond the subject matter and about class and career options in general.”

“From what I hear, the entire Physics department has been great. XXXX started as a Math major; hated Physics. Took her first course, and decided to double-major. Now, she has come full circle—her graduate work will be in Physics. They must be doing something right.”

Others (27 comments or 5.5 percent) have singled out academic clubs or Honors programs as beneficial to their students:

“I think the honors program/classes format helped my child in the most positive way. She was able to meet students of similar interest to start out for her Freshman year.”

“My daughter is a member of AIAS and she has made some nice friends within that organization.”

A few parents (6 comments or 1.2 percent) said that the University administration and its campus-wide services were particularly helpful to their students:

“Disabilities Services,” “Director of Admissions,” and “the financial aid department has been very helpful with our twin girls,” are representative of the comments received in this category.

Involvement in the arts and performing groups garnered 29 comments (5.9 percent); participation in the marching band was frequently mentioned:

“The U Band has been my son’s first group of friends.”

“My son is in the marching band and has had an extremely wonderful time being a part of that. He also participates in the pep band. Being a part of any group gives you opportunities to make life-long friends, as you spend a lot of time with each other.”

Learning abroad was named by 4 respondents (0.8 percent):

“Study Abroad (Mexico last summer, Venezuela next fall semester). Excellent!!”

The positive experience of on-campus employment, internships, or volunteering was mentioned by 36 parents, or 7.3 percent. Employment in Recreation Center facilities was most often mentioned:

“...perhaps her supervisors at work. She works at the pool in the rec center,” and “working at the St. Paul climbing gym” are two of many examples.

“Her being able to volunteer at the Raptor Center in St. Paul.”

“His job at the Weisman art museum has been a real positive thing especially with the people he has met there and their flexibility.”

Several (17 comments or 3.4 percent) parents also mentioned that Housing and Residential Life staff and CA's had made particularly strong contributions to their students' college experience:

“Dorm room CA's have done an excellent job making someone from out-of-state feel welcome and explaining how to get answers to concerns.”

Participation in athletics, whether at the intercollegiate, club, or intramural level, was listed by many (55 comments or 11.1 percent) parents as making an important contribution to their students' experience:

“XXX XXX has been a wonderful addition to our family as XXX's coach/part-time father. Everyone in the system related to Bierman/Athletics has been amazing to work with from Dr. XXX, to trainers, advisers, and assistant coaches.”

“The fencing club has been a big help in assisting my student to become a member of the university community. She has traveled to Northwestern, Purdue, and Notre Dame to attend fencing tournaments. She has learned to repair weapons and has had fun teaching other students. Teaching fencing is a new experience because the majority of the fencers in her club at home have been at it for years; some were even Olympic fencers.”

Student affairs personnel and programs were also frequently (40 comments or 8.1 percent) mentioned by parents; the Parent Program director was mentioned specifically several times, as were student organizations:

“Marj Savage has been highly influential in our student's life and in our lives as parents. Almost a mother hen to mother. Commuter Connection has been a valuable resource and contact place for our son.”

“Our son is involved in debate and Republicans on Campus—he even ran for student office last year—it all helps XXX develop into who he is—he has gotten to travel to Harvard and soon Yale for debate tournaments and got to debate with the wrestling coach.”

Sororities and fraternities were also mentioned (30 comments or 6.1 percent) as making positive contributions to students' experience of the University:

“My son joined Sigma Chi Fraternity. He has enjoyed it and made lots of good friends already. He got his job as a result of being part of the fraternity.”

“Her sorority. We saw her become much more outgoing and her leadership skills have blossomed. She is now president as a sophomore. We are proud of her.”

Religious leaders and groups, particularly Campus Crusade for Christ, garnered several (12 comments or 2.4 percent) mentions:

“Campus Crusade has been wonderful for her.”

“Religious counselors (non-university) and conservative groups. The religious counselors helped to overcome the University of Minnesota support and emphasis on homosexual lifestyles.”

Three parents (0.6 percent) mentioned the positive effect on their students of belonging to ROTC:

“My son is attending the U with a Naval ROTC scholarship. Several of the officers in his unit have had major influences on his professional and academic development.”

Four (0.8 percent) respondents listed another student, often the student’s roommate, as the most significant positive influence. And 39 parents (7.9 percent) either said there was no significant positive influence, or if there was, that they could not identify it:

“There probably is but I don’t know names,” and “It’s difficult to make those connects in such a huge university” were typical responses.

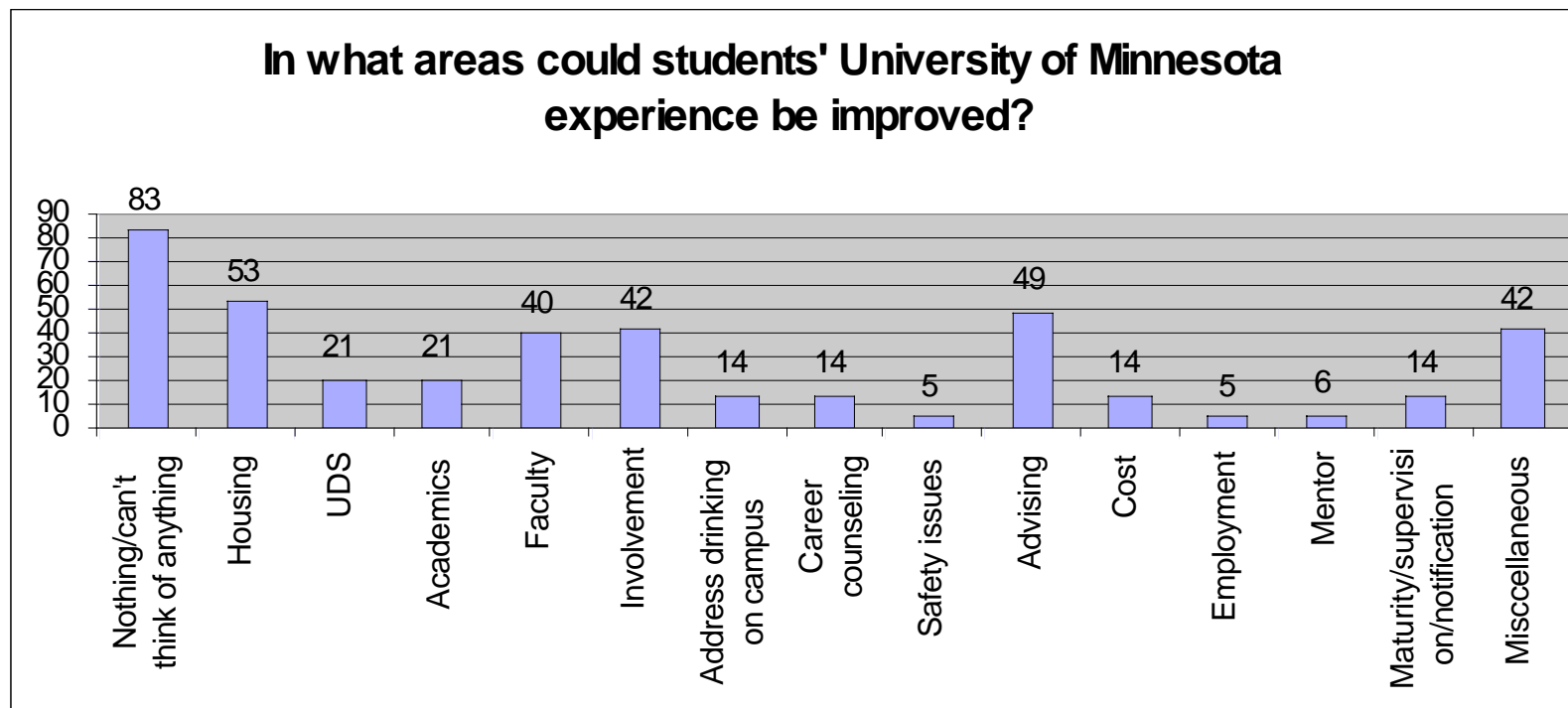
“NO—I have been totally disgusted with the few dealings I have had with certain professors at the U. I won’t name names, but trust me, I could.”

Related to what could have improved their students’ experience

The survey also asked parents whether there was something that would have improved their students’ experience at the University of Minnesota, and, if so, asked them to describe it.

Nearly half of the survey respondents, or 431 parents, commented on this question. The comments have been divided into 15 categories, as represented on Chart 5 below. Below the chart the categories are defined for clarity, and representative quotes from each are printed.

Chart 5: How students' experiences of the University of Minnesota could have been improved?



By far the largest number of responses (83) to the question indicated that the University could not do anything to improve upon the student's experience. Many indicated that the experience has been overwhelmingly positive; others noted that all the resources are available, and it is the individual student's responsibility to make use of them. Representative comments:

"I believe you offer a complete and wide range of services to students. The school and parents can make the student aware, but I believe it is up to the student to take advantage of them."

“Our experience has been wonderful. My student has found out that a large campus offers many opportunities he would not have had available had he attended a smaller college. Everything is there that he needs and not a day goes by when there is ‘nothing’ to do!”

Among areas in which improvement could be made, however, housing was a top concern (53 responses). Students having problems with their roommates and finding it difficult to get mediation or a room change was mentioned several times. Parents also mentioned that the rooms were crowded and that the residence halls were noisy and difficult to study in. Students had difficulty getting to know people and making friends, especially freshmen placed in single rooms or in residence halls that had a lot of upperclassmen. Some comments:

“Improvement in the dormitory. The room was extremely small and made it very difficult to have a positive study atmosphere.”

“She had roommate problems early in the first semester. After numerous contacts with her CA and housing, it was finally resolved the day before she left for semester break and she was assigned a new room. In the meantime, she spent many nights in friends’ rooms because it was unbearable in her room with her roommate and her partying friends.”

“Housing is excellent, but for a freshman quite isolating. No apparent interaction among residents in Wilkins and with a shy person, an RA would be very helpful.”

Improvements to UDS’s offerings was cited by 21 respondents as one way the University could enhance their students’ experience here. Complaints covered the hours kept by the dining facilities, the offerings, and the meals. Here are some representative responses:

“Changing the meal plan to where the students buy what they eat—comparable to what is done at UW-Madison. This would be healthier (students would not overeat just because they paid for it), more fair (students who do not eat as much would not be paying for other students) and it would provide better feedback on what items students like and which ones they don’t. It would also help if there was more local and organic produce. My daughter continues to be amazed at the apples from Washington State, given the ground breaking work U of M has done on apple varieties.”

“The operating hours for the dining halls have been a constant concern. It is one of the reasons he is moving off campus next year. On days that he has early a.m. classes, he makes it to breakfast at approximately 9:55 when they are closing, and on weekends, to stop serving meals at 7 p.m. makes it difficult for him to get an evening meal if he works or is studying and loses track of time. It seems that a campus as large as the U of M should have at least one dining hall open around the clock or at least from 7 a.m. until midnight every day the students are on campus.”

Another recurring theme for parents (42 responses) was concern about their students’ lack of involvement in campus groups and activities, not only because they feel that the involvement would have been beneficial in its own right, but also because their students have not formed many close relationships at the University:

“Nothing that I could say the University needed to do; he just needed to have a job, or be more involved with something his freshman year...That was up to him; UMN offers so much, but maybe that was the problem for him at the time? Too much, too big? Maybe that is what you can do—continue to stress that being part of some organized activity/club makes a big campus smaller!”

“More successful opportunities to develop friendships with other students. Several campus clubs/activities have not made enough of an effort to make new members welcome.”

Parents also suggested (14 responses) that their students’ experience could be improved by the University doing more to curb drinking and the use of marijuana on campus, particularly in the residence halls.

“I was very disappointed because there seemed to be no rules in the dorm. Other floors would complain that the floor my daughter was on was making too much noise. I got the impression that if a student wanted to drink, do drugs, and have sex, the University was very supportive, but if she wanted to study, she was being unreasonable. My daughter said the Resident advisers paid no attention to anything that happened on the floor. I felt guilty that I sent my daughter to an unsafe place.”
“Greater emphasis on social activities that do not involve drinking.”

Parents also made a number of suggestions (21 comments) related to their students' academic programs, most of which are too specific to reproduce here, but general comments included the following:

“Easier way for student to monitor personal progress and standing in classes. This was easy to obtain online in high school; difficult at the U.”

“The biggest struggle my daughter is having is academic. She has always been a strong student, but having your grade rest solely on a handful of tests has been a tough transition for her.”

One of the most frequent comments was that students find non-native speakers of English difficult to understand as teachers or teaching assistants. Of the 40 suggestions pertaining to faculty, most made this complaint. Other comments registered students' and parents' frustration with the students' perceived lack of access to faculty members, or failure to make a connection with them:

“Having TA's who can speak the English language proficiently so that the students can actually understand them. It seems to me with all the \$\$ we pay for this education, it shouldn't be unreasonable to expect to have TA's who can clearly speak English!!!! That has been a huge stumbling block for both of our children and their experience with the U of M.”

“I do wish that both my sons had more meaningful connection with their professors. They have liked some professors, but aren't connected, personally, with them.”

Parents made 49 comments about advising, with most commenting that their students' advisers could have offered more help or direction:

“Very poor counselor, who didn't know the first thing about PSEO and didn't understand what to do about her credits...my daughter did all of it...she needed more information on what the various business degrees really were...never got this and has her degree.”

“More involvement in the early years to help guide the student.”

A few parents commented that lower tuition would have improved their students' experience at the University:

“Less tuition, less work time equals more U experience.”

Several parents said that their students’ experience would have been improved if their student were more mature, if they were better supervised, or if the parent were notified when students were in trouble academically, financially, or in some other way:

“Need for more maturity regarding finances, ability to ‘look ahead.’ Our son definitely lives ‘day-to-day.’”

“Being in charge of himself.”

“I know it is the ‘real world’ and she should be old enough and mature enough to take care of business, but she did extremely poorly first semester, and seems to be improving only very slightly—I hate to think she has wasted a year. Some type of direct intervention would have been appreciated.

Analysis

One of the most obvious correlations is that those who read or viewed the University's communications for parents, and those who attended special parent programming or used parent services, had higher satisfaction rates and felt more connected to the University than parents who did not. Parents who attended Parent Orientation or Parents Weekend, shared content from the e-mail or print newsletter with their student, viewed or listened to the online workshops and discussed the content with their student, or participated in the online alcohol course, all reported higher satisfaction and connectedness rates than parents who did not.

Parents who attend Parent Orientation report higher satisfaction and connectedness rates than those who do not. Of course, parents who attend Orientation are likely to be the most concerned and involved with their student's education, thus more open to reading the communications and using the services the University offers to them. Respondent comments about Orientation are overwhelmingly positive, however, indicating that the program provides a good experience for parents. Judging from their comments, most of the parents who did not attend Parent Orientation fall into three categories: those who lived too far away, those who lived in the Twin Cities and felt they already knew what they needed to know about the University, and those whose students were transfer or PSEO students.

While parents who attended Parent Orientation report higher levels of satisfaction and connectedness than parents who did not attend, parents who also attended Parents Weekend or made use of information in the Parent e-mail or print newsletter, viewed or listened to the online workshops, or registered for the online alcohol course for parents register even higher levels of satisfaction and connectedness. Parents who signed up for the online alcohol course or attended Parents Weekend reported themselves the most satisfied with the University's programming for parents. Parents who viewed or listened to the University's online workshops—which addressed such issues as off-campus housing, student mental health, and learning abroad—reported the highest satisfaction with the University's communications, followed closely by those who completed the alcohol course. Parents who attended Parents Weekend reported the greatest feelings of connection to the University community, followed by parents who used the online workshops. This may indicate that after Orientation, parents want the University to continue to offer them information and ways to stay connected to the campus. Or, again, it may be that the most committed and involved parents are the ones who participate in the programming for parents.

Although the number of parents who expressed dissatisfaction with the University's communications, there are some common factors to note among this group:

- They are less likely to have attended Parent Orientation than the respondents as a whole: only 76.9 percent of dissatisfied parents attended Parent Orientation, compared to 90.5 percent of all respondents.

- They are much less likely to make use of the parent e-mail newsletter—35.7 percent are not even aware of the e-mail newsletter, compared to only 4.6 percent of all respondents. Only 42.9 percent of them read all or most of the e-mail newsletter, in contrast to 84.2 percent of all respondents. They are also less likely to have discussed the contents of the print or e-mail newsletter with their students—71.4 percent versus 91.6 percent of all respondents.
- They are likely to be from Greater Minnesota. While only 1.6 and 1.8 percent of respondents reported themselves to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with communications for parents or programs and services for parents, respectively, the percentages for residents of Greater Minnesota were roughly twice that, at 3.6 and 3.5 percent, respectively. Although Twin Cities residents were slightly more satisfied with communications and programming than all respondents, at 1.2 and 1.6 percent, they felt less connected to the University community. While 2.8 percent of respondents overall disagreed or disagreed strongly that the University includes parents in the campus community, 4.0 percent of Twin Cities residents (and 4.3 percent of Greater Minnesota residents) disagreed or disagreed strongly.

Implications

Parents continue to be strongly involved in their college students' lives, and their comments indicate that while many of them are satisfied with the communications and services the University currently makes available to them, many desire more information (about health services available to students, commencement, e-mail alerts about crime and emergencies), more direct parent programming (workshops or programs focusing on academic and job seeking skills for students, more parents weekends, lectures and educational seminars for parents in the evening, parent computer message board), and increased opportunities to be involved in the University campus community (more information about and access to arts and athletic events). While a handful of parents stated that they believed their student needed to learn to navigate the University system themselves and that they—as parents—did not want to interfere, many indicated a desire for more basic information on how the University works and how they can help their students access the information and services they need. Providing more and better information to parents on student development throughout the college years and suggesting ways they can encourage their students to take on increasing responsibility for themselves may satisfy both parents' desire for more communications and programming as well as the goal of the Office for Student Affairs to provide ample opportunities for students to learn and succeed outside of the classroom.

The survey shows that students continue to turn to their parents for guidance on topics such as finances, career development, and academics. In the areas of career development and academics, the University has staff members with the resources and expertise to service as expert advice-givers to our undergraduates. University programming and communications can help make parents aware of these on-campus resources for their students, and encourage them to refer their students to the experts.

In planning for future parent programs and services, the survey indicates that we would benefit by promoting greater participation in Parent Orientation sessions, and attempt to include groups with lower participation rates, such as Twin Cities residents and parents of PSEO and transfer students, in greater numbers. Communications with these groups might emphasize that even people who consider themselves to be very familiar with the University and its offerings will be surprised at how much they will learn at Parent Orientation. The parents undoubtedly will learn new information about the University at these sessions, but participation in Orientation also creates a sense of both student and parent belonging to the University community.

We should also continue to encourage parents to sign up for the parents e-mail newsletter, and to participate in parent programs, courses and events throughout their students' college years.

Limitations

As mentioned previously, this survey was not generally promoted to parents of transfer students nor to parents of students who may have started out as part-time students or who became part-time students at some point in their academic career. The newsletter that invited parent participation is sent to parents of students who begin at the University of Minnesota as full-time, new freshmen or first-year students. A few transfer parents are on the mailing list because they have asked to be included; therefore, parents of transfer students who responded to the survey are likely to be among the “most involved” parents.

The geographic origin of respondents does not reflect what we know about our students. Of the respondents to this survey, 30.2 percent were from the Twin Cities (compared to 53.7 percent of all undergraduates); 16.7 percent were from Greater Minnesota (compared to 18.2 percent of all undergraduates); 38.5 percent were from Wisconsin (compared to 18.3 percent of all undergraduates); 4.5 percent were from the Dakotas (compared to 3.6 percent of all undergraduates); and 10.1 percent were from other states or countries (compared to 6.1 percent of all undergraduates).²

Only 2.1 percent of the respondents reported that their student is living at home. More than half (53.1 percent) said their student lives on campus (we know that this is not accurate as the University does not have housing for half of its students; 96.3 percent of the parents of freshmen reported that their student lives on campus; about 80 percent of freshmen actually live on campus); 3.6 percent said their student lives in a sorority or fraternity; 37.6 of respondents reported that their student lives in an apartment near campus. This last number may be higher, as parents often consider the large apartment complexes near campus to be campus housing.

Parents of younger students are overrepresented in the survey results. Whereas 38.3 percent of the survey respondents indicated that their student was a freshman, the freshman class for spring 2006 made up only 15.8 percent of the undergraduate student body. Similarly, 26.8 percent of respondents indicated their student was a sophomore, while only 21.3 percent of all spring 2006 students were sophomores; 16.3 percent said their student was a junior, while 24.3 percent of the spring 2006 student body were juniors; and only 17.5 percent said their student was a senior, while 38.7 percent of the spring 2006 student body were seniors.³ There are a couple of possible explanations for this discrepancy: First, parents with more than one student at the University were asked to respond to the survey based on their youngest child here. Second, parents are more likely to be engaged with their students and their students’ college during the first years of college, and therefore are more likely to read the newsletter and respond to a survey.

² Spring 2006 Registration Statistics provided by University of Minnesota Office of Institutional Research, “Campus and Unit Enrollment by Level and Geographic Origin.”

³ Spring 2006 Registration Statistics provided by University of Minnesota Office of Institutional Research, “Campus and Unit Enrollment by Level and Class.”

Additionally, in Question 25 parents were asked to identify their greatest concern, but they could choose only one of the topics listed. This may have prevented us from gaining an accurate reflection of the relative importance of the topics mentioned. For instance, although the topic “Involvement Opportunities” was at the bottom of the list for all parents, and was also at the bottom at every stage in the students’ career, involvement opportunities did emerge as a topic of interest for parents. When asked in Question 43 what factors had made positive contributions to their student’s experience at the University, many mentioned involvement in student groups, arts and performance groups, athletics, and participation in Student Affairs programming. In the related Question 44, parents were asked what could have been done to improve their students’ experience at the University, and many parents said they wished their student had become more involved in the activities available on campus. It seems possible that if, in Question 25, parents had been able to rank from most to least important to them the topics of concern, rather than just identify one as their strongest concern, we might gain a more accurate picture of the relative weight of the concerns listed.

Appendix 1

Survey Questions

Parent Survey Questions

1. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities publishes an e-mail newsletter for parents and guardians and sends it electronically about every two weeks. Do you read...
☐ All or most of it
☐ Some of it
☐ Little or none of it
☐ I did not subscribe to the list
☐ Not aware of it
2. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities publishes a *print* newsletter, *University Parent*, and mails it three times a year to parents and guardians of our students. Do you read...
☐ All or most of it
☐ Some of it
☐ Little or none of it
☐ Not aware of it
3. Have you discussed with your student any of the topics covered in either the e-mail or print newsletter?
☐ No
☐ Yes (please list any topics you recall discussing with your student.)
4. Please rank the following as your sources of information about the University.

Sources	Essential	Important	Unimportant	Not a Source
Your student				
Newspaper				
Radio/TV				
Parent e-mail newsletter				
Parent print newsletter				
University Parent Web site				
University of Minnesota Web site				
5. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the University's communications for parents and guardians of University students.
☐ Very satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

6. How often do you typically communicate with your student?

- ☐ More than once a day
- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Two or three times a week
- ☐ About weekly
- ☐ Two or three times a month
- ☐ About once a month
- ☐ Less than once a month

7. How do you *most often* communicate with your student?

Frequency	Most Frequent	Frequently	Less Frequently	Rarely	Don't use this method
In person					
Student's cell phone					
Student's landline phone					
E-mail					
Regular mail					
Instant messaging					

8. Does your student have a cell phone?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

9. How often do you visit campus?

- ☐ Rare or not at all
- ☐ Once or twice a semester
- ☐ About once a month
- ☐ More than once a month
- ☐ Once a week or more

10. Did you attend Parent Orientation when your student first enrolled at the University?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. If you answered yes to the last question, what was the most useful? What was missing? If you answered no, why did you decide not to attend?

12. At Parent Orientation, parents are given a copy of the University's planner and handbook, the *Gopher Guide*. Did you find the *Gopher Guide* useful?
 ___ Yes
 ___ No
13. Have you ever attended Parents Weekend celebrations during Homecoming?
 ___ Yes
 ___ No
14. If you answered yes to the last question, were you satisfied with the activities for parents at the event? Was there anything missing? If you answered no, why did you decide not to attend?
15. Please indicate whether you are aware of the following programs and services for parents.
- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Parent Orientation | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| Homecoming/Parents Weekend events | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| University Parent Web site | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| Parent e-mail listserv | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| Parent Program Director to answer your questions | ___ Yes | ___ No |
16. Have you viewed or listened to any of the following online video and audio workshops on the University Parent Web site?
- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Housing Workshop | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| Mental Health and the College Student Workshop | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| Study Abroad Workshop | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| I am not aware of the workshops mentioned | ___ Yes | ___ No |
17. If you have viewed or listened to any of the video or audio workshops mentioned above, have you talked with your student about the information presented?
 ___ Yes
 ___ No
18. Have you registered for the online course for parents, "Alcohol Use on Campus"?
 ___ Yes
 ___ No
 ___ I am not aware of the course mentioned

19. If you registered, did you complete the course?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure
20. If you have taken the online course, have you talked with your student about the alcohol information presented in the course?
☐ Yes
☐ No
21. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the University's programs and services for parents and guardians of University students.
☐ Very satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied
22. What other services would you like to see for parents?
23. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I feel that the University of Minnesota includes parents in the University community."
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
24. What year is your student now?
☐ Freshman
☐ Sophomore
☐ Junior
☐ Senior
☐ Graduate student
☐ Unsure

25. This year, what has been your greatest concern regarding your student?
- ☐ Health and Safety
 - ☐ Finances
 - ☐ Academics
 - ☐ Campus or community involvement opportunities
 - ☐ Career planning
 - ☐ Personal relationships
 - ☐ None
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
26. This year, on what topic has your student most requested your assistance or advice?
- ☐ Health and Safety
 - ☐ Finances
 - ☐ Academics
 - ☐ Campus or community involvement opportunities
 - ☐ Career planning
 - ☐ Personal relationships
 - ☐ None
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
27. What percentage of your student college expenses do you expect him/her to contribute?
- ☐ 0 to 10 percent
 - ☐ 11 to 25 percent
 - ☐ 26 to 50 percent
 - ☐ 51 to 75 percent
 - ☐ 76 percent or more
28. How many hours per week does your student work?
- ☐ 0 to 8 hours per week
 - ☐ 9 to 12 hours per week
 - ☐ 13 to 19 hours per week
 - ☐ 20 to 30 hours per week
 - ☐ 31 to 40 hours per week
 - ☐ More than 40 hours per week

29. Where does your student work?
☐ On campus
☐ Off campus
☐ Both on and off campus
☐ Does not work
30. How many credit hours is your student currently taking?
☐ 8 or fewer
☐ 9 to 12
☐ 13 to 16
☐ 17 or more
☐ Don't know
31. How much time will it take/is it taking for your student to receive an undergraduate degree?
☐ Less than four years
☐ Four years
☐ Five years
☐ Six years
☐ Seven years or more
32. How important is it to you that your student graduate in four or five years?
☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Other factors are more important
☐ Not at all important
33. Did your student start at the University as
☐ A freshman with no college credit
☐ A first-year college student but with some college credits (i.e., PSEO or AP credits)
☐ A transfer student from another college or university
34. Where does your student live?
☐ At home
☐ On campus
☐ Sorority/fraternity
☐ Apartment/house near campus (non-University housing)
☐ Other (please specify)
35. Please indicate where you live.

- ☐ Twin Cities area
- ☐ Greater Minnesota
- ☐ Wisconsin
- ☐ North or South Dakota
- ☐ Other (please specify)

36. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Less than high school diploma
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Ph.D.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

37. If you're a college graduate, did you graduate from the University of Minnesota?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

38. If you attended college, how would you compare the level of your involvement/communication with your student to the involvement/communication your parents had with you during college?

- ☐ Much more involved
- ☐ More involved
- ☐ About the same
- ☐ Less involved
- ☐ Much less involved
- ☐ Not applicable

39. Do you have access to e-mail or the internet?

- ☐ Yes, at work
- ☐ Yes, at home
- ☐ Yes, at home and at work
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other (please specify)

40. What is your relationship to your student?
- ☐ Mother
 - ☐ Father
 - ☐ Grandmother
 - ☐ Grandfather
 - ☐ Aunt
 - ☐ Uncle
 - ☐ Foster mother
 - ☐ Foster father
 - ☐ Other
41. How old are you?
42. Which of the following statement best describes how you think student change/develop while in college?
- ☐ Slow and gradual development across all years
 - ☐ Most significant changes occur during the first year
 - ☐ Little or moderate change during first year but increasingly significant changes closer to graduation
 - ☐ Other/Comments
43. Is there a faculty member, staff member, activity, or organization that has made a particularly positive contribution to your student's experience at the University of Minnesota? If so, please describe:
44. Is there something you can identify that would have improved your student's experience at the University of Minnesota? Please describe:
45. If you would like to be entered in the drawing for University Bookstore gift certificates, a one-night stay at the Historic Faculty House, or a copy of *You're on Your Own (But I'm Here if You Need Me)* by Marjorie Savage, please include your mailing address or phone number. (Note: There may be some reservation restrictions for the Historic Faculty House.)
46. We welcome your comments on any of the questions you've answered, or on other issues related to the University of Minnesota. If you would like a response or an answer to a question, please include your name and phone number or e-mail address along with your comments.

Appendix 2

Comparing first-year college parents who attended parent orientation with first-year parents who did not attend

Comparing first-year college parents who attended Parent Orientation with first-year parents who did not

	Attended Parent Orientation	Did Not Attend Parent Orientation
Have you discussed with your student Topics covered in e-mail listserv or <i>University Parent</i> ?	Yes 92.4%	93.8%
Satisfaction with U communications	Very satisfied 64%	Very satisfied 59.4%
Have you attended Parents Weekend?	Yes 22.3%	Yes 6.2%
Are you aware of the Parents E-mail Listserv?	Yes 76%	Yes 69%
Have you registered for the online alcohol course?	Yes 17.5%	Yes 12.5%
Satisfaction with parent programs/services	Very satisfied 53.1%	Very satisfied 46.9%
Feel U includes parents in campus community	Strongly agree 48.4% Disagree 1.4%	Strongly agree 40.6% Disagree 3.1%
Greatest concern regarding student this year	Health and safety 28.1% Academics 27.1% Finances 10.3% Personal relationships 8.9% Career planning 5.8% None 5.5% Involvement opportunities 4.1% Other 10.3%	Health and safety 28.1% Finances 21.9% Academics 12.5% Personal relationships 9.4% Career planning 6.2% Involvement opportunities 6.2% None 3.1% Other 12.5%
Topic for which student has most requested help this year	Finances 27.6% Academics 18.6% Career planning 11.4%	Academics 22.6% Finances 19.4% Personal relationships 16.1%

	Attended Parent Orientation	Did Not Attend Parent Orientation
Topic for which student has most requested help this year (continued)	None 10.3% Health and safety 9.7% Personal relationships 7.9% Involvement opportunities 2.4% Other 12.1%	Health and safety 12.9% Career planning 9.7% None 6.5% Involvement opportunities 3.2% Other 9.7%
Length of time expected to graduate	Four years or less 95.5%	Four years or less 93.8%
Importance of graduating in four or five years	Very important 67.8%	Very important 68.8%
Family residence	Twin Cities area 28.5% Greater Minnesota 14.8% Wisconsin 42.3% North or South Dakota 4.1% Other 10.3%	Twin Cities area 50% Greater Minnesota 15.6% Wisconsin 31.2% North or South Dakota (none) Other 3.1%
Student residence this year	Home 0.7% On Campus 96.6% Sorority/Fraternity 1.4% Apartment/house near campus 1%	Home 3.1% On Campus 93.8% Sorority/Fraternity (none) Apartment/house near campus (none)
Level of involvement (compared to own parents)	Much more 59.2%	Much more 48.3%
Grad of U of M	Yes 11.9%	Yes 33.3%
Expectations on how students change over college years	Slow/gradual across all years 43% Most change during first year 35.2% More change closer to graduation 9.5% Other 12.3%	Slow/gradual across all years 34.4% Most change during first year 50% More change closer to graduation 12.5% Other 3.1%

Appendix 3

Topics parents have discussed with their students

Topics Discussed

Have you discussed with your student any of the topics covered in either the e-mail or print newsletter?

Yes 91.6%

No 8.4%

Please list any topics you recall discussing with your student. (793 respondents; many listed multiple topics)

Topics	Number of Respondents
Room and board	
Housing (unspecified housing issues or on-campus housing issues)	139
Off-campus housing	72
Dining facilities/services	6
Financial issues	
Finances (tuition, financial aid, loans, billing)	60
Scholarships	29
Personal finance/finance course for students	15
University processes/facilities	
Deadlines/dates	45
OneStop	2
Parking/transportation (zip cars, parking messages, transport to Wisc.)	19
Computing/software	9
Outside the classroom opportunities/services/student support	
Campus/area events, activities, involvement opportunities	188
Career issues (job fairs, internships, mentorships, career counseling)	133
Counseling (UCCS services, classes, workshops)	53

Topics	Number of Respondents
Outside the classroom opportunities/services/student support (continued)	
Mental health/stress	34
Campus/student jobs	9
Safety/security	
Safety/security/crime	311
Bike safety	4
Fire safety	12
Internet safety (identity theft, facebook)	9
Riotous behavior (campus rioting/Halloween in Madison)	7
Health	
Alcohol/drugs	141
Smoking	3
Sex	2
Health/Boynton Health Services	19
Flu/meningitis vaccinations	12
Helmets/headlights offer through Boynton	8
Student death	12
Academics	
Graduation	20
Student services (academic advising, tutoring, academic resources)	40
Study abroad	43
Educational expectations (grades, studying, exams)	22
Declaring/changing majors	3

Topics	Number of Respondents
Transition/adjustment	
Student adjustment/student development	20
Family adjustment	9
Miscellaneous	
Storage companies	1
Parent polling questions	9
Gambling	1
Classes	4
Caucus night	1
“Fun & Interesting” Web page (Parent Website)	2
Other	
Too many to recall; send entire message; cut and paste multiple messages	65

Appendix 4

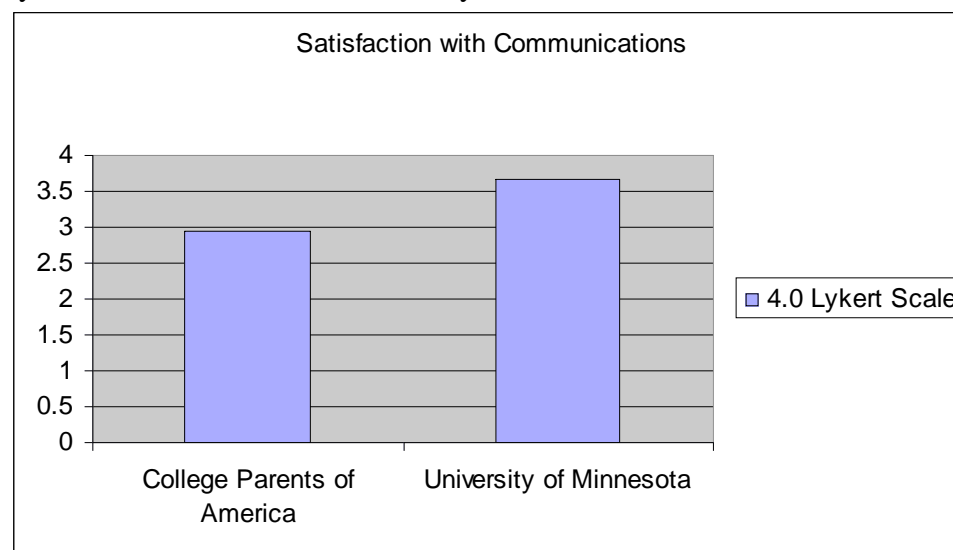
Comparison to national data on parent satisfaction

In 2006, College Parents of America (CPA) conducted a survey of their members to determine parents' level of involvement during the college years, the level and types of communication between parents and their college student, and major parent concerns during the college years. In developing their survey, CPA contacted the University of Minnesota Parent Program for insight into questions to ask.

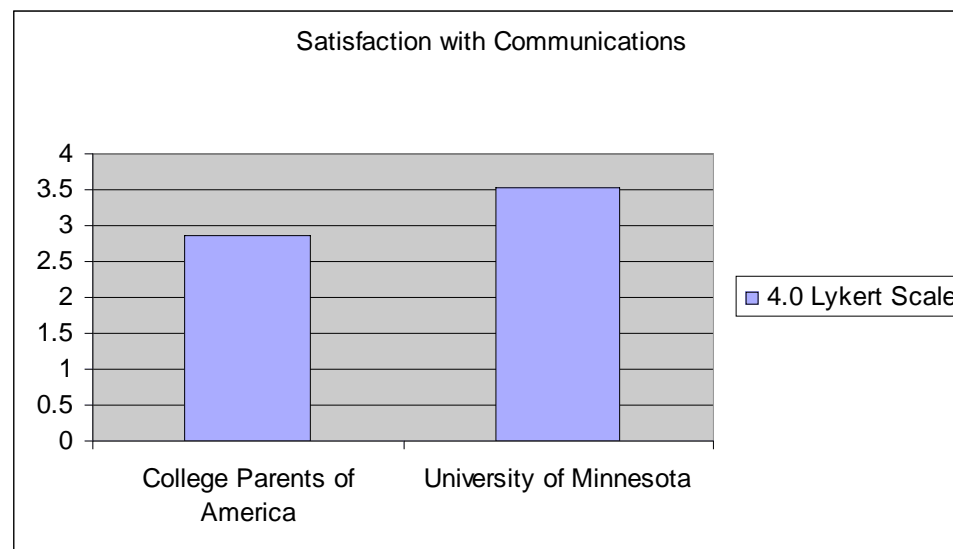
Several of the questions used by CPA are identical or nearly identical to those asked of University of Minnesota parents. Consequently, we can compare our results against the responses of CPA members. It should be noted that CPA is a national organization based in Washington, D.C., that conducts lobbying and provides services to parents across the country. Their membership is heaviest along the East Coast, and a significant proportion of their members have children attending a limited number of institutions that supplement the CPA membership costs for their parents.

Their entire membership (40,000) was invited to participate in the survey, and 839 participated.

CPA asked parents to indicate their level of satisfaction with the school's communications for parents and guardians. The national satisfaction rates are significantly lower than those at the University of Minnesota.

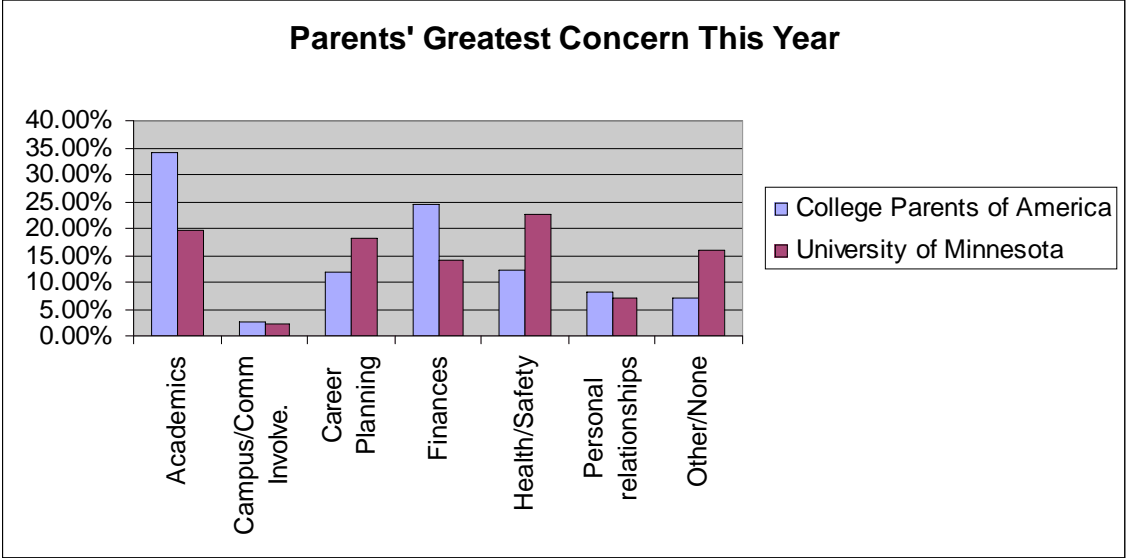


CPA did not ask about satisfaction with programs and services, but they asked parents to indicate whether or not their student's college or university includes parents in the school community. Again the University of Minnesota exceeded the national numbers.

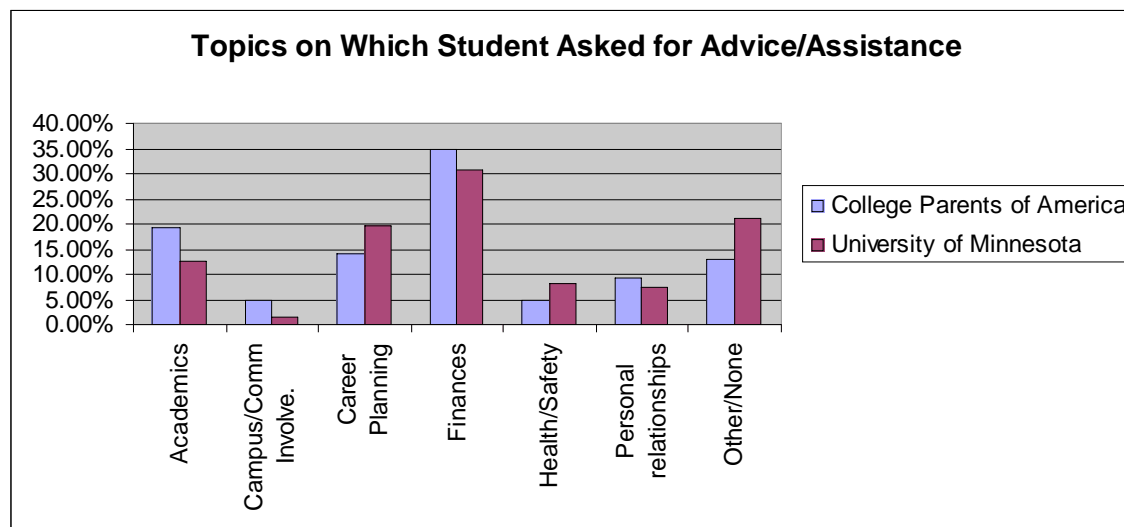


U of M parents have different communication patterns than CPA's overall audience. While just over 20 percent of our parents are in touch with their student one or more times a day, one-third of CPA members are in touch with their student that frequently. About three-fourths of CPA parents are communicating more than once a week, compared to two-thirds of U of M parents. CPA parents are more likely to use the student's landline phone: while half (52 percent) of CPA parents say they rarely or never use their student's landline phone, 85 percent of U of M parents rarely or never use the landline phone.

When asked about their greatest concern regarding their student during the past year, CPA parents expressed a much higher concern for Academics. A third (33.9 percent) of CPA parents indicated academics as the top concern, compared to 19.8 percent of U of M parents. Health and safety was the highest concern for U of M parents at 22.5 percent; 12.1 percent of CPA parents cited health and safety.



There also are differences in the kinds of advice and assistance students seek from their parents when comparing the University of Minnesota with CPA families:



Appendix 5

Parent comments

Parents were given the opportunity to add any comments they wished. The following list categorizes comments we received.

Student Affairs

- One issue we had was my daughter was ill and she said she didn't have time to go to Boynton. Maybe extended hours or another location on campus for health care?
- I have recently visited and talked to many of the girls in my daughters dorm and they all have left over meals from their plan. they took the smaller meal plan (150). We were not aware of another meal plan and would have liked something smaller - a plan for 2 meals a day.
- We are very pleased with the University. We are always telling people how great it is. At Christmas time my daughter took the bus home. Imagine my surprise when I checked the email before going to work that morning and finding an email telling me when the bus would arrive -and to check the email an hour before stated arrival time to make sure the bus was on time. Every detail seems to get attention and I appreciate that. I am very proud that my daughter attends the University of Minnesota. The University should be proud of the excellent customer service it provides. I appreciate it and when the topic of universities/colleges comes up I make sure everyone knows about the services you provide.
- I think overall the U is great, but housing and the related financial problems it causes is a big issue. When students have to substantially increase their student loan if they want to afford an apartment, that's just too much. I believe the students should work, but the hours they have to put in just to pay the rent on some of the apartments available to them, is terrible.
- Would like to see more campus housing and more incentive, encouragement for upper class students to live on campus. May be related to addressing the alcohol problem among students. Also creates a very different sense of campus community.
- I believe that the University needs a football stadium. While I did not (unfortunately) attend the U for undergraduate, I did some graduate work there. I remember with great fondness the Saturday games, stopping at Stubb and Herbs, the band marching down the street, and the wonderful smells and colors of autumn in the old stadium. I would not go to the dome to watch anything.
- Thanks for keeping communications open. Also wanted to mention that Frontier Hall really needs to have additional doors with some sort of card system that opens for students. I realize safety is a concern, but every time we have visited, we have walked through the front doors and into the locked area of the dorm without anyone questioning or stopping us. Our son knows we are coming and is usually on his way to meet us, but since security is lax enough for us to do this, I don't think having a doorway at the end or middle of the hall that opens with a student's id should cause anymore risk than already there. It seems ridiculous to walk through 4 halls to enter and leave, when his room is next to an exit that should be available as an entrance, too.
- I am becoming more and more concerned about the cost of sending our kids to the U of M. When our son began there over 5 or 6 yrs. ago, it felt affordable to us. Now with our daughter there and even with her academic scholarship as aid, it has become economically difficult for us to have enough \$\$ for her entire education. Something we had planned on doing. We have begun to

wonder if in fact we are getting our money's worth when you consider the tuition is creeping closer and closer to some of the private school tuitions and when we consider the scholarships and incentives that were offered to us by some of them. The UDS meal plan and the food there is a total joke. I have spoken with other parents whose kids attend other colleges and what we have to pay for one semester for UDS, they pay for an entire year!!! That we are required to pay for the crud they seem to serve and that our daughter is not even eating there is frustrating.

- Free parent parking would be nice. Football stadium should not have been moved off campus & the girls hockey should have been played @ Mariucci w/o building Ridder. No preference should be given to foreign students for lower tuition or acceptance over a united states residence.
- Our daughter really did not want to attend the U. The U was actually her last choice out of 7 schools. BUT, when she was suddenly offered a generous scholarship (Bentson), that turned her attitude around. She decided that if the U wanted her that badly, (and some of the other Eastern schools wait-listed her) that's where she'd go. Now, she couldn't be happier. We are delighted also. She loves Middlebrook, luckily got a great roommate, has good classes through the Honors program, has taken advantage of the athletics counselors (through Crew) and also is an Admissions Ambassador. She's having fun and getting a great education. Thank you U of M.
- Our concern about the U of M was that it was so large, that our daughter would just be a number. For the most part, that has not been the case. There are probably as many advantages as disadvantages to the size of this college. A particular plus for us, as parents, has been the Boynton Health Center. She has experienced terrific care there. We do wish that college, in general, wasn't so expensive.
- Information on storage rentals!!! Information on off campus housing would also be very helpful including low crime areas, transportation, etc.
- Would like to see some type of parking for parents to use, to visit their sons or daughters on campus!
- If a friend is dealing with some sort of depression and won't seek help what options does the student have or advice that the student can give to their friend especially when they are doing things out of character. The friend has so much potential and is doing extremely well and we just hate to see it come to a bad ending. Thank you for your assistance.
- Boynton Medical Service has been a huge disappointment. My daughter went there for a severe cold/flu. They told her to take aspirin. She actually had pneumonia, and suffered a long time. Also: their mental health services are not good. My daughter has suffered from severe depression. Counselors were not sympathetic. Was immediately put on effexor, which caused suicidal urges and extreme pain in heart, that felt like a heart attack. It seems to be very common, as her friends were given the same treatment with the same result.

- One concern I had is that my daughter said that the house fellows in the dormitory put up Christian religious material on the floor bulletin board. My daughter is not religious and her roommate is Jewish.... I think it is inappropriate for such material to be displayed by a leader in the dorm.
- The food served in the dorm where my daughter stays needs significant improvement.
- Are there any coping skills out there for dealing with the weather? Also maybe a comprehensive list of deadlines for different university things such as housing, registration, tuition due, FAFSA form due, etc. or maybe there is and I am just not aware of it. Thank you for all you are doing for the students and their families.
- Why is the underage drinking in the dorms allowed?
- It's unfortunate that the dorms are so overcrowded that there aren't any study or social areas. My son's biggest adjustment problem was a lack of opportunity to socialize. He's moving into those Melrose apts. next year partly because they have those facilities. My son wished they sponsored more dances, instead of other activities
- My son does not drink, but seems to be surrounded by people that drink. I'm concerned about the level of drinking in the dorms. Is there a way for my son to meet more people who don't drink?
- Just curious to know if there is a campus "ride board" instead of just the ones located in the various dorms. Finding rides home to the Milwaukee WI area has been a problem for us this year, and with all of the student population from that area, my guess is that my son is not looking in the right places.
- An update on remodeling the dorms would be nice. Pioneer hall is the dorm my daughter lives in now.
- I am surprised that there is not more development or redevelopment going on around the university. It seems there could be more hotels, restaurants and variety of places for students to go.
- My daughter complains a lot about the quality of the food served in the Comstock cafeteria. She says that very often, the food served is not fresh and is obviously days old.
- Again, I know I would have been much more comfortable this last year if he had stayed in the dorms. Our biggest worry has been the neighborhood in which he lives. He studied abroad the last semester of his sophomore year therefore relied on his roommates to find the apartment. Needless to say, it wouldn't have been one we, as parents, would have picked. I think parents should be warned early on about the desire of living off campus and the danger involved. Last fall our son's roommate was mugged and robbed coming home from work. If a parent can't convince their student to stay on campus, I would wish they would play a bigger part in finding that apartment than we did. We live out of state, and our son was in Japan when it came time to apartment hunt, but still we should have been involved. Please warn other parents.
- If anyone can fill me in on room options for this year within Comstock, my student's roommate situation is bad enough that I believe we'd entertain a move even this late in the year.
- I am worried about housing for next fall. My son would like a roommate but cannot find one.

- The biggest issue we had this year was problems with connecting to the campus internet. Our daughter worked with the IT Help desk on campus and could not get the issues resolved. I finally came up during Parent's weekend and fixed the problem by restoring to an earlier date. I was very disappointed that there was really no one taking charge and getting her issue resolved.
- Could you inform me on the best way for students to find a job when they are awarded work study money and what they should do after they fill out an application on line for a job and hear nothing back. Is there someone they can meet with in person who could assist them in finding a job?

Parent Program

- Marj has been wonderful - by home, by e-mail and in person. We've been UMN parents twice now, and she - and the program - have been outstanding. Thanks for everything.
- We appreciate the email news letter as a great form of communication. Thank you for this effort. As we toured the college a few weekends ago for our younger children, we stayed at the Historic Faculty House. It was a very comfortable experience. They are most hospitable.
- I feel connected to the University through the emails received from Marjorie and they seem written in a personal style. when I have had questions, she has helped solve the mysteries of the university. - It has been wonderful!
- I appreciate the email updates because they make me feel more in touch with my student's community. Keep up the good work.
- On the advice of my mother-in-law, also a graduate of the U, I purchased Marjorie Savage's book "You're on Your Own (but I'm here if you need me) and read it the summer before our daughter started at the U. It is one of the most helpful books I've read in a long time and was pleased to have been able to tell Ms. Savage this herself. At that time, I was doing work in the area of family relationships and community development which included writing articles in our small town local paper. I made a point to recommend this book to all parents of graduating students and will continue to do so. There was some very sound, down-to-earth advice from parents who have "been there".
- I have been extremely impressed with UM beginning with our summer campus visit and continuing on through today. I especially like the email newsletter and find its contents to be "right on the mark". It sometimes seems that you actually know my son. I have shared many editions with parents of freshmen at other schools and prospective parents as well. All have said that it was very good and that they don't receive anything that holds a candle to it (including parents of students at UW-Madison.) Thanks for all you do!
- No questions--just a comment. I have been extremely pleased with the communications via this email newsletter. A couple of questions I have had through the years were answered immediately and taken care of. As my now sophomore daughter told me the other day "When you come to this university you have to grow up right away. You have to learn to be independent and responsible for yourself. Both the city and the campus are large and you need to take care of yourself. There is always someone to help you,

but there is no one to hold your hand. You have to learn to speak up." To some parents this might not be what they want to hear. But to myself and my husband this is exactly what we want for our children as they grow. It's hard to let go but it is not healthy to hang on. Thank you.

- I would like to say I'm very pleased with the email new letter Marjorie puts out. As I stated in a previous question, this is another nice touch that puts U of Minn over Wisconsin. We actually use the newsletter to rub it in a little when we get together with the neighbors, whose son went to Madison! Thanks - we appreciate it
- We also have a son at The University of Missouri in Columbia, and your parent communication and webpage rate a 10 compared to their 3. It is an amazing difference and we commend you on your program(s). Thank you.
- When there were problems on campus concerning student's safety the first two years, we appreciated knowing this, so we could reiterate to our student the necessity that he wasn't "in Kansas" anymore. This year we weren't given that information as timely or at all. If it was a PR question, I would have thought that it would have been more important to give the information to parents rather than reserving the reputation of the University. Perhaps this information could have helped prevent our son's mugging.
- I really enjoy the parent emails and will always read the topics.
- I frequently copy parts of the parent e-newsletter and send them to my son. He comments that I am much better-informed about what's happening on campus than he is.
- I would just like to say that Ms. Savage's newsletter has been great and I'm very impressed with the information available online about the University.
- I just want to comment that the parent newsletter helps a lot. Madison has nothing like it.
- I really appreciate the tuition payment calendar schedule in the University Parent. I even cut it out and posted it as a reminder when to make tuition payments. I like the email newsletter but find it easier to read the University Parent newsletter at my convenience and repeated times.
- Marjorie Savage's e-mail publication is something very unique to your University. Having had children at other universities, this is the only school where I have felt we, as parents, are included in University information and communication. Thank you so much.
- Would like you to continue the parents newsletter and e-mail's as our daughter does not communicate a lot of the items and issues you cover.
- I would just like to "Thank" the Parent Organization and Marjorie Savage for their continued efforts to keep the parents connected to the university.
- I really enjoy reading the emailed parent newsletter.
- Your parent communication is great. We have 2 other students at 2 different colleges besides UMN and have been trying to convince them they need a network like yours. Keep up the good work.

- Thank You for the communication with the parents, it makes us feel part of our daughter life and part of the University. We are very proud of the excellent education she is receiving.
- Marj. Savage-----you're doing a great job! I recently experienced a topic of concern that puzzled our family---- you cleared it up immediately! Thanks!
- Many thanks to Marjorie Savage and staff. The Parent communication has been wonderful. As I work in RISK Management at UW-Milwaukee I also use the information I receive as an example of how we can emulate UMN and do a better job on our campus. May I stay on the Parent mailing list?
- I think Marjorie Savage and her staff do a great job. I always felt I had a contact on campus to whom I could ask any question and get a quick response. With such a large departmentalized place this is really good for peace-of-mind and easy and quick.
- Honestly, we have been delighted with how well the University maintains contact with parents, as well as maintaining our involvement. I frequently cite to other parents the email in November that cautioned us how our students will return home for Thanksgiving different than how we expect them to behave, and similarly you told students the flip side of the same issue. I wish someone had clued my parents and me into similar such issues when I was in school. I think the U is outstanding and exemplary in how you help parents keep the right distance/closeness, and I don't hear that from my friends whose children are at other schools. thank you, very much.
- The online parent newsletter is wonderful. I enjoys all aspects of it including what the students are wearing, what the weather looks like. It reminds me of important upcoming dates as well as important things that have happened.
- I am so impressed with the parent communication (newsletter). My friends who have kids at other universities are not kept informed through a newsletter, so I feel very fortunate. The information shared is great! Please continue this service! I even appreciate the "style" of writing; it is so nice to hear what you "see out your window." It helps me feel closer to my daughter and visualize her experiences. Thank you for that!
- I would like to be able to get into the alcohol course. I would also encourage you to have other type offerings that may help us with our student children.
- Can't begin to tell you how impressed I am with the parent communications. I also have a son at a private college in Wisconsin and from orientation to regular communication....can't even compare to Minnesota. I actually forwarded him some of your advise when he had a tough first semester. Of all the students I have talked to from U of M, everyone loves it. The problem is getting them to come back home!
- I want to thank Marjorie Savage for the monthly updates. She has been very helpful in the past when I had questions and suggestions re: FAFSA and has always been very responsive with answers and action.

- Thanks for doing this survey. The communication opportunities for parents seemed to be one of the best changes at the U as well as more opportunities for students to be in a community rather just a student with a number. There is also much more help for students willing to get help than when I was a student at the U of M. Great job!
- I very much appreciated a forum, this Parent email access for info and updates, it felt closer to know what was happening with my student, I also have a student at UMD and don't have this connection. As the U of M -Twin Cities is such a large school this email and mail connections kept me in the loop , very much appreciated!
- Your website, parent email and newsletters have been extremely helpful. Neither my husband or I have attended college, so this was as new of an experience for us as it was for our son. Our oldest child, a daughter, attended a community college and then moved on to Metro State (St. Paul) so she has remained living at home during college. My son chose the U of M (Carlson School) and to live on campus, which we supported. Being we weren't familiar with all of this, I feel the U of M was extremely helpful and we couldn't be happier with his first year experience. He was placed with a fabulous roommate, and had found many friends. The rumor that all schools are party schools and the party atmosphere you always hear about is frightening as a parent. I am glad to say our son has been very diligent with his grades, even making the Dean's list his first year with 18 credits. The friends he has made all have the same values so he isn't under any negative peer pressure, which we are happy about. I thank all those who help with the parent communication. Without it, we would have been lost.
- It's been a great year and I enjoy the newsletter very much! I think what you do to reach out to parents is great.
- The monthly message from Marjorie Savage is very useful indeed. I appreciate her wisdom and her candor. The topics covered are timely and relevant. She always includes the appropriate links to more information. I look forward to reading her newsletter because I feel she will give us the most up-to-date information concerning our students.
- I have read *You're on Your Own*. They have it at our local library. Very helpful.
- This is a good spot to say thank you to Ms. Savage. We have found the Parent Program very important to our family. The communications are timely and we do read them. The Parent and New Student events were well done and have increased our comfort level at the U Of M. We have your book...special topics are page-marked...and I have found both of our sons reading it. Yes!
- I applaud Marj Savage for her work at helping parents understand the U!!! I feel that when all else fails, I could call her and get some direction on where to go for answers or help. Also, there was an interesting story in the Bemidji Pioneer this past week. The paper occasionally carries an additional section called the Senior Scene. One of the women who often contributes her thoughts wrote about a survey that she had completed for the U of M. She had some very interesting perspectives -- I'm sure you could find the Bemidji Pioneer on-line and read her story.

- I consider the University Parent email Newsletter a valuable tool for me to stay connected with campus happenings/deadlines. I rely on its information and reminders to parents. My student will be a senior next year and I know that I will be on top of graduation deadlines with the help of the parent newsletter.
- We have a daughter going to UW-Madison also, and I have to say that Minnesota's efforts at keeping parents regularly informed is far better than Madison's. The E-news is so readable; if more information is wanted you provide the links/resources for us to pursue it. More than once I've bragged and shared your E-News with co-workers!
- A special thanks for the work you do to keep the parents aware of what's going on at the University! I wait for your emails to arrive and enjoy reading them from top to bottom!
- I think that parent involvement has been wonderful--newsletters, e-mails, etc. Especially when there's a tragedy on or near campus. It's nice to hear from you.
- I also want to say thank you for the parent e-mail. There have been many times when I was comforted while being 6 hours away when a crisis on campus came up that all was OK. The biggest one was a few days after my son started and 9/11 happened. Thanks. I think in making parents feel still important and not just the money bags you have swayed me to your school with both kids.
- I think Marge Savage has done a great job in communicating. Her emails make me feel as if my daughter attends a smaller university than what she does. Information is valuable. In talking to parents of University of Wisconsin - Madison students, University of Minnesota communicates much more with parents. Great Job!
- The UM is doing a fantastic job of keeping parents informed and involved in their student's life. I graduated from UM in 1978 and in those days, there was very little parental involvement. The only information my parents received came from me and that was sparse, I'm sure! I especially like the University Parent email list. Keep up the good work!
- Although we are a minority in the fact that we are out of state, I think more thought could be given to parent courses that are offered on campus the week during winter break etc since we are very unlikely to be able to attend. It would make more sense to offer parent classes when it is likely the parents might be bringing their students back to school.
- I had planned on finishing the online course. I started it in the fall and got busy with holiday events and I forgot about it. Maybe if a course is half finished, an email could be sent after a month or two to ask if the person wants to finish it.
- I think your communication with parents is great. I love the newsletter. It should be a model for other universities. I have always felt well informed, especially when there has been an important campus event, especially in the case of a tragic event.
- I was very nervous to send my daughter off to such a large school where she knew not a single soul. She adores the school and has made very good friends. The parent email updates have made me feel very connected to the school. It is obvious that you work very hard to create a student-centered environment, and we are very satisfied in every area. Thanks for all your efforts.

Career Services/Major Selection

- The biggest disappointment is the difficulty for a student to major in business at the U of M. My son wants to major in business but even though he received 3.5 GPA fall semester and is getting good grades spring semester so far. But Carlson is for the elite students and not for the hard working good students. It shouldn't be next to impossible to transfer into Carlson. This is one of the reasons that my son wants to transfer to another university. The U of M has to address their business requirements. The assaults and robberies on and around campus is also disturbing. I've warned him against walking around late at night, but students think it won't happen to them. The safety in the area is a huge issue.
- His major is music. I wish he would consider other options as it is so difficult to be successful in music performance. I would like to know what other music majors are doing. How many got jobs with orchestras or what else are they doing? I would like to see a big focus on what jobs are possible at the end of school. Also, last year he lived in the dorm and told me most social activities involved alcohol. He doesn't drink (he says). He was really turned off by fraternities. I would like to see more activities not involving alcohol.
- Several times my daughter has asked what to do with her major. I have no CLUE what to tell her. Every time she asks the question, I think to myself... "Was all this time spent and the fabulous scholarship and financial aid a waste?" I've never responded with my feelings... I just tell her I have no idea. I had trusted your 'system' to guide her and I really feel let down.
- My son always knew he wanted to go to U of M and he has had a good experience there. My daughter who is now a sophomore probably went there because of his experience. I really liked the sequence of the Interior Design program there compared to Madison because she could tell in the first year if she was going to like the program because of the classes offered the first semester in that program.
- We are very satisfied with the University of Minnesota and feel the "U" did a wonderful job educating our son. The undergraduate advising seems to have improved since my years at the U.

Academic Affairs

- I have sometimes been disappointed with how long it takes to get an email response from One-stop.
- We need more information on student loans
- He is currently in the co-op and I think that is such a great experience for the student. It has been extremely helpful to him. Plus, the mock interviewing and interviewing was excellent. Such opportunities.
- Appreciate the communication and billing structure which far surpasses UWM where another student is attending

- By next fall all three of my children will have or are attending the University. It is a quality, global education, right at our back door. The standards are set high which is important to keep attracting high quality, highly motivated students. We do not pay much attention to what the Tribune or TV says about the University. We feel it usually isn't an accurate picture.
- One Stop is awesome too
- All tuition bills should be sent to the parents by regular mail. When tuition bills are sent to the students e-mail, it adds unnecessary stress to the student.
- My husband and I have been very happy with the changes made at the UMN since our time there in the 70s and 80s. The University is a much more pleasant and cared-for place, the computer based registration and the adviser system is also a huge improvement. I also believe our child is at one of the best schools for studying biological sciences that she could have attended as an undergraduate.
- Response on how the instructors can take more ownership and respond to students questions.
- We are also pleased with the academic rigor, our son is in IT and even with AP courses in high school, he is being thoroughly and soundly challenged!!! Despite his acceptance of C's after A's in high school, we would be more concerned if there were not challenges academically! The U of M offers excellent scholarships to its students. I am very impressed with the scholarship money that you have available for top students. This is good!
- I would like a response to my concerns about communication to my son/us when he was failing his classes his first semester. I thought there was some follow up that is done by his adviser or someone. If it was done, he never told us about it. I walked away from the parent orientation with a feeling that I shouldn't worry about his grades, that staff at Minnesota will work with him and be in contact with him to help get him back on track. Don't misunderstand me, I am a teacher and know that we don't perform miracles, but I am just wondering what communication happens when/if a student is failing classes.
- Regarding hours that the student works while going to school: Our daughter is in a field that requires A LOT of volunteer hours! Although she doesn't "work" while at school, she puts in at least 10 hours a week volunteering for different organizations. Her internship of 120 hours was all volunteer work also!
- The question regarding working does not allow you to answer that she works fulltime over the summer to pay the expenses. It also doesn't allow you to tell the school that you include grants and scholarships in calculating her contribution. Our daughter elected to live frugally so she could concentrate on her education rather than taking a menial job during the academic year.
- Where can my daughter get assistance on Physics classes - not helping with strategies for learning - but actually help?
- Our son has had a great experience here at Minnesota, and will be graduating summa cum laude. We are very proud of him. We had reservations at first about his attending the U (we thought it was too big and he'd just be a number) but we've found just the opposite. He had good relationships with many of his professors, works as a research assistant for one of them, and is using two others as references. Now, if he can just find a job! :)

- It's a great school, and my son has come to love being up there. I never pictured this child at such a large school, so I think that's been part of the long adjustment period, maybe this wasn't the perfect fit...but thanks to General College, it's all worked out. Freshman year would NOT have been a success for him if it wasn't for GC, the smaller classes, and more adviser attention.
- My father, who values higher education, has many dedicated giving plans with the institutions that his children and grandchildren have attended. We have asked him to not include the U. in his generous bequests, since we were told by XXX XXXX that the U does not wish for family involvement. Those dollars will go to more family friendly Universities and Colleges, including Concordia in Moorhead, MN. which has received money since 1978.
- We can't get a statement about itemized billings and credits for tuition.
- What resources should my daughter be utilizing to improve her test taking abilities? Also, how should she be using the Health Sciences Counseling Center as a freshman?
- I believe she's had a very good educational experience at the U of M. She lived on campus 2 years and had a very good experience with campus life too. My main complaint is that textbooks are SO EXPENSIVE! Otherwise I think she's had a good and productive time.
- Both our son and my husband and I are pleased with the U so far. Our son loves the campus and all it has to offer. He has enjoyed all of his classes so far but struggles to understand one foreign TA. Overall is has been a very good experience so far.
- I was a bit distressed to here from my daughter that a TA was drinking a beer in class! She would not tell me which class..... Thanks for this opportunity! AND for the opportunity to possibly win a stay at the infamous Historic Faculty House!!
- I also would like to mention that the one stop has helped us out with numerous questions on tuition, billing and fees. If I remember correctly there was a Scott and Mary that was very kind and explained things to me very well. On the other hand my daughter had called and someone was not very patient with her as she tried to understand why there were late fees and late charges on her account. She never did get the person's name.
- My husband and I have been very pleased with our son's education and his athletic experience. He has turned into a well rounded young man. We think he will have a great future due to the education he received at the University of Minnesota. We've enjoyed the Parent Newsletters, and the newsletters from the school. It has help make us feel more a part of his college experience. This has been exceptionally helpful with us living so far away.
- I'm impressed with the ONE STOP. They have always been very helpful and very knowledgeable. My daughter needs to get a certificate for documentation for German social security. I was impressed by how the one Stop folks knew exactly what to do. They also help me with the tuition bill since my daughter still hasn't forwarded the bill to me yet. hopefully next semester!! Thanks
- My son is a 3rd year student, but is only 3 credits shy of graduating in May. He was told that if that one remaining class is available in May, he can attend commencement ceremonies May 5. If the class is NOT available, when would he then be eligible to attend commencement? He's in IT in computer science.

- The only area that was not addressed was that of feedback on college professors. I felt that my daughter's freshman biology professor was awful. They even held an open session to hear from students concerning her teaching style. We need the best at the freshman level. This person should be confined to research, not teaching. Many biology students were going to major in biology changed their minds after having this person in an entry level course. Come on... Why create stress in kids when it is not needed. Freshman year is hard enough. Don't add to it by having incompetent people as instructors.
- Please do whatever you can to hold costs down. We have 3 kids in college (two at Univ. of MN) at the present, our financial struggle is hard to describe. I hear a lot about the Univ. of MN keeps trying to get more money from the legislature but never hear anything about the Univ. of MN trying to save money by whatever methods possible. A college education is a wonderful thing, the costs of obtaining it are getting out of control and causing a lot of pain and anguish. PLEASE take this into consideration.
- I strongly feel that lower middle class white families are discriminated against in regards to financial aid.
- I am quite pleased with how helpful the folks at OneStop have been. I love getting the parents newsletter emailed to me. Keep up the good work.
- I feel that both of my sons received a very good education, both completed their degree in four years, and both were able to secure employment in their fields before graduation. What more could a parent ask for? The added bonus for them was the opportunity of living in the twin cities. All around it was a very positive experience for both of them.
- One of the biggest problems my son has faced is having professors who are foreign who have such strong accents that he can't understand them.
- I'm thankful that the U of M encourages students to study abroad as it not only broadens horizons but promotes world community. I am confused as to why the cost for studying a semester abroad is the cost of a full year at the U of M. Our daughter is hoping to study in France next year and the cost is approximately \$13,000 for the semester. Because we feel this is a valuable part of her education (and probably because our older 2 children studied abroad) we will do what we can to send her. It just seems really expensive especially because we're responsible for airfare and 2 meals a day in addition to the cost of the program. P.S. I notice that there is an audio on the parent website in regard to studying abroad - I'll listen in.