

# Parent Survey 2010

By Marjorie Savage, Parent Program Director  
and Chelsea Petree, Graduate Assistant

Research conducted Spring 2010



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
Introduction.....	4
Method .....	5
Results.....	6
Discussion .....	28
References .....	32
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Survey questions .....	33
Appendix 2: Comparing first-year parents who attended Orientation with first-year parents who did not attend .....	43
Appendix 3: Topics parents have discussed with their students.....	45
Appendix 4: Parent comments .....	47

# Parent Survey Spring 2010

## Executive Summary

The mission of the University of Minnesota Parent Program is to provide communication between the University and the parents of our students in order to support student success, generate goodwill for the University, and promote an appropriate role for parents within the campus community. To assess our efforts to meet our mission, the Parent Program surveys parents of U of M students every two years.

The University of Minnesota Parent Survey has been conducted seven times since 1995, providing a longitudinal study of parental involvement and satisfaction with the services and programs offered to parents and family members. During that time, the University's parent-university relations have changed substantially, based on feedback from parents and University staff, research conducted in partnership with the U of M Department of Family Social Science, as well as on emerging practices nationally.

Programming and communications have also changed significantly based on new technologies, on the changing demographics of parents of U of M students, and on differences in characteristics of college students and their families that have been noted in national studies. Social scientists have recently coined the phrase "emerging adulthood" as a new category between adolescence and adulthood, covering the late teens to mid- or late-twenties. This new definition of young adults is described as postponing major life transitions such as marriage, home ownership, and child-bearing to explore different possibilities for love and work (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood means that students are remaining dependent on their families longer.

In recent years, parents have consistently reported high levels of satisfaction with communications, programs, and services and strong feelings of connectedness to the University. The results of the 2010 survey verify the continuance of those high levels of satisfaction. We also see continuing evidence that the majority of parents are using U of M communications in conversations with their students, discussing the topics we present and passing along messages we're delivering to parents.

Parent-student communication has evolved over the history of the parent surveys, due to the availability of new technologies, with parents following their students in adapting to these new communication formats. Traditional communication methods such as landline phones and postal service now are nearly non-existent, and in the two years since our previous survey, texting increased significantly, bringing down the rates of email and cell phone communications even further. We also have seen an increase in numbers of parents visiting their student on campus over time, and especially in 2010.

In this year's survey report, we have looked more closely at parental communication and contact based on parents' educational background, and we found some significant differences among parent populations: parents with no college education are more likely to be in touch with their student on a daily basis, more likely to discuss topics from University communications with their student, and more likely to attend Parent Orientation than those who have college experience. We also found that parents with the highest levels of education are the most likely to visit campus one or more times a month.

## Introduction

The University's parent program has evolved from an initiative in 1993, when the communication unit of the Office for Student Affairs was asked to develop a newsletter for parents of U of M students. The first survey of parents, conducted in 1995, was a readers' survey and focused on reactions to the newsletter. At the time, the University's parent services included a Parent Orientation program, managed by the New Student Orientation office, a parent handbook, and a quarterly newsletter. Reader responses to the initial survey indicated that while parents were satisfied with the newsletter, they were hoping for additional services and programs for parents. They asked for a reason for parents and families to come to campus—a Parents Weekend or similar event—and they said they wanted a parent contact person, someone to call when they had questions. As one parent expressed it, “The University is a big place. We don't need to understand the bureaucracy, we just need answers when we have questions.”

A more comprehensive survey of U of M parents was conducted in 1997, and biennial surveys were begun in 2002. Those early survey findings and respondents' comments led to the growth of parent services, and they inspired additional research projects on family relations at the college level.

The 2010 parent survey was conducted for the purpose of continuing to track parent attitudes toward the University, to learn more about our current population of parents, and to assess parent knowledge of and satisfaction with services and programs offered by the University Parent Program. Several minor changes were introduced to the longitudinal study in 2010:

New questions since 2008:

1. To the question, “How do you communicate with your student?” “Facebook or other social networking site” was added as an option.
2. Because we have found that methods of communication are changing along with technological advances, an additional question about social networking was inserted in addition to the above change: “Are you in contact with your student through social networking sites, such as Facebook or Twitter?”

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

3. In a question that asks for the respondent's greatest concern related to his or her student, we added “Living situation” as an option. Similarly, we added “Living situation” to a question about the issues on which the student most frequently sought help or advice from the respondent.
4. On a question asking how the respondent is related to the students, we added the options of stepmother and stepfather.

Deletion since 2008:

1. For the question, “The University Parent Program provides a number of online workshops, guides, and courses for parents. Have you viewed any of the following online

video and audio workshops on the University Parent website?” we deleted the following options:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Housing Workshop
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mental Health and the College Student Workshop
- \_\_\_\_\_ Study Abroad Workshop
- \_\_\_\_\_ Online workshop, “Career Guide for Parents”

Two options remained from the 2008 survey; 1) the online course, “Alcohol Use on Campus;” and 2) the online course, “Student Finances,” as these are the online courses that are most often promoted by the Parent Program office.

## Method

The survey was conducted online using an instrument provided by StudentVoice (studentvoice.com). Parents were notified of the survey through the parent listserv with multiple reminders between February and the end of April. The emails were distributed to nearly 8,000 parents who opted into the listserv. The listserv is used to send messages about every two weeks during the academic year and is described as the medium delivering the “most current information” to parents of U of M students. Parents learn about the listserv during Parent Orientation, in print newsletters, on the University Parent website, and through emails sent to parent email addresses by the Orientation & First-Year Programs office before students attend orientation. In addition to email invitations to participate in the survey, an article about the survey was published in the print University Parent newsletter. The print newsletter is mailed to the home addresses of full-time students who enrolled within the past five years, and it is sent to approximately 19,000 addresses. The article included instructions on how to access the online survey. Parents were also given the option of completing a paper survey and were asked to notify the parent office to have a paper copy of the survey mailed to them, although no parents opted to receive the paper version.

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 email or print newsletters. We received 1,663 online responses, which is the highest level of responses we’ve ever received for the biennial survey. This represents a response rate of approximately 20.7 percent of those registered for the parent listserv (8,040 were on the listserv at the beginning of 2010) or 8.8 percent of those who received the *University Parent* mailing.

Although there may be a concern that parents who do not have Internet access are less likely to respond, previous surveys have found that nearly all parents of University of Minnesota students have Internet access, either at home, at work, or both<sup>1</sup>. In the last four surveys, we have found that there were no notable differences between responses gathered online or on paper.

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2006 parent survey found that 100 percent 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 email and websites.

Even with the large sample size, our results do not represent the entire population of University of Minnesota parents for several reasons: our sample is self selected and not randomized; only parents who read the *University Parent* newsletter or messages from the email listserv are represented in the survey results; and the parents who opt into the listserv and who read the mailed newsletter are likely to be the most involved in their students' educational lives. Additionally, our results do not reflect statistical significant differences or findings.

### **Participants**

Among the 1,663 respondents, 80.85 percent were mothers; another 18.47 percent were fathers. Additional respondents reported being a student's stepmother, stepfather, grandmother, foster mother, sibling, or godfather. The gender of respondents' students was split fairly evenly, with 50.68 percent male and 49.25 percent female. One parent reported the student as transgender/other. The gender breakdown is slightly different from the 2009-2010 University of Minnesota enrollment data, which reported 47.9 percent male and 52.1 percent female (Office of Institutional Research, 2009).

The average age of survey respondents was 51.20 years, with a range from 27 to 70 years. It is noteworthy that the respondents on the bottom of the age spectrum were a sister (27 years) and a stepmother (32 years.) On the upper end were a father (70 years) and a grandmother (67 years).

Respondents represented a cross-section of students' academic classification, with response rates declining steadily over the four-year span; 31.58 percent were parents of freshmen, 24.78 percent sophomores, 21.20 percent juniors, and 18.97 percent seniors. A small number were parents of graduate students (2.78 percent), and a few didn't know their student's classification (0.68 percent).

While respondents reported living across the country, most parents came from the Twin Cities area (36.92 percent), Wisconsin (30.02 percent) or Greater Minnesota (17.03 percent). The rest came from multiple other states. Based on undergraduate enrollment data for 2009-2010, Wisconsin and other state respondents are overrepresented in the survey, and Minnesota residents are underrepresented. About 70 percent of the U of M undergraduate population was from Minnesota in 2009-2010, and 15 percent were from Wisconsin.

Nearly half of the parents responding to the survey (42.39 percent) had a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education; 30.64 percent had a master's or doctorate degree; and 9.14 percent cited high school graduation as the highest level of education. Just over 20 percent attended the University of Minnesota themselves.

## **Results**

### **Satisfaction and Feelings of Connection**

Parents rated their levels of satisfaction with the University's programs/services and communications based on a four-point Lykert scale. After a decrease in 2008, satisfaction with programming has risen again to 3.48 in 2010. Satisfaction with communication has remained relatively stable over the past years.

**Table 1: Levels of satisfaction**

	2002 survey	2004 survey	2006 survey	2008 survey	2010 survey
Programming	3.02	3.45	3.50	3.36	3.48
Communication	2.96	3.51	3.64	3.60	3.58

Additionally, we asked parents if they feel the University includes parents as part of the campus community. After a steady increase between 1995 and 2006, feelings of connection to the University dropped in 2008. In the 2010 survey, feelings of connection have risen again to an average score of 3.44 (based on a four-point scale).

**Table 2: Feelings of connection**

1995 survey	1997 survey	2002 survey	2004 survey	2006 survey	2008 survey	2010 survey
2.79	2.96	3.22	3.29	3.45	3.28	3.44

There was a connection between parents' level of involvement with campus programs and communications and their satisfaction and feelings of connectedness. Parents who attended Parent Orientation or Parents Weekend, and those who discussed with their student topics promoted in newsletters and courses, tended to report higher levels of satisfaction and connectedness than the overall population of parents. In 2008 the largest rates in satisfaction occurred among parents who reported participating in online courses and those who discussed content of online information with their students. In 2010, however, satisfaction and feelings of connectedness were similar across all types of involvement.

**Table 3: Effect of parent participation on satisfaction and connectedness**

	Satisfaction with programming	Satisfaction with communication	Feelings of connectedness
Attended Parent Orientation	3.49	3.60	3.46
Attended Parents Weekend	3.50	3.65	3.50
Discussed with student topics covered in the email or print newsletter	3.50	3.61	3.46
Participated in online courses and discussed content with student	3.50	3.60	3.52

### Communication and Campus Visits

Parents are continuing to communicate with their student on a regular basis. Almost three-quarters of parents (72.36 percent) reported communicating with their student two or more times a week, and 22.36 percent said they are in touch with their student one or more times a day. Only 5.17 percent of parents reported communicating less than once a week and 0.12 percent communicated less than once a month. While the number of parents who communicate two or more times a week has increased by more than 8 percent since 2008, the other categories have remained stable.

Although the frequency of communication has not changed dramatically since 2008, methods of communication have. Just as in 2008, the cell phone is still the most common way in which parents communicated with their students, but the percentages of parents using these methods



“almost always” or “often” has decreased from 92.80 percent in 2008 to 86.52 percent in 2010. Similarly, the number of parents using email frequently has fallen significantly from 61.50 percent in 2008 to 45.20 percent in 2010. Communication through regular mail (7.50 percent) and landline phones (3.00 percent) have continued to decline, while communication in person (19.75 percent) has remained stable.

Parents are adapting to changes in technology by communicating with their children through new technology. The percentage of parents who reported text messaging their students has nearly doubled since 2008 to 60.63 percent in 2010. In addition, 36.27 percent of parents reported that they are in touch with their student on Facebook or another social networking site. Because this is the first year we have asked about social networking, we cannot verify a change from previous years

**Table 4: Methods of communication**

	2008 survey	2010 survey
Cell phone	92.80%	86.52%
Landline phone	3.00%	1.27%
E-mail	61.50%	45.50%
Regular mail	7.50%	3.29%
Text messaging	32.90% (freshmen)	60.63%
In person	20.30%	19.75%
Facebook/social networking sites	---	36.27%

In 2010, 38.46 percent of parents visited campus once a month or more. This is a significant increase since 2008, when 26.6 percent visited campus once a month or more. These numbers were increasing at a much slower rate in previous years, with 25.7 percent in 2006, 23.7 percent in 2004, and 19 percent in 2002.

We asked parents to compare their involvement and communication with their college student to the involvement and communication their own parents demonstrated with them while they were in college. From 2004 to 2008, responses remained consistent with about 76 percent of parents describing themselves as more involved or much more involved than their parents. In 2010, however, parents in this category jumped to 83.92 percent. Just over 11 percent felt their involvement was about the same as their parents, and only three percent described themselves as less or much less involved than their parents. Just 1.71 percent of parents (compared to 9.6 percent in 2008) reported that the question was not applicable.

### **Student Residence**

Based on parents' responses to the question about students' living arrangements, we see first that we did not have a completely accurate survey sample of student residence. Nevertheless, the trends shown by the survey did reflect student trends.

Survey responses confirmed that on-campus housing is highest during the freshman year (92.8 percent of responses; although Housing & Residential Life reports 82.07 percent of the freshman class lives on campus). On-campus students dropped to 33.7 percent during the sophomore year, reflecting a known drop for on-campus students the second year. However, respondents' reports of sophomore students living on campus in 2010 indicated a decrease from 42.7 percent in 2008.

During the junior year, parents said that 14.9 percent lived on campus, and 11.8 percent of respondents said their student lived on campus during the senior year. These numbers are higher than would be expected based on campus housing data, but parents may consider “near campus” housing to be “on campus.”

At the same time, students living in non-University housing increased from 2.8 percent for freshmen to 50.6 percent for sophomores, 69.5 percent for juniors, and 74.8 percent for seniors. More freshmen and sophomores were living in non-University housing than in 2008. Freshmen had the lowest percentage of parents reporting that their students lived at home (1.8 percent), with this figure topping out during the sophomore year (5.2 percent) and dropping a bit by senior year (4.6 percent). Lastly, 5.5 percent reported their student living in a fraternity or sorority, with 2.2 percent (freshmen) and 9.2 percent (sophomores and juniors) indicating their student is in greek housing.

Even though only a small percentage of parents reported that their student was a commuter or transfer student, it is useful to examine these populations individually. In this survey, 3.60 percent (58 parents) reported that their student lived at home and 3.29 percent (53 parents) reported that their student transferred to the University.

When a student lived at home, parents were less likely to read all or most of the email newsletter (77.59 percent) and the print newsletter (58.62 percent) than parents who had students who live on campus (82 percent for email; 67.43 percent for print). Parents of commuter students rated their satisfaction with communication (3.52), programming (3.38), and feelings of connection to the University (3.22) slightly lower than the overall population of parents (3.58, 3.48, and 3.44 respectively).

Parents of transfer students also were less likely to read all or most of the email newsletter (75.47 percent) and the print newsletter (47.17 percent) compared with parents of students who began as a freshman with no college credit (84.53 percent for email; 66.28 percent for print). Parents of transfer students, however, did not differ from the overall population of parents on their satisfaction with communications, programming, or feelings of connection with the University.

### **Accessing Information**

Parents were asked how much they read of the email newsletter, sent approximately every two weeks, and the print newsletter, mailed three times a year. The majority of parents (81.60 percent) reported that they read all or most of the email newsletter; 65.60 percent reported reading all or most of the print newsletter. Additionally, nearly all parents (91.16 percent) reported that they had discussed topics covered in the newsletters with their students. Overwhelmingly, the most common topic of discussion was safety, with 64.0 percent of parents discussing this with their student. Other important topics were career issues (23.88 percent), housing (9.17 percent), events, activities, involvement opportunities (8.15 percent) and flu vaccinations/H1N1 (8.11 percent). The complete list of topics that parents identified as discussing with their student can be found in Appendix 3.

Parents also rated the importance of different sources of information about the University. The parent email newsletter was the top source for parents; 86.77 percent of parents reported using

this source ‘a great deal’ or ‘considerably.’ This was followed by the parent print newsletter (63.32 percent), their student (59.83 percent), the University of Minnesota One Stop website (52.92 percent), the University Parent website (43.05 percent), newspaper (15.58 percent), and radio/TV (11.67 percent).

When asked, “What other services would you like to see for parents,” half of the parents (50.80 percent) said there were none or they didn’t know of any. Several (14.0 percent) said they would like more information on a variety of topics, including housing, academics, upcoming deadlines, health care, and how to support their student. Similar to more information, some parents (4.16 percent) specified that they would like to have access to more information about their student, such as grades, bills, and student progress. Other parents (9.81 percent) wanted to see better communications in the form of a direct line for parents, access to faculty, access to emergency texts or emails, or communication with a ‘real’ person or through ‘real’ mail. Parents also wanted programming for out of town parents (4.16 percent), courses or webinars for parents (4.02 percent), more reasons to come to campus (3.35 percent), more financial aid and scholarships (2.95 percent) and ways to connect or network with other parents (2.01 percent). Just under one percent of parents named website changes and an additional 4.56 percent were miscellaneous responses, including bookstore discounts, campus maps, student-parent travel opportunities, and a sibling weekend.

Several of the services mentioned by parents are already offered by the Parent Program office, such as a financial course for parents, travel opportunities for parents and students, campus maps, emergency text and emails, and a contact person for parents.

### **Parent Expectations Related to Student Employment/Graduation**

While most parents do not expect their student to contribute heavily towards paying college expenses, students were working more than before. About a quarter (23.96 percent) of parents expected their student to contribute more than half of college expenses; 76 percent expected their student to contribute less than 50 percent. Nevertheless, the rate of students who work has risen since 2008: Looking at past data, the number of respondents who reported that their students did not work at all increased steadily between 2002 (24 percent) and 2008 (40.7 percent). In 2010, the number of students who did not work at all dropped back down to 32.09 percent. Most parents (61.58 percent) reported that their students work 20 hours or less each week. Older students worked more hours than younger students.

**Table 5: Number of hours students worked**

	All students	Freshmen	Seniors
Less than 9 hours per week	23.71%	30.14%	15.74%
9-12 hours per week	21.17%	13.11%	26.23%
13-20 hours per week	16.70%	6.26%	28.52%
21-30 hours per week	5.28%	0.98%	9.18%
31-40 hours per week	0.87%	0.39%	2.62%

Despite the fact that students were more likely to spend time working, parents had high expectations for their student to graduate within four years. In 2010, 83.65 percent of parents expected their student to graduate in four years or less. This expectation has continued to rise

since 2002, when only 58 percent of parents expected four-year graduation. As in 2008, almost 99 percent of parents believed their student would graduate in five years or less (less than four years, 10.19 percent; four years, 73.46 percent; five years, 15.29 percent; more than five years, 1.05 percent). The percentage of parents expecting their student to take more than five years to graduate has remained stable and low since 2006; this is assumed to be the result of efforts made by the University to promote the benefits of four-year graduation.

More than three quarters of parents, 76.57 percent, said that it was very important for their student to graduate in four or five years; 18.15 percent said that it was moderately important; 3.36 percent said that it was slightly important; and 1.93 percent said it was not important at all.

### Parent/Student Concerns

Since 2004, parents have been asked about their greatest concern regarding their student; they also were asked about the topics for which their student has most requested parental assistance or advice. 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 6: Question-This year, what has been your greatest concern regarding your student?**

All parents	Freshmen	Seniors
Health and safety 37.21%	Health and safety 40.70%	Career planning 35.50%
Career planning 15.33 %	Time management 13.31%	Health/safety 25.73%
Finances 10.94%	Finances 9.00%	Finances 10.10%
Time management 8.10%	Academics 6.65%	Other 9.45%
Other 9.7%	Other 6.46%	Academics 5.21%
Academics 6.49%	Living situation 6.07%	Personal relationships 2.93%
Living situation 4.33%	Career planning 6.07%	Time management 2.61%
Personal relationships 3.71%	Personal relationships 5.68%	Living situation 0.98%
Involvement opportunities 2.04%	Involvement opportunities 3.72%	Involvement opportunities 0.65%

Unsurprisingly, health and safety was the biggest concern for all parents (37.21 percent). The 2009-2010 academic year began with H1N1, and continued with a shooting on campus shortly before the parent survey was announced. There were additional campus safety issues while the survey was posted. Although health and safety has consistently been the top concern of parents, this number increased dramatically from 21.8 percent in 2008, presumably due to these atypical circumstances.

Other major shifts for all parents since 2008 included a decrease in concerns about academics, which fell from 12.7 percent to 6.49 percent in 2010 and personal relationships, which fell from 7.4 percent to 3.71 percent in 2010.

As in past surveys, areas of concern changed over the course of the students' college careers. Health and safety was the number one concern for parents of freshmen, with 40.70 percent naming this as their top concern. Health and safety continued to be the number one concern through sophomore (41.90 percent) and junior (37.03 percent) years. While it remained an important concern for parents of seniors, it ranked second at 25.73 percent and followed career planning.

Understandably, concerns regarding career planning were the lowest for parents of freshmen (6.07 percent) and grew each year until senior year (35.50 percent). Concerns about time management, meanwhile, went in the opposite direction, with parents of freshmen ranking this second overall (13.31 percent) and parents of seniors ranking it much lower (2.61 percent). Likewise, concerns about living situations decreased gradually from freshman to senior year.

**Table 7: Question-This year, on what topic has your student most requested your assistance or advice?**

All students	Freshmen	Seniors
Finances 28.74%	Finances 25.05%	Career planning 32.25%
Career planning 18.54%	Living situation 16.05%	Finances 30.94%
Living situation 12.05%	Career planning 11.74%	Academics 7.49%
Health and safety 8.90%	Academics 11.35%	Living situation 6.51%
Academics 8.90%	Health and safety 10.37%	Health and safety 5.54%
Other 6.24%	Other 6.46%	Other 4.23%
Personal relationships 4.51%	Personal relationships 5.48%	Personal relationships 3.91%
Time management 3.09%	Time management 3.33%	Time management 1.95%
Involvement opportunities 1.48%	Involvement opportunities 3.13%	Involvement opportunities 0.65%

As in 2008, finances were the issue on which students most often requested their parents' assistance and advice. Parents overall (28.74 percent) reported that this was the number one concern of their students, and concerns increased each year from freshmen (25.05 percent) to juniors (34.11 percent). For seniors, finances were identified as their second highest concern (30.94 percent). These numbers have remained fairly consistent since 2006.

Students increasingly requested assistance from their parents with career planning throughout their college career. During freshman year, 11.74 percent of parents considered career planning to be the most significant topic on which their students were seeking advice or assistance. This only went up slightly for parents of sophomores (17.21 percent) and juniors (18.66 percent). By senior year, parents rated career planning as the top concern of their students at 32.25 percent. This was comparable to parents' own concerns about career planning for their senior students. Comparing Table 6 and Table 7, we can see that parents and students frequently had different top concerns. For example, while health and safety was the top concern for parents overall and across years, students were not asking for advice or assistance in this area. However, parents and students had similar concerns about finances and career planning; while exact ranking varied, parents named these as among their own top concerns and top areas in which their students requested assistance.

Parents and students also differed in their concerns about living situations. Parents noted that students were asking for advice in this area across the years, yet it was not among the top concerns for parents. From freshman to senior year, the percentage of students requesting assistance about a living situation fell from 16.05 percent to 6.51 percent, while the percentage of parents naming this as a top concern started at only 6.07 percent for parents of freshman and dropped to 0.98 percent for parents of seniors.

Similarly, parents and students differed in their concerns about time management. However, for this area, parents reported higher concern than students, with the gap narrowing as students approached senior year, and parental concern about time management decreased.

One major difference since 2008 was the level of concern and requested advice about personal relationships. For parents overall and parents of freshmen, concerns about personal relationships have dropped to nearly half the rate of the previous survey; it fell from 7.4 percent for all parents in 2008 to only 3.71 percent of parents in 2010. Likewise, fewer parents in 2010 than two years earlier reported that their students requested advice or assistance about personal relationships. However, more parents of seniors named personal relationships as a top concern, rising from 0.6 percent of parents of seniors in 2008 to 2.93 percent of parents of seniors in 2010.

### **Geographic Influence**

As in 2006 and 2008, Wisconsin parents were the most satisfied with the University of Minnesota's communications for parents and including parents in the community. Parents who were residents of states outside of Minnesota and Wisconsin were the most satisfied with programs and services for parents, although there was only a small difference between these parents and Wisconsin residents. Note: responses for the questions that follow were listed as very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. We are citing just the "very satisfied" responses in this analysis.

Among all respondents, 61.66 percent indicated that they were very satisfied with communications with parents; 73.70 percent of Wisconsin parents reported they were very satisfied. This compared to 55.05 percent of Twin Cities residents, 55.11 percent of Greater Minnesota residents, and 64.34 percent of residents from other states. Overall, 45.86 percent of parents indicated that they were very satisfied with programs and services for parents; 50.39 percent of parents from other states reported that they were very satisfied compared to 50.10 percent of Wisconsin residents, 44.95 percent of Twin Cities residents, and 35.77 percent of Greater Minnesota residents. When asked whether they agreed that the University includes parents in the campus community, 49.63 percent of all respondents strongly agreed; 58.80 percent of Wisconsin residents strongly agreed compared with 44.61 percent of Twin Cities residents, 39.05 percent of Greater Minnesota residents, and 55.04 percent of residents of other states. (Responses for this question included strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.)

**Table 8: Satisfaction rates by geographic group ("very satisfied" responses)**

	All respondents	Wisconsin residents	Twin Cities residents	Greater Minnesota residents	Other residents
Very satisfied with communications for parents	61.66%	73.70%	55.05%	55.11%	64.34%
Very satisfied with programs and services for parents	45.86%	50.10%	44.95%	35.77%	50.39%
Strongly agrees that the University includes parents in community	49.63%	58.80%	44.61%	39.05%	55.04%

Also similar to 2008, Wisconsin residents reported the lowest levels of dissatisfaction with the University. Across all respondents, 3.22 percent reported feeling moderately or very dissatisfied with the University's communications with parents, while 1.45 percent of Wisconsin residents reported dissatisfaction; 3.37 percent of Twin Cities residents, 4.74 percent of Greater Minnesota residents, and 3.11 percent of residents from other states reported dissatisfaction with communication. Wisconsin residents (1.66 percent) and residents from other states (1.94 percent) reported lower levels of dissatisfaction with programs and services than all respondents (3.34 percent); 4.89 percent of Twin Cities residents and 4.38 percent of Greater Minnesota residents reported feeling moderately or very dissatisfied with program and services for parents. When asked whether they agreed that the University includes parents in the campus community, 4.89 percent of all parents moderately or strongly disagreed compared with 2.90 percent of Wisconsin residents and 4.66 percent of residents from other states. Higher rates of Twin Cities residents (6.06 percent) and Greater Minnesota residents (6.20 percent) moderately or strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Table 9: Dissatisfaction rates by geographic group**

	All respondents	Wisconsin residents	Twin Cities residents	Greater Minnesota residents	Other residents
Moderately/very dissatisfied with communications for parents	3.22%	1.45%	3.37%	4.74%	3.11%
Moderately/very dissatisfied with programs and services for parents	3.34%	1.66%	4.89%	4.38%	1.94%
Moderately/strongly disagrees that the University includes parents in community	4.89%	2.90%	6.06%	6.20%	4.66%

### **The Alumni Factor**

Since 2004, University of Minnesota alumni have reported higher levels of great satisfaction with the University than non-alumni. Alumni respondents indicating that they feel very satisfied has risen from 46.7 percent in 2004 to 61.7 percent in 2010 for communication and from 40.0 percent in 2004 to 48.8 percent in 2010 for programs and services. Likewise, alumni parents who strongly agreed with the statement that the University includes parents in the campus community rose from 23.3 percent in 2004 to 47.8 percent in 2010.

While rates of high satisfaction with communication and programming have remained relatively stable from 2008, this year saw a large increase in feelings of strong connection to the University, which increased to 47.8 percent of alumni parents strongly agreeing that they are part of the campus community.

**Table 10: Changes in alumni satisfaction and feelings of connection: 2004-2010**

	2004	2006	2008	2010
Very satisfied with communication	46.7%	66.7%	62.1%	61.7%
Very satisfied with programs/services	40.0%	57.7%	46.9%	48.8%
Strongly agree parents included	23.3%	49.5%	39.1%	47.8%

### **Generational Differences**

As in 2008, we examined how parents differed based on their ages, or which generational category they fit into. The 2010 parent respondents crossed three generations: the Greatest Generation—those born before 1945 (0.2 percent); the Baby Boomers—those born between 1945 and 1959 (54.95 percent); and Generation X—those born after 1960 (44.86 percent). However, because only three parents fall into the Greatest Generation, we only compared Baby Boomers and Generation X parents here.

Baby Boomers were slightly more likely than Generation X parents to discuss topics from the University's communications with their student (93.04 percent versus 89.94 percent), which is opposite from 2008 results. Generation X parents were more likely to consider the University Parent website as an important source of information (44.97 percent versus 41.39 percent), although the difference between generations has decreased since 2008.

Younger parents were in contact more frequently with their students than older parents; 24.44 percent of Generation X parents were in contact with their student one or more times a day, compared to 20.87 percent of Baby Boomers. Once again, the difference between the generations has decreased since 2008. The percentage of parents who sent text messages to their student has increased for both generations since 2008, with Generation X parents using the technology to the greatest extent; 53.14 percent of Baby Boomers texted almost always or often (compared to 23.5 percent in 2008) and 70.67 percent of Generation X parents texted almost always or often (compared to 37.3 percent in 2008).

Both older (37.86 percent) and younger (37.01) parents cited health and safety as their number one concern about their student. Older parents (17.33 percent) were slightly more likely to cite career planning as another main concern than younger parents (12.57 percent), while younger parents (13.41 percent) were somewhat more likely to name finances as a concern than older parents (9.01 percent).

Perhaps because finances were a bigger concern to Generation X parents, they were also more likely to expect their student to contribute financially to education expenses. Among Baby Boomers, 39.79 percent expected their student to contribute 10 percent or less financially, compared to 30.59 percent of Generation X parents. Similarly, fewer Baby Boomers (19.84 percent) expected their students to contribute 50 percent or more; 28.91 percent of Generation X parents expected their student to contribute at the 50 percent or higher level.



Just as in 2008, older parents were more likely to have higher levels of education. One explanation is that parents who had children when they were young may have had responsibilities that took precedence over or interfered with higher education. Fewer Generation X parents had a bachelor's degree or higher (64.62 percent) compared to Baby Boomers (79.77 percent). While only 22.9 percent of Generation X parents had a master's or doctorate degree, 36.83 percent of Baby Boomers fit this category.

### **Parents' Educational Levels**

There were differences in responses across the survey based on the amount of education completed by the parent. While specific information varied, first-generation parents and parents with less education utilized the University's resources more than those with higher levels of education. Parents who had no college experience were more likely to have read all of the print newsletter than parents who have a bachelor's degree (73.47 percent compared to 65.10 percent). They were also slightly more likely to have used the information from the newsletter when they talked to their student (95.92 percent versus 91.50 percent). As the educational level of parents increased, they were less likely to consider the print newsletter (42.18 percent for high school graduates versus 28.87 percent for doctorate degree), the email newsletter (67.35 percent for high school graduates versus 48.45 percent for doctorate degree), and the University Parent website (29.93 percent for high school graduates versus 12.37 percent for doctorate degree) as important sources of information (reported as using each source 'a great deal').

Parents with a high school education communicated more frequently with their student. Of those with no more than a high school diploma, 29.93 percent communicated one or more times a day. This compared to 20.53 percent of those with a bachelor's degree and 19.58 percent of parents with a doctorate degree.

Communication through cell phone was fairly equal across parents' educational levels. However, the use of email and text messaging for communication changed based on education. The higher the educational level, the more likely the parent was to communicate with their student through email (41.49 percent for high school graduates; 46.62 percent for bachelor's degree; 52.57 percent for doctorate degree). Parents with an associate's degree were the most likely to text their student (68.59 percent) followed by those with a bachelor's degree (61.29 percent), high school graduates (55.78 percent), and finally those with a doctorate degree (46.39 percent). Similarly, parents with an associate's degree were most likely to communicate through Facebook or another social networking site (46.60 percent), followed by high school graduates (38.78 percent), parents with a bachelor's degree (36.80 percent), and parents with a doctorate degree (31.96 percent).

Parents with more education visited campus most often. Of those with a high school diploma, 32.65 percent visited campus once a month or more, while 38.57 percent of parents with a bachelor's degree and 41.24 percent with a doctorate degree came to campus this frequently. On the other hand, parents with less education were more likely to have attended Parent Orientation when their student was first enrolled at the University. Almost all respondents with no more than a high school diploma (95.92 percent) attended Parent Orientation. This decreased gradually as educational level increased; 87.63 percent of parents with a doctorate degree attended. There were no significant differences across educational level in Parent's Weekend attendance.

The biggest difference in parental concerns based on educational levels was that of finances. While 19.73 percent of high school graduates named this as their greatest concern, only 9.24 percent of parents with a bachelor's degree did. This decreased even further for parents who had a doctorate or equivalent degree (5.15 percent). However, this is likely to be related to the parent's financial situation. Of parents who had a high school diploma, 40.14 percent expected their student to contribute 50 percent or more to college finances. This decreased to 21.40 percent for parents with a bachelor's degree and 7.21 percent for parents with a doctorate degree.

### **The Orientation Effect**

Parents who attend orientation interact much differently with the University, their student, and the communications, events, and activities provided for parents. They are significantly more likely to receive and read the parent emails (82.8 percent of orientation attendees read all or most of the parent emails and 66.9 percent read all or most of the print newsletter; of non-attendees, 72.8 percent read all or most of the emails and 58.02 percent read all or most of the print newsletter.) 92.2 percent of attendees talk to their student about the topics the University mentions to parents, compared to 83.3 percent of non-attendees.

After receiving the introduction to the University that orientation provides, 63.2 percent of attendees were very satisfied with the University's communications and 33.4 percent were satisfied. This compared with non-attendees, among whom 49.9 percent were very satisfied and 45.7 percent were satisfied.

Parents who attended orientation were the most involved and were in touch with their students more often: 22.9 percent were in touch one or more times a day; another 44.1 percent were in touch two or three times a week. By comparison, 17.9 percent of non-attendees were in touch daily and 46.4 percent were communicating two or three times a week. They are also more likely to visit their student on campus: among those who attended orientation, 84.3 percent visited campus one or more times a semester, compared to 74.7 percent of non-attendees.

**Table 11: Levels of satisfaction and feelings of connection based on orientation attendance**

	Orientation Attendance	
	Yes	No
Communication		
Very satisfied	63.16%	49.38%
Very/moderately dissatisfied	2.92%	4.94%
Programs/services		
Very satisfied	46.34%	42.77%
Very/moderately dissatisfied	2.83%	6.92%
Feelings of connection		
Strongly agree	50.34%	45.28%
Moderately/strongly disagree	4.13%	10.07%

### **The Email/Newsletter Effect**

When we filtered the results for parents who receive and read "all or most" of the email newsletters, we found parents who are more likely to address with their students the topics we present in any format: 94.4 percent compared to 80.4 percent who read only some or none of the

emails. They were also more satisfied with the University's communications (66.37 percent very satisfied and 31.1 percent satisfied) compared to those who read some or none (41.7 percent very satisfied and 48.7 percent satisfied); more satisfied with programs and services (47.9 percent very satisfied and 38.4 percent satisfied) than those who read some or none (36.9 percent very satisfied and 42.4 percent satisfied); and more likely to feel included in the University community (52.3 percent strongly agree and 43.9 percent agree) versus those who read some or none of the emails (37.2 percent strongly agree and 52.9 percent agree).

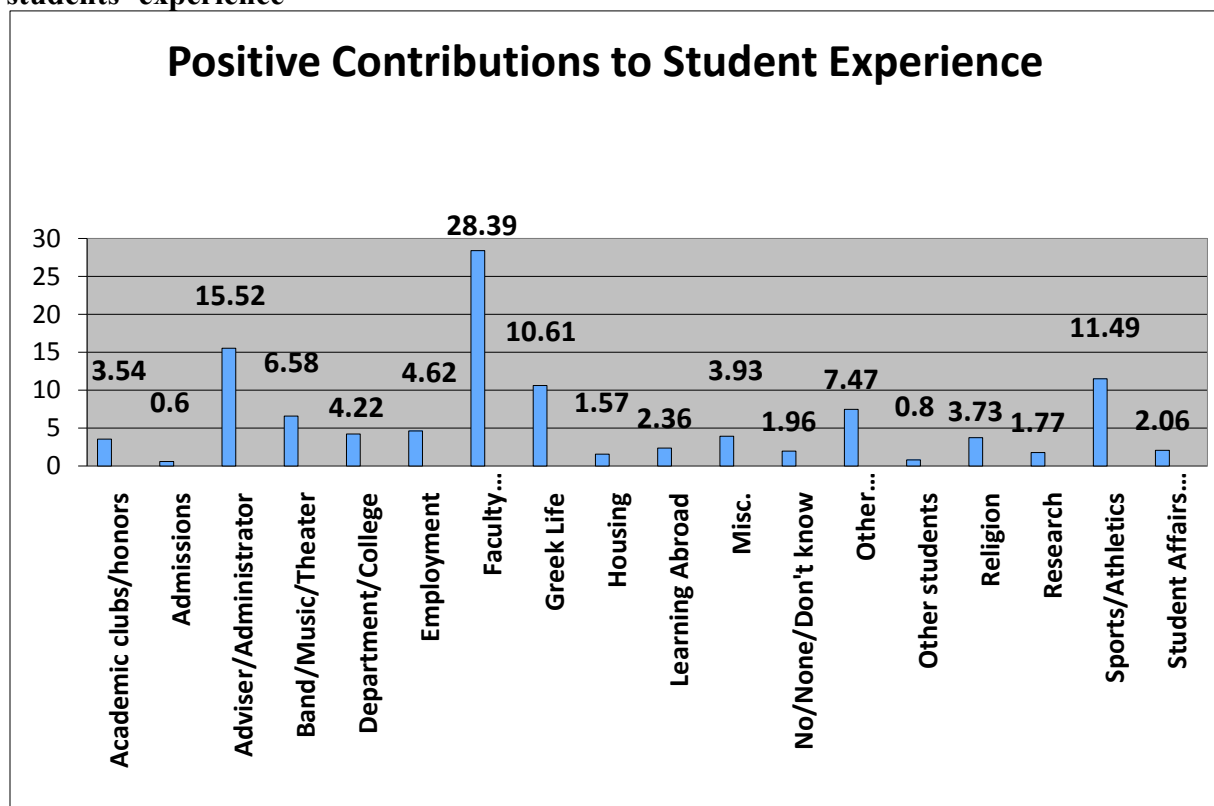
Perhaps significantly, we also saw that fathers are less likely than mothers to receive and read the email information (among respondents who read all or most of the emails, 16.7 percent were fathers or stepfathers; of those who read some or none, 27.1 percent were fathers or stepfathers. For reference, 18.47 percent of the total survey respondents were fathers or stepfathers).

### **Positive Influences on Students**

Once again, the 2010 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.

Just over 1,000 parents responded to this question, and responses included a wide range of faculty and staff members, activities, and organizations. Responses have been divided into 18 categories. There was one change in categories since 2008: a new category, *other organizations and activities*, was added while the *ROTC* category, which only yielded two responses in 2010, was included in the miscellaneous comments. The categories are represented in the chart below, along with the percentage of responses that fit into each category. Additionally, the categories are further defined with parent comments after the chart.

**Chart 1: People and organizations that made a positive contribution to respondents' students' experience**



The most-frequently cited category was faculty member/TA/tutor; a total of 289 parents, or 28.39 percent of respondents cited a faculty member, TA, or tutor as a positive influence on their student. Some parents did not mention a specific name, but spoke of these influences in general:

*“A number of the professors in the Economics and Business curriculum have positively affected my son's experience providing him with valuable insights into his major and the type of work that he will be doing post graduation.”*

*“Each term there has been a teacher or two that she has particularly enjoyed, whether she thought she'd like the subject or not.”*

Other parents, however, included specific information about the faculty and/or the ways in which they contributed to their student's experience (names have been removed):

*“XXX (honors stats professor in CSOM) is a professor with very high standards who our daughter enjoyed having and meeting his expectation.”*

*“XXX Journalistic Law professor had a very positive impact on our daughter.”*

Advisers and administrators were also frequently cited by parents; 158 comments, or 15.52 percent, mentioned an adviser or administrator as a positive contributor:

*“XXX, Carlson - great adviser, very helpful with a stressful medical situation with our son, totally went out of his way.”*

*“Adviser: helped my daughter (become) aware (of) different career opportunities related to different majors.”*

Admissions staff was mentioned in six comments, or less than one percent:

*“Admissions was very helpful when she transferred.”*

*“The admissions office. She was assigned a counselor, whose name I cannot remember now but it was a U of M student who had graduated, and she was very helpful and accessible.”*

Additionally, a number of respondents (43 comments, or 4.22 percent,) acknowledged their student’s department or college, rather than identifying a particular faculty or staff member:

*“I would recommend Carlson to anyone. Our son just got what I would call an unbelievable job offer today! Carlson has been a wonderful experience for him.”*

*“My son loves the entire CBS faculty and program. He is so proud to be a part of it and finds the academic challenge very stimulating.”*

Clubs, activities, and organizations were commonly named as a positive contribution. Some respondents (36 comments or 3.54 percent) named academic clubs or honors programs:

*“The University Honors Program has been a big influence on my son.”*

*“He absolutely loves his classes.”*

Involvement in band, music, or theater received 67 comments (6.58 percent):

*“The Marching Band Program- my son loves it and has made many friends in the band. His roommates this year are all from the marching band”*

*“Also my son’s participation in Campus Orchestra has allowed him to continue playing his clarinet without having to be a music major.”*

Participation in sports and athletics was a common response, with 117 comments (11.49 percent). Involvement included many levels, from spectator to student athlete:

*“[My] son was student manager for gopher basketball for four years; absolutely positive experience.”*

*“Intramural sports have eased the tension of too much studying and helped her meet new students outside of her dorm.”*

Some parents (76 comments or 7.47 percent), mentioned an activity or organization (both formal and informal) that did not fit into an academic, arts related, or athletic activity.

*“The number of clubs and organizations is unbelievable. We’ve encouraged our 2 boys to participate in something to meet more people and have a positive experience.”*

*“The Muslim Student’s Association...At the MSA room in Coffman, she found a comfortable, small place to hang out between classes. Older students showed her the ropes, and helped her to break the ice and make new friends.”*

Learning abroad was cited by 24 parents (2.36 percent):

*“Her semester of studying in Italy was a great thing. For a kinesiology major, studying Italian was not really an essential, just a dream.”*

*“She did a study abroad in Venezuela last semester which was also a fabulous experience and greatly influenced her.”*

Employment was named as a positive influence by 4.62 percent of parents, or 47 comments:

*“She works with the YMCA through campus. Helping the children makes her feel great!”*

*“Also my son’s work as a reporter for the Minnesota Daily provided a fun, challenging and flexible work experience for him for the past 3 years.”*

The positive experience of research opportunities was named by 18 respondents (1.77 percent):

*“My daughter was fortunate to get a research job in her area of interest during the first month of school. She prizes this above anything else in her life and hopes to retain the job all four years.”*

*“XXX lab and staff, was where our son started research his Frosh and Soph. years and was a terrific experience for him.”*

Housing and its living/learning communities were listed by several parents (16 comments or 1.57 percent) as a positive influence:

*“Casa Sol: this small community & the freshman seminar classes he attended really got him involved w/campus life, making new friends, using the resources to help him succeed his 1st 2 semesters.”*

*“The Honors housing at Middlebrook is a fantastic place for like-minded students to live, collaborate and study together.”*

Additionally, involvement in Greek life was named by 108 respondents, or 10.61 percent:

*“Alpha Kappa Psi business fraternity. She has established strong friendships, done service activities and had a terrific time.”*

*“Alpha Chi Omega sorority has helped my daughter know a smaller community within the University.”*

*“Sorority life gave my daughter a sense of belonging. This was very important to her as a transfer student.”*

Religion, in particular Campus Crusade for Christ and Campus Outreach received 38 responses (3.73 percent):

*“Campus Crusade for Christ-has supported his previous good decisions and has given him an amazing peer group!!!!!!”*

*“His involvement with Campus Outreach has had the greatest and most positive impact on him this year.”*

Eight respondents (less than one percent), listed other students as a positive contributor to their student’s experience:

*“I know he really connected with his roommate. It has made his first year a good one.”*

*“The dorm resident student that helps freshmen adjust to living on campus.”*

Student Affairs staff and first-year programs were cited as well (21 comments or 2.06 percent); Parent services were specifically mention several times:

*“The freshman orientation was really great. I saw a lot of positive students that made us feel welcome and less afraid of our first year.”*

*“Marjorie Savage does an outstanding job of communicating with parents through the Parent Newsletter on-line.”*

Twenty parents (1.96 percent) said there was no significant influence or that they could not remember anything specific:

*“They have not mentioned anyone specifically.”*

*“I am sure there are but my student would have to explain.”*

Finally, there were 40 (3.93 percent) miscellaneous comments, relating to various aspects of campus:

*“The entire university has been very helpful both to my daughter and my son who attended.”*

*“We have been overwhelmingly satisfied with our son's experience at your university. Keep up the great work :)”*

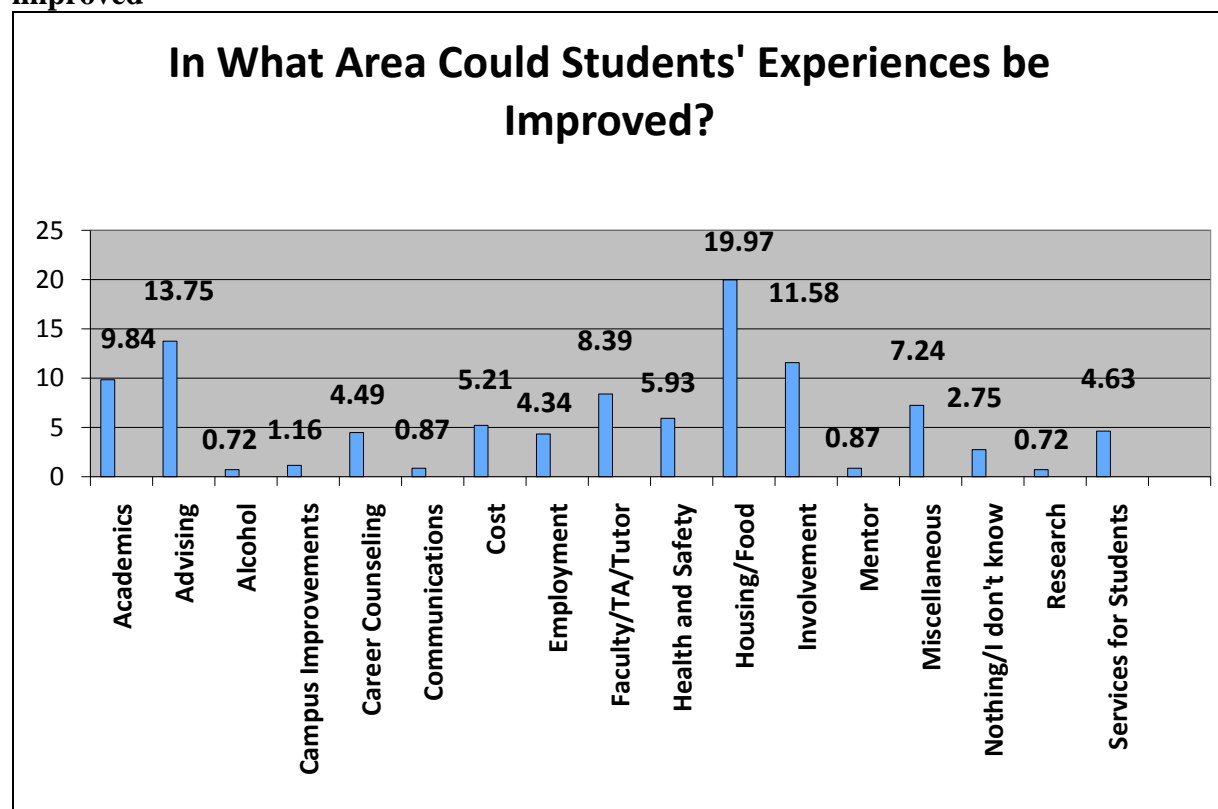
### **What could have improved their students' experience**

The survey also asked parents whether there was something that would have improved their students' experience at the University of Minnesota. Just under half of the respondents (691 parents) commented on this question.

Responses have been divided into 17 categories, with one less category than in 2008 (*student workshops*). The categories are represented in the chart below, along with the percentage of responses that fit into each category. Additionally, the categories are further defined with parent comments after the chart.



**Chart 2: How students' experiences of the University of Minnesota could have been improved**



The top area in which parents felt there could be an improvement was housing and food; 138 parents (19.97 percent) commented in this area. Problems included small dorm rooms, issues with roommates, a lack of connection with hallmates, or the location of housing. Additionally, parents cited concerns about food such as dining hall hours, the difficulty in finding healthy food choices, or allergy needs. Some comments included:

*“Dorm living: CAs need to help students on their floor realize they are only one of a large population and need to be considerate of others.”*

*“He was given a single room. I think it made it a bit more difficult for him to feel a part of things at first.”*

*“My daughter had a difficult time managing the food choices with her dietary limitations.”*

Another area mentioned by a large number of parents (98 responses or 13.75 percent) was advising. Parents mostly mentioned that it would have helped their student to have more time with an adviser or a better matched adviser:

*“Someone that could really give her advice and help her figure out how to best fit her classes together. She still has not found someone to help her with this.”*

*“Having his advisor take a more interested role. He has gone in to ask for advice but felt like she did not provide the help he needed.”*

Involvement, or meeting people and making friends, was named by 80 parents (11.58 percent). Parents mentioned both specific activities they wished were available and need for involvement in general:

*“I wish he had taken advantage of the cultural offerings on campus.”*

*“I wish he would be more involved in other clubs, and make greater use of the facilities such as the athletic centers and pools.”*

*“Since my student is quiet, it would have been nice if there was something that would draw him out more and take part in activities to meet more people.”*

Academics was another area several parents (68 comments; 9.84 percent) felt could be improved upon:

*“Less general classes and more geared towards his degree.”*

*“More group-oriented and project-oriented learning than the traditional lecture-homework-quiz-exam based learning.”*

Faculty, TAs, and tutors were named by 58 parents (8.39 percent). Of these comments, the most common concern was that students found nonnative English speakers difficult to understand. Other concerns included a lack of focus on teaching and a disconnection between teachers and students:

*“It is also our observation that teachers who are at the University primarily for research purposes do not make the best teachers in cases we have observed with both our students who have attended the University of Minnesota.”*

*“He talks a lot about how hard it is for him to understand the teachers/professors that are foreign.”*

*“I believe our son would have been more successful had he connected with some of his professors.”*

Not surprisingly, there was an increase since 2008 in parents that listed health and safety as an area that needed improvement (41 comments or 5.93 percent):

*“Better service at Boynton clinic. That seems to be OK for very minor things, but we never felt very confident with their services.”*

*“I know she was concerned (as were we) about walking across campus safely after concerts, recitals, etc. considering the high number of attacks on students.”*

Parents thought that the experience could be improved through lowered tuition or fees (36 comments or 5.21 percent). These comments included not just the overall cost of attendance, but also the lack of scholarships and financial aid:

*“If the cost of tuition and housing was less, my son would have been able to participate in more activities on campus. In order to pay rent (he pays for his off-campus housing) and living expenses, he has had to work too much to be involved in these activities.”*

*“More beneficial financial aid or lower costs would reduce his (and our) anxiety.”*

Services for students were mentioned by 32 parents (4.63 percent) and included different areas in which students could use more assistance:

*“Helping them plan ahead more (i.e. for summer internships and overall career planning) know these are available, but how do you get your child to pay attention to these issues more.”*

*“I think all college students should have to take basic financial life skills class that reviews all the basics...banking, credit, borrowing money, a bit on investing.”*

Parents also said that students could use more assistance in career counseling (31 comments or 4.49 percent):

*“Better help in help finding a job after graduation.”*

*“More career guidance counseling.”*

Employment improvements were named by 30 parents (4.34 percent), with most parents concerned about the lack of jobs:

*“A job fair at orientation or prior to school starting. He has not been able to secure a job even though he has \$2400 in work study money.”*

*“He needs a job on campus.”*

Some parents (19 comments or 2.75 percent) indicated that there was nothing the University could have done to improve their experiences. Comments included:

*“She loves it there, the whole experience has been great for her.”*

Campus improvements, mostly about the location of grocery stores, were named by 8 parents (1.16 percent):

*“A bus that takes students directly to a grocery store that sells affordable groceries such as Cub Foods.”*

*“More bike lanes on campus for safety of bike riders.”*

Six parents thought that having a mentor could have improved their students’ experiences:

*“I would have liked another student to have been a mentor to him in his field or as a transfer student just to have checked up on him and how he was doing or feeling a part of the university, that first year.”*

Another six parents felt the University lacked communication in some areas:

*“Better communication between some professors and teaching assistants - mixed messages many times is frustrating for students.”*

A small number of parents named concerns about alcohol (five comments):

*“It bothers me that kids have easy access to alcohol; that there’s no surveillance/consequences of drinking.”*

And more research options were listed as a way to improve their students’ experiences by five parents:

*“More opportunities for getting involved in research.”*

Finally, 50 parents (7.24 percent) listed a miscellaneous improvement. Several of these comments concerned issues outside the University’s control, such as distance from home, high school standards, even the weather.

*“A closer knit, more unified body of students.”*

*“Better preparation for college at the high school level.”*

Parents occasionally also used humor in their responses:

*“Beating Wisconsin in Gopher football!”*

## **Discussion**

Considering the University Parent Program’s mission, vision, and desired outcomes as the measure for serving parents and families, the survey shows continuing and increasingly positive results. Satisfaction rates for communications, programs, and services are extremely strong. Parents seem to understand the messages they receive in terms that apply to student success, and they are supporting and reinforcing those messages by repeating them to their students. With 95 percent of respondents saying they feel the University includes parents in the campus community, the goals for developing parents’ affinity for the institution are being met. We have not, however, measured whether parents understand when to step in and help their student and when to empower their student to take responsibility, a key outcome for parents.

The results confirm that when parents are engaged in University activities, events, and communications, they are more satisfied with the University, and they feel more connected to the institution. Perhaps more importantly, they are more likely to help the University deliver the messages it wants students to receive. Among the most critical factors in engaging parents are attendance in Parent Orientation programs and providing ongoing information through email and print newsletters.

To the extent that parents can be enticed to attend Parent Orientation, we have the opportunity to build more loyalty to the institution and to promote student success. In addition, if we can convince parents to sign up for electronic communications from the Parent Program, we have more opportunity to build satisfaction rates, maintain high levels of affinity, and engage parents in reinforcing campus messages.

Analysis of the data reveals differences among parent populations based on segmenting by factors such as parents’ generational status and, perhaps more significantly, educational background. The current communication methods and programs—notably Parent Orientation—are particularly effective with parents who have less education. Those with no college background are more likely to attend Parent Orientation, to read all or most of the parent communications, and talk with their students about the topics we present. They also tend to talk with their students more frequently, which may mean more timely delivery of relevant messages. This would seem to indicate we are meeting our goals of supporting students who would be expected to have less social capital due to a family background based in higher education.

As we track parents’ educational background from some college to bachelor’s, master’s, and Ph.D. degrees, we see parents communicating less often with their student, less likely to read all or most of our communications, and less likely to attend Parent Orientation. At the same time, though, we see these parents coming to campus more often to visit their student. The students of more highly educated parents may not require as much parental support during the college years

because of the family's social and cultural capital, but their parents' more frequent visits suggest different types of programming and information to address messaging and increase affinity. Parents can be introduced in person to campus resources, encouraged to look for signs in their students' behavior that may indicate potential problems, and take part in campus events that will help them feel more connected to the institution.

We also noted differences in the ways parents of transfer students and commuter students responded to Parent Program services. Both used communications less frequently than other parents, and commuter parents were less satisfied with communications, programs, and services, and felt less connected to the campus community. By working with commuters and with transfer students to determine the messages they would like their parents to hear, we may be able to better serve those families.

A few survey results show distinct changes from previous years, and it will be important to consider in future surveys whether these are changing trends or reflective of current events. The increase in parents' expectations related to their students' employment may be a response to the current economy. Media reports indicate that young adults are among the most likely to be unemployed; students may be having more difficulty finding high school jobs or summer employment, meaning that they come to school with fewer savings. Parents themselves may be unemployed or facing financial challenges. On the other hand, parents may be more aware of the expectations of employers to hire candidates with multiple internships and with a strong work history.

The 2010 survey saw a significant rise in parents' concerns about health and safety. As noted earlier, this increase may be, at least in part, situational. The media—and the Parent Program—discussed H1N1 frequently during the first half of the 2009-2010 academic year, and it was a widespread topic in the popular press. The campus shooting in January, shortly before the survey was posted, raised significant alarm among families, and safety continued to be on the minds of parents throughout the rest of the academic year.

A continuing trend shown by the results indicates that we have not found a solution to the concern that Minnesota parents—those who live in the Twin Cities as well as those from Greater Minnesota—report lower satisfaction rates with the communications, programs, and events than out-of-state parents, and they report feeling less connected with the University. We might speculate that Minnesota residents are likely to receive more messages from and about the University than out-of-state parents, including news reports unflattering to the University, which could negatively affect their feelings about the University. They may have longstanding opinions about the University that are difficult to change based on their experience as a parent of multiple University applicants or students. Or they may have cultural tendencies toward modesty that cause Minnesotans to be less likely to heap high praise on anything local.

It is notable that U of M alumni parents have dramatically increased their rates of satisfaction during the years the survey has been conducted. In 2004, 46.7 percent said they were very satisfied with the University's communications; that percentage increased significantly to 61.7 percent in 2010. The very satisfied designation for programs and services increased somewhat among alumni from 40.0 percent in 2004 to 48.8 percent in 2010. When asked if they feel the

University includes parents in the campus community, the number who strongly agreed doubled for alumni parents from a low of 23.3 percent in 2004 to 47.8 percent in 2010. Such significant increases have not been noted in other population segments.

### **Implications**

Today's parents remain highly involved in the lives of their students, and they are comfortable with that level of involvement. They know they are more involved than their own parents were when they were the age their children are now. They are taking advantage of the communications, programs, and services, and they are largely meeting our desired outcomes for parental involvement. Most parents are pleased with the information, programs, and services the University provides, and we are largely commended as doing better than the institutions their other children attend.

At the same time, however, a significant number of parents want more from the University and from the Parent Program. Rather disturbingly, many parents—when asked what more they would like the Parent Program to provide—listed services or information we are already providing. Not all parents seem to be aware of what we offer, and many of the suggestions they made referred to services or communications we had addressed in the survey. Moreover, many of their suggestions were for information we cannot provide because of data privacy, or that is not routinely provided to parents of college-level students.

FERPA continues to be a bone of contention. Despite the efforts to provide parent/guest access to the University's One Stop website, which hosts student record information such as registration, finances, and grades, parents are frustrated with their inability to see their student's grades and financial information when students do not grant access to them. Some of their frustrations come from not knowing a student's grades and academic progress as the semester progresses, information that is not tracked at the University level. The ease of tracking student progress that was available to them at the K-12 level probably contributes to confusion about why the University can only provide parents end-of-semester grades, and then only with student permission.

The Parent Program, along with the Admissions office and Parent Orientation, should consider ways to better explain what is possible and what is available for parents of our students. Moreover, we need to find ways to explain what is not possible. Some parents indicated they would like campus guest rooms for family members to use when they visit; others want significant discounts at both on- and off-campus businesses, including the Bookstore, local hotels, and local restaurants. Free parking was requested, and some would like access to staff who could arrange concierge services for them, such as getting tickets for campus events and athletics as well as local theater and concert events.

Many parents asked for more weekend programming for parents, beyond Parents Weekend; this year the Parent Program responded by working with both the Alumni Association and the Athletic Ticket Office to promote campus activities on multiple weekends, and Athletics made discounted tickets available for each of the home football games.

A number of parents also asked for “more” or “different” options for out-of-state parents, but it is unclear what they want. They said they have different needs than local parents, but there were no specific requests, aside from some suggestions that we provide a chatroom, discussion board, or blog for out-of-state parents. A new Facebook page for parents of U of M students may meet some of their communication and involvement needs.

All of these points lead to the need to continue to seek information from parents on what they use and what they are missing. Family support is an important element in student success; their students are seeking answers to everyday questions from their parents; and by providing information and services to parents, we are serving their students. As we move forward, facing the possibility that we will have more students whose parents did not attend college, we must consider the different ways parents of first-generation students interact with the University community and with their students, as well as assessing the language we use and the services we provide.

Finally, as parents explore and adapt new communication technologies, the Parent Program is likely to benefit by using emerging technology to reach parents. Although all parents will not migrate as early adapters to new communication forms, a mix of communication methods—snail mail, email, and newer forms such as texting and social networking—should ensure wide coverage and relevance for all audience segments. Continuing research must seek out information on changing trends in communication patterns.

### **Limitations**

It is likely that the responses we received on this survey came primarily from the most involved and engaged parents. Nearly all respondents (93.87 percent) indicated that they read at least some of the email newsletter. Our subscriber list for the parent emails, however, was approximately 8,000, less than half the distribution of the print newsletter, which is sent to ‘the parent of’ all full-time undergraduates who started at the University within the previous five years. Parents who attend Parent Orientation, closely read print materials, and are most inclined to sign up for the emails are likely to be more engaged parents who have been closely involved in their students’ education throughout their lives. Consequently, we may have biased responses on how parents use our information, whether they attend parent events, and what their primary concerns are. We may also have inaccurate demographic information.

The campus area crimes that occurred shortly before the distribution of the survey clearly colored parents’ responses, as did publicity throughout the fall semester related to H1N1 influenza. The changes noted in the 2010 survey as compared to previous surveys related to parents’ greatest concerns will need to be viewed from the perspective of the high level of concern for students’ health and safety. The number of parents selecting that category as their top concern very likely affected the responses to all other categories.

### **Future Research**

Along with timely issues that occur within the next year, we will consider the following additions to the 2012 University of Minnesota Parent Survey based on the results and analyses of the 2010 survey:



1. In order to further assess parental involvement, we will ask if parent respondents are members of the U of M Parents Association.
2. To measure in-depth parent involvement, we will construct survey items to measure whether parents understand when to step in and help their student and when to empower their student to take responsibility.
3. As we continue to develop additional online workshops and courses for parents, we will include these options to determine if parents are using these tools.

## References

- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging Adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469-480.
- Office of Institutional Research. (2009). *Campus and unit enrollment by level and gender*. Retrieved from [www.oir.umn.edu/static/stix/fall09/fall\\_2009\\_enrollment\\_report.pdf](http://www.oir.umn.edu/static/stix/fall09/fall_2009_enrollment_report.pdf) (page 10).

## Appendix 1: 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. How much of it 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 at the of our students. How much of it do you read?  
☐ All of 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  
If yes, please list any topics you recall discussing with your student. (open-ended, leave space for response)
4. To what extent are each of the following a source of information about the University for you? - Your student  
☐ A great deal  
☐ Considerable  
☐ Moderately  
☐ Slightly  
☐ Not at all
5. To what extent are each of the following a source of information about the University for you? – Newspaper  
☐ A great deal  
☐ Considerable  
☐ Moderately  
☐ Slightly  
☐ Not at all

6. To what extent are each of the following a source of information about the University for you? – Radio/TV
- ☐ A great deal
  - ☐ Considerable
  - ☐ Moderately
  - ☐ Slightly
  - ☐ Not at all
7. To what extent are each of the following a source of information about the University for you? – Parent e-mail newsletter
- ☐ A great deal
  - ☐ Considerable
  - ☐ Moderately
  - ☐ Slightly
  - ☐ Not at all
8. To what extent are each of the following a source of information about the University for you? – Parent print newsletter
- ☐ A great deal
  - ☐ Considerable
  - ☐ Moderately
  - ☐ Slightly
  - ☐ Not at all
9. To what extent are each of the following a source of information about the University for you? – University parent website
- ☐ A great deal
  - ☐ Considerable
  - ☐ Moderately
  - ☐ Slightly
  - ☐ Not at all
10. To what extent are each of the following a source of information about the University for you? – University One Stop website
- ☐ A great deal
  - ☐ Considerable
  - ☐ Moderately
  - ☐ Slightly
  - ☐ Not at all

11. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the University's communications for parents and guardians of University students.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Moderately dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Unable to judge

12. 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

13. How do you communicate with your student? – In person

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

14. How do you communicate with your student? – Student's cell phone

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

15. How do you communicate with your student? – Student's landline phone

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

16. How do you communicate with your student? – E-mail

- ☐ Almost always

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

17. How do you communicate with your student? – Regular mail

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

18. How do you communicate with your student? – Text messaging

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

19. How do you communicate with your student? – Instant messaging

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

20. How do you communicate with your student? – Facebook or other social networking site

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

21. Are you in contact with your student through social networking sites, such as Facebook or Twitter?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

22. How often do you visit campus?

- ☐ More than once a week

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Once a semester
- ☐ Less than once a semester

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

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not aware of it

24. What was the most useful information you received at Parent Orientation?

25. What was missing from Parent Orientation?

26. Why did you decide not to attend Parent Orientation?

27. Have you ever attended Parents Weekend events?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not aware of it

28. How satisfied were you with the activities for parents at the event?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Moderately dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

29. Please explain your answer above.

30. Why did you decide not to attend any of the Parents Weekend events?

31. The University Parent Program provides a number of online workshops, guides, and courses for parents. Have you participated in either of the following online courses? - Seminar for parents, "Alcohol Use on Campus"

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not aware of these courses

32. The University Parent Program provides a number of online workshops, guides, and courses for parents. Have you participated in either of the following online courses? - Seminar for parents, "Student Finances"

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not aware of these courses

33. Have you talked with your student about the information presented at any of the workshops/courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

34. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the University's programs and services for parents and guardians of University students.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Moderately dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Unable to judge

35. What other services would you like to see for parents?

36. 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
- ☐ Moderately agree
- ☐ Moderately disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

37. What is your student's current academic classification?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate student
- ☐ Unsure

38. This year, what has been your greatest concern regarding your student?

- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Finances

- ☐ Academics
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Campus or community involvement opportunities
- ☐ Career planning
- ☐ Personal relationships
- ☐ Living situation
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ None

39. This year, on what topic has your student most requested your assistance or advice?

- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Finances
- ☐ Academics
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Campus or community involvement opportunities
- ☐ Career planning
- ☐ Personal relationships
- ☐ Living situation
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ None

40. What percentage of your student's college expenses do you expect him/her to contribute?

- ☐ 0% - 10 %
- ☐ 11% - 25%
- ☐ 26% - 50%
- ☐ 51% - 75%
- ☐ 76% or more

41. How many hours per week does your student work?

- ☐ Less than 9 hours per week
- ☐ 9 - 12 hours per week
- ☐ 13 - 20 hours per week
- ☐ 21 - 30 hours per week
- ☐ 31 - 40 hours per week
- ☐ More than 40 hours per week
- ☐ My student does not work

42. Where does your student work?

- ☐ On campus
- ☐ Off campus



- ☐ Both on and off campus
- ☐ My student doesn't work

43. How many credit hours is your student currently taking?

- ☐ 8 credit hours or less
- ☐ 9 – 12 credit hours
- ☐ 13-o 16 credit hours
- ☐ 17 credit hours or more

44. How much time will it take/is it taking for your student to receive an undergraduate degree?

- ☐ Less than 4 years
- ☐ 4 years
- ☐ 5 years
- ☐ 6 years
- ☐ More than 6 years

45. How important is it to you that your student graduates in four or five years?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Not at all important

46. How did your student start at the University?

- ☐ 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

47. Where does your student live?

- ☐ At home
- ☐ On campus
- ☐ Sorority/fraternity
- ☐ Apartment/house near campus (non-University housing)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

48. Where you live.

- ☐ Twin Cities area
- ☐ Greater Minnesota
- ☐ Wisconsin
- ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

49. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Less than high school diploma
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctorate or equivalent degree
- ☐ Other (please specify)

50. Did you attend the University of Minnesota?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

51. 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

52. What is your student's gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender/other

53. How are you related to your student?

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Stepmother
- ☐ Stepfather
- ☐ Grandmother
- ☐ Grandfather
- ☐ Aunt
- ☐ Uncle
- ☐ Foster mother
- ☐ Foster father
- ☐ Other

54. How old are you?
55. 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?
56. Is there something you can identify that would have improved your student's experience at the University of Minnesota?
57. 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.
58. If you would like to be entered in the drawing for a hotel stay at the Radisson University Minneapolis, a hotel stay at the Holiday Inn Metrodome Minneapolis, University Bookstore gift certificates, 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.

**Appendix 2: Comparing college parents who attended Parent Orientation with parents who did not attend**

	Attended Parent Orientation (89.55%)	Did not attend Parent Orientation (9.84%)
Have you discussed with your student topics covered in the e-mail listserv or <i>University Parent</i> ?	Yes 92.20%	Yes 83.33%
Satisfaction with U communications	Very satisfied 63.16% Dissatisfied 2.92%	Very satisfied 49.38% Dissatisfied 4.94%
Have you attended Parents Weekend?	Yes 32.83%	Yes 15.00%
Satisfaction with parents programs/services	Very satisfied 45.27% Dissatisfied 2.92%	Very satisfied 40.50% Dissatisfied 9.09%
Feel U includes parents in campus community	Strongly agree 49.56% Disagree 4.60%	Strongly agree 42.98% Disagree 12.39%
Greatest concern regarding student this year	Health/safety 37.59% Career planning 16.14% Finances 10.69% Time management 7.72% Other 6.55% Academics 6.34% None 4.76% Living situation 4.62% Personal relationships 3.59% Involvement 2.00%	Health/safety 33.96% Finances 12.58% Time management 11.95% Other 10.06% Career planning 8.18% Academics 8.18% None 6.29% Personal relationships 4.40% Involvement 2.52% Living situation 1.89%

## 2010 University of Minnesota Parent Survey

Topic for which student has most requested help this year	<p>Finances 28.55%</p> <p>Career planning 18.83%</p> <p>Living situation 12.14%</p> <p>Health/safety 8.97%</p> <p>Academics 8.97%</p> <p>None 7.31%</p> <p>Other 6.14%</p> <p>Personal relationships 4.62%</p> <p>Time management 2.97%</p> <p>Involvement 1.52%</p>	<p>Finances 30.19%</p> <p>Career planning 16.35%</p> <p>Living situation 10.69%</p> <p>None 10.06%</p> <p>Academics 8.81%</p> <p>Health/safety 7.55%</p> <p>Other 7.55%</p> <p>Time management 4.40%</p> <p>Personal relationships 3.14%</p> <p>Involvement 1.26%</p>
Length of time expected to graduate	Four years or less 83.48%	Four years or less 84.90%
Importance of graduating in four or five years	Very important 76.86%	Very important 76.10%
Family residence	<p>Twin Cities area 35.81%</p> <p>Greater Minnesota 17.07%</p> <p>Wisconsin 31.44%</p> <p>Other 15.68%</p>	<p>Twin Cities area 47.17%</p> <p>Greater Minnesota 16.35%</p> <p>Wisconsin 16.98%</p> <p>Other 19.50%</p>
Student residence this year	<p>Home 3.61%</p> <p>On Campus 43.10%</p> <p>Sorority/Fraternity 5.48%</p> <p>Apartment/house near campus 45.52%</p>	<p>Home 3.14%</p> <p>On Campus 47.17%</p> <p>Sorority/Fraternity 5.66%</p> <p>Apartment/house near campus 37.74%</p>
Level of involvement (compared to own parents)	Much more 49.50%	Much more 42.48%
Grad of U of M	Yes 19.32%	Yes 28.10%

**Appendix 3: Topics parents have discussed with their students**

Have you discussed with your student any of the topics covered in either the e-mail or print newsletter? (n=1516)

Yes 91.16%

No 8.12%

Not applicable 0.72%

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
<b>Room and board</b>	
Housing (unspecified housing issues or on-campus housing issues)	139
Off-campus housing/apartments	59
Dining/meal plans	10
<b>Financial issues</b>	
Tuition, financial aid, loans, billing	53
Scholarships	48
Finances	32
Job/employment	30
Budgeting/Money management	10
<b>University processes/facilities</b>	
Deadlines/dates/schedules	36
One Stop	4
Parking/transportation (zip cars, winter, snow, bus)	14
Technology	1
<b>Outside the classroom opportunities/services/student support</b>	
Campus/area events, activities, involvement opportunities	129
Parent Weekend	56
Homecoming	14
Volunteering	10
Research/UROP	4
Career issues (job fairs, internships, mentorships, career counseling)	362
Counseling	12
Mental health/stress/depression	26
<b>Safety/security</b>	
Safety/security/crime	970

Campus shooting/stabbing/violence	69
Bike safety (theft, helmets)	12
Text-U (emergency/text alerts)	21
Fire safety	4
<b>Health</b>	
Alcohol/drugs	97
Sex/rape	4
Health/Boynton Health Services	93
Flu vaccinations/H1N1	123
<b>Transition/adjustment</b>	
Student adjustment/breaks/first-year	24
<b>Academics</b>	
Academics	8
Graduation/Gradfest	57
Student services (advising, tutoring)	42
Contact with professor	2
Study abroad	100
Educational expectations (grades, studying, exams)	41
Classes/registration	35
Choosing/defining majors	17
Senior project	15
Time management	5
Graduate school	3
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Bookstore clearance	1
Friendships/other students	1
Webcams	12
Census	19
Weather	2
Twin Cities life	1
Farmers market	2
Care packages	1
Roommate issues	2
Stadium	4
Spring Break	3
<b>Other</b>	
Unsure/can't recall	25
Forward all or parts of newsletter	47

## **Appendix 4: Parent comments**

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

### **University of Minnesota**

- I have been very impressed and pleased with the University of Minnesota! Thank you!!! I am a secondary teacher, and I highly praise your school to my students and friends, even though I live in the heart of Badger country.
- I am very pleased with the U of M, my oldest son graduated last May and the opportunities that he had at the university exceeded any of my expectations and I believe my youngest son will have those same opportunities. The U of M provides a great education and outstanding opportunities for students that are willing to work hard
- I have two children at UMN right now. I was impressed with the no nonsense approach UM took during campus visits. I was impressed with the way students are encouraged to declare a major early. UM recruiting strategies are solid - as a parent, I felt very comfortable my children were in good hands. Both of my kids were also accepted to UW - Madison and chose to attend UMN ... our family home is 30 minutes from Madison, WI so that should say something about the way they felt during those campus visits. I felt the same way (though I am a UW alum). I have been very pleased with the decision they made to attend UMN.
- I would like to commend the University on the freshman orientation week events. Our daughter is not overly outgoing and it made it so easy for her to make friends and to meet new people. She is still really close with the kids she met at welcome week. She still talks about the night at the football stadium with all of the incoming freshmen in attendance and making the big "M" on the field.
- She loved the college & all the experiences that came with it. We are very proud to say she is graduating from the U of M - Twin Cities!!
- As a university professor myself, I am particularly impressed with how well the university is run--from academics to finances to parent communication. Junior faculty seem to be the only academic disappointment, all else has been very satisfactory to our daughter and to me.

### **Parent Program**

#### *Strengths*

- I appreciate the communications from the University Parent office. Thanks!
- I appreciate the university's importance on keeping parents informed via the newsletters and parent website. My student is not very good at remembering to communicate items of importance to me (or necessarily knowing what those are). These parent resources have been very valuable to me. I applaud the University for supporting these tools.
- The parent emails from Marge Savage is second to none! My other two children attend UNIV of NE at Lincoln and I have no idea what is going on at all. You really make such a huge university seem very small with all your info you send to parents. This has been the best experience for my son! I am sad he is graduating because UMN has been such a powerful force in his life



- Email/web-based communication is best for me. I like the parents page on the website and the email notifications. Since our mother died last year, my siblings and I have tried to help our father support our youngest brother - the current U of M freshman. So, I am an older sister who lives far away and wants to stay on top of what's going on at the U, and the info for parents works well for that. Thank you!
- Everything I attended at UMN was very upbeat. I always felt that my family was "valued" whenever we were at UMN. I know UMN has a huge enrollment and we continued to be welcomed with open arms. It is a "small town" atmosphere in a big city.
- I am extremely pleased with the parent communications on this campus. I have a daughter who attends the University of Minnesota-Duluth and I wish they were as good about communicating with parents. Their web site is never updated and they have very old communications on it. I signed up several times and couldn't get on their email list--not that I think they send them out often. If she were my oldest, I would be very upset. You set a great example and I wish they would follow what you do!
- I can't even begin to tell you how much my husband and I appreciate each and every email from Marjorie Savage. The newsletters/emails are well-written, pertinent, interesting, and very often (to our pleasure) amusing. Thank you so much for taking the time to consistently and thoroughly involve us in our daughter's collegiate years. Well done, and thanks!
- I enjoy your email newsletter very much. It's very relevant and timely.
- I feel that the level of proactive communication is very good- wish that we were closer in order to participate in some of the events and activities that have been offered to those in the Twin Cities area.
- I just want to say that something I appreciate very much is having Marjorie Savage's name attached to so many of the parent communications. This gives the communications a personal feel. The U does a fantastic job of communicating with parents. Communicating with parents so well helps us feel that the U really cares for our students.
- I just want to say that the Parents' Program has been wonderful. It helps me to stay informed about events on campus, and it has given me a sense of community with my student's college that helps me to help and support my student better. Thank you all for the great job you're doing!
- I like the parent e-mail newsletter. It is very helpful. I also like you can click reply and ACTUALLY get a reply! Marjorie is wonderful!
- Marjorie Savage does an outstanding job with her department keeping parents informed of what is happening on campus. This type of parent communication was not available when I was going to college and you do a good job at catching the highlights that we should know. I am also impressed with the amount of effort you put in getting feedback from parents. This will go a long way toward improving your communications.
- Marjorie Savage has to be the most encouraging and valuable resource you have for we parents--her predictions and suggestions were always taken seriously. We have been pleased with our experiences at your University--thank you!!
- The online newsletter by Marjorie Savage's office is very informative. Sometimes we couldn't figure out why our son was acting a certain way, and then the newsletter would come out and it would explain the range of emotions new college students are going

through. It helped a lot. It seems there are so many resources for all questions students have. They just have to go after the answers because they are there at the U of M.

- Through the E-Mail given in the E-Mail newsletter, I recently submitted a question / concern. This concern was immediately transferred to the appropriate person. That person responded within a week. Quite Impressive!!

#### *Weaknesses*

- Sometimes we get too much info. It can be hard to determine relevance.

### **Career Services/Major Selection**

#### *Strengths*

- Just wanted to say that it has been a very positive experience for her - and she already got a job through a job fair in Iowa - that she learned about at UMN.
- My oldest son graduated from U of M and enjoyed his time there and actually has a job in his profession.

#### *Weaknesses*

- In this day of limited job opportunities, I would have liked my soon-to-be-graduate to have more guidance/information/assistance on landing a job.
- I hope \*\*\*\* will get better counseling for her career future. She asked about getting into education or nursing and was told that there were too many students in the field for her to change. Not sure there will be any job opportunities for a marketing degree.

### **Academic Affairs**

#### *Strengths*

- Believe both our children have gotten a quality education at the U of M. Both have enjoyed both the college and the cities immensely.
- The opportunities provided through the Honors Program are outstanding. Our daughter enjoyed her experiences in the lab and is interested in graduate school & research.
- I am pleased overall with the education my daughter has received. However, she felt she had some difficulty with administrative issues regarding scheduling and academic planning. Sometimes it is difficult to see your children working through some of these issues, but we have made her forge forward on problem-solving. We expect she will be able to graduate in December.
- Our overall experience with the University has been overwhelmingly positive. Our daughter is in the Carlson School and everyone from professors to advisors to tutors to the computer repair staff have been a wonderful resource and support system.

#### *Weaknesses*

- The one area where she has had problems has been academic advising. She is interested in a lot of stuff and sometimes has a hard time being self directed. She needed more help when she sought it out.
- Freshmen classes should be taught by experienced professors who enjoy teaching such basic courses rather than reluctant faculty members dragged away from their research labs.
- I am concerned about having to go back an extra semester to complete his degree. My own college experience allowed me the flexibility to take several electives and still be done in 8 semesters.

- I find it disturbing that you require "Liberal Education" credits in order to graduate. You should be teaching students, not indoctrinating to a certain social philosophy!
- The university needs to step it up for the student's who have completed AP courses in high school. Both of my children graduated HS with basically 2 years worth of credits. The credits transferred but they did not help them graduate any sooner. As a result, they are graduating with triple or more the credits required. Also, the university courses are way behind what my children learned in high school; thus, they were extremely bored the first year or two of college as it was what they had learned in junior high. It is sad that the high school courses are more advanced than the college courses. I would say the high schools are doing their job in preparing the students for college but the colleges are not meeting their responsibility in meeting the students where they are at upon entrance to college.
- I know the university is a big school, but I feel like the freshmen would have a better experience if they had more guidance academically. It seems like the advisors could be more helpful with course suggestions. Also, when students are struggling with a class it is hard to get help.
- It seems to me that many of the students have no idea what they want to study or major in school and they are just their because they feel they have to be
- My only negative comment would be the student abroad office and how ineffective they were in some areas of our son's experience. We attended the parent meeting and felt we received some good information, but absolutely NO feedback after the trip.....on what they could have helped with more.
- My son had initially signed up for a calculus class and had a teaching assistant that only spoke Chinese. When my son needed help, there was an obvious problem. The TA was not helpful due to a language barrier. My son ended up dropping the class and had to scramble to pick up another. Why in the world would the U allow a TA that did not speak any English? That just makes a case for smaller, private schools that don't use TAs. Help me understand how this could have happened.

## **Financial/Work**

### *Strengths*

- Your financial aid department was very helpful when finances were different than we originally anticipated.

### *Weaknesses*

- All parents should have access to student info if we are paying for it regardless of age of student.
- another main concern of mine was the financing, at times it seems confusing
- Finding out about financial aid has been very difficult. We've had no contact from the U of MN regarding it.
- He loves it at the U of M and wouldn't have wished to go anywhere else. It is so unfortunate that it has to cost so much and he will start out with so much debt.
- It's unfortunate that tuition at the U has become so high. My husband is an alumnus and we love the U, but we have encouraged our younger daughter to attend school at U-W Eau Claire.

- It would be nice if there were fewer restrictions for work-study jobs for students on campus. His dad is self-employed and his income doesn't qualify our son for work study, but his income is not steady so having this option would be great.
- My daughter has applied for several jobs on the University Employment web site in the past month. She is looking for both summer full time employment and school year part time employment. She has not heard anything from any the jobs she applied for.
- My student does not work because she was informed that there are NO Work Study Jobs!! This I and she are EXTREMELY disappointed in!! She was counting on that to help pay for her education.

### **Housing/Food services**

#### *Strengths*

- I used the online parent resources when my son decided to rent an apartment off campus for next year. There is a great deal of support for parents---email and on the web. It has made this first year of being 900 miles away from my son easier.

#### *Weaknesses*

- The meal plan that's mandatory is extremely unfair and borders being a rip-off. She can't/won't eat the food so she'll get juice. The fruit is dried out and the meals have no taste. So we use as much as we can in flex dollars and the rest she eats in her dorm or off-campus.
- As a freshman, my daughter was driven out of the dormitory within two months, because she came to school to learn and study, not party. The dorm was noisy/rowdy most nights, with illegal drinking and sexual activities. You could really use a dorm for students who are committed to basically, just an education, academic, that is...
- Can't figure out why dorms can't provide decent, healthy food. Other colleges do a better job with this.
- Dorms are dumps. She lives in basement of Pioneer. Dump.
- The housing situation has been terrible. My younger daughter is considering U of M as well but I will not allow her to live in the dorm. I will get her an apartment if she decides to attend.

### **Safety/Health**

#### *Strengths*

- I appreciate your commitment to safety and all the police cars I see visible on campus
- I am pleased to hear that if there are any future emergencies on campus that all U of M Twin Cities students will receive immediate text alerts sent to their cell phone #s. We were very upset by the poor notification of students regarding the incidents this past winter, esp. with the shooting right in front of my son's dorm (Centennial).
- Again, I really appreciate the Public Safety Alerts because we are not in the immediate area of the Twin Cities. And our daughter goes to another college and we do not get newsletters like you send out - they are much appreciated.
- The safety aspect was better than I expected being in a large community

#### *Weaknesses*

- We were not happy with the lack of/slow response to students and parents regarding the shooting incident on campus this past winter. We felt that the U should have sent out

texts immediately, thereby possibly helping to identify and capture the suspects sooner. The recent stabbing incident seemed to be handled better, with information being shared shortly after the crime was committed.

- I would like to see a female student self-defense class offered to students.
- I am concerned about the recent kidnapping and rape of a woman near campus. Is there any progress in this case? My daughter hopes to move off campus junior year and I don't know how safe the area is.
- I know safety is a main issue this year and you provide escort service. It appears that service does not have a great reputation among students. First, it takes forever to get an escort when the phone number is called. Then others look at the student as a coward if they use the service. Somehow to improve the safety on campus, we need for this service to have a positive reputation and provide faster service.
- I think that the Mpls Police dept needs to get more involved with the U of M police. The U of M areas need more and better police coverage 24 hrs a day. I would like to see more cameras installed.
- Need to have some way of reaching our child in a crisis...someone to talk to who can check in on them.
- I question whether there are adequate health facilities for students -- someplace they can be "isolated" to for a short period of time if they contract something highly contagious (general stomach flu, etc) since germs are so hard to control in a dorm setting.

## **Alcohol**

### *Strengths*

- My son had a drinking episode and I was very impressed that the U of M called me and explained everything after my son had to talk to a counselor. As a parent it is very scary with the drinking issues and I'm glad the U is making it there cause as well. I only wish kids that were caught drinking were made to go to counseling or give up their time some way. I know you aren't the parents but if they all had consequences other than a fine, maybe some of them would stop and think more before they drank.

### *Weaknesses*

- There MUST be a way to eliminate underage alcohol consumption at fraternity houses. How can they get away with that behavior in this day and age?
- I believe that the University needs to reevaluate its policy regarding its involvement with alcohol-related issues. University needs to take an active stand against alcohol consumption, rather than just accepting it as inevitable evil. Freshmen are away from home for the first time, and they are exposed to a lot of alcohol. There is rarely a gathering without it. Very few students will make a personal choice not to drink - they are away from home and from their former support groups and they need to fit into their new environment. The University is really doing a disservice to its students by staying out of this issue. The University needs to find courage to take the stand against the wine producers, sellers, and distributors, and be consistent and steadfast with its efforts. Only then can a real difference be made for the students. They need an advocate for their interests, and the University needs to rise up to its obligation.
- The university needs to take a strong stance against public alcohol intoxication by students and under aged drinkers in its proximity. The problem is an epidemic health problem. It is obvious when you are near campus on the weekend. Students' lives are at

risk. The serious academic environment is at risk. The investment of the tax payers is at risk.

## **Personal growth**

### *Strengths*

- I did not know my child was gay. I had some thoughts but it did not come out until one day I asked sophomore year. My child told me part of the reason the U was chosen was because of its gay/lesbian tolerance. Now, I must say I myself did not necessarily find this information when planning for school visits. However, I was not looking specifically for it either. I found it actually fascinating that this was part of the consideration for choosing the University. Just thought you might find that interesting.
- Enjoy watching the confidence that our daughter is gaining from her independence.
- He is growing considerably and greatly appreciates his education there so far. Very positive experience.
- I feel that the University does a good job of helping families to transition to adulthood. This requires that parents let go and students grow up, even if it means that they might stumble a bit.
- I 'm not sure why my son picked UMN, but he chose very well. When he was home on spring break, he was a little more confident.
- I think my daughter has had a great experience at the U of Minnesota. She has learned to live and study independently. This experience has taught her to be self-sufficient and will bode well for her in the future. Thank You.
- I thought the U of M would be too large for my son but he has grown so much as a person. He is social and his grades are great. He is very happy and knows this was the right decision for him.
- It seems that he is loving going to school in the Twin Cities. Although he can be an introverted person, it seems that he has been continually engaged and enjoying numerous activities within the college environment.
- My daughter loves the U of M. I have seen her grow up so quickly in many ways this year and I'm very proud of her and the choices she has been making.
- We are delighted with \*\*\*\*\*'s progress and development as a young man at the University of MN. He is doing an amazing job academically as well as socially and we believe this was the best school for him. I must say that we (formally Bucky fans) are 100% Golden Gopher fans!! Keep up the good work...keep us in the loop, it makes us feel very secure in his decision to go to the U of M.

### *Weaknesses*

- I have two students at the U who both work very hard. There seems to be so much stress in their lives. It is hard for me to get a handle on how much of it is self-imposed and how much of it is brought on by the expectations of their classes/professors.
- My son is struggling to get 'comfortable' on campus. He doesn't stay on campus on weekends but comes home. I would like to see him get more integrated with the campus life - hopefully this will occur next year.

## Miscellaneous

### *Strengths*

- I feel the U for my daughter has been a much better experience than it was for me as an undergraduate. Perhaps because she has lived on or near campus, and has gotten involved in on-campus jobs, such as working as a tour guide this past summer, and also working as research asst. on campus.
- My son tells me that the University requires the fraternities and sororities to perform service in the community. That has been one of his greatest experiences and as a parent I really appreciate what this does for the University, the community and the students.

### *Weaknesses*

- As a commuting student who is living at home, my daughter has struggled to find ways to feel connected to the campus. I know that the U of M has made efforts to reach out to commuting students. I would encourage you to continue to look for ways to bring them on campus and engage them.
- I get tired of student athletes getting into trouble. I don't think they should get into the "U" unless they have the same ACT scores as other students.
- I'd like students of performance arts to be recognized and supported by the University at the same level as varsity athletes.
- My husband and I are both appalled with the stadium and the cost which was certainly not a "need" in a terribly dismal fiscal time. Students cannot make tuition, find jobs, etc., but a stadium was built with cherry locker rooms and is a monument to what? It says that U of M puts sports and egos above brains and books. We went to U of Wis. schools and we would hope they would not spend money so foolishly. Our daughter and most of her friends have never set foot in the stadium. We have encouraged her to attend games but she thinks it is a joke.
- I wish more of the university's programs (e.g. Music School's performances, choir programs, graduation prep for parents) would be planned on weekends so that parents farther away could participant. I feel at times like the U continues to plan everything around MN parents, and doesn't take into account the extra distance of parents like us. But the U has been a great experience for my daughter, and I'm glad she chose to attend.