National Survey of College and University Parent Programs

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Survey Conducted February – March 2003

University of Minnesota
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Abstract

In recent years, colleges and universities have acknowledged parents as an important constituency—partners in their students’ post-secondary education—and parent services are increasingly being incorporated into higher education institutions. These services often include newsletters, Web sites, e-mail listservs, telephone hotlines, Parent or Family Weekend events, and outreach staff for parents. At the same time, institutions now are asking parents to serve as volunteers for admissions events and other campus activities, donate to an institution’s parents fund, and take an active role in supporting their student by understanding institutional policies and procedures.

A survey of parent programs around the country indicates that while institutions are providing a range of services to this “external audience,” different colleges and universities are approaching parent services and programming in very different ways. Depending on the institution, parent services may be housed in one of several different areas within higher education (student affairs, development, alumni associations, or enrollment management, for example); institutional support for specific parent services differ from one institution to another; and just as qualifications and experience of parent program staff vary significantly, so do pay rates and support systems.
Introduction

Federal legislation enacted in 1974 gave college students the authority to monitor their own educational records (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 [FERPA]). Under this act, colleges and universities were required to restrict access to educational records, including grades, class schedules, attendance, and financial records. After FERPA was introduced, the message to parents of an entire generation was that their college-age students were adults, and communication from the institution would be with the students, not with their parents.

Within the past decade, however, higher education administrators, staff, and faculty began noting increased involvement from parents of their students. Institutions began responding by involving and even welcoming parents into the collegiate community.

Beginning with the admissions process, colleges and universities routinely include parents in admissions information sessions. Some institutions direct information sessions specifically to parents, and efforts are made to address common parental concerns throughout the recruitment phase. At many institutions, admitted students who go to New Student Orientation bring their parents along for Parent Orientation sessions. Colleges and universities have re-introduced the Parents Weekends that were known in years past as Mothers Weekend and Fathers Weekend, giving parents a reason to come to campus once or twice a year. Meanwhile, educational institutions have developed communications especially for parents: parent newsletters, listservs for parents, and Web sites for parents keep family members posted year round about what’s happening on campus. Telephone hotlines and e-mail services address parent questions about topics ranging from roommate assignments to financial aid, health and safety, and career planning.

A glimpse at programming for national Student Affairs conferences in recent years indicates that parents are a topic for discussion among student services and student development staff. The American College Personnel Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and National Orientation Directors Association all regularly include presentations and workshops on serving parent audiences or responding to parent involvement. A national organization dedicated specifically to parent services, Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI), has held annual conferences for the past five years at its home institution, Northeastern University in Boston.
Conversations among parent programming staff at student affairs and APPI conferences during the past few years led to a hypothesis that the emphasis and extent of parent services varies from college to college, and that the direction of the parent program at most campuses is influenced strongly by which department oversees the institution’s parent program. This survey, then, was conducted to determine

- “best practices” among college parent programs
- emerging trends related to services and program structure
- the influence of departmental placement within the institution on services provided to parents
- any discernible trends in the qualifications, experience, and pay scale of parent staff/administrators; in addition, we were interested in career goals of staff/administrators currently working in parent services
Method

In late January 2003, we mailed surveys to 409 colleges and universities, addressed to the institutions’ “Parent Office.” The mailing list was obtained through Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI) and included schools with which APPI had been in contact, as well as institutions on the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) mailing list. No follow-up reminders were mailed to request non-responders to fill out the surveys.

Ultimately, we received 82 completed surveys. Of the 353 that were not returned, the response rate, then, is 23 percent. Fifty-six surveys were returned marked with comments such as “No such office here.” We are operating under the assumption that still more surveys were discarded by campus mail offices that were unable to determine who at the institution should receive them.

Because we were concerned with the number of surveys returned unopened—the mailing list came from schools that were considered likely to have a parent office—we checked Web sites of a random sampling of the schools on the list. The goal was to check the institution’s Web site to see if there was, indeed, a parent office at those institutions. A sample of 60 colleges selected randomly from the mailing list indicated that for the majority (58 percent), we were unable to determine that there was, indeed, a parent or family office or a contact person for parents. For one-third of the institutions, we could easily identify a contact person or office. For the remaining 8 percent, we were unsure if we had identified a contact person or office.

The low rate of response prohibits us from drawing conclusions based on statistically significant numbers. However, we believe the response we received allows us to develop some basic information and baseline standards for parent services.

In addition, we have the results of a survey conducted in 1999 by a masters degree candidate, Madhu Bhat, in the College of Education and Human Resources at the University of Minnesota. The 1999 survey identified programming and services in which parents were able to participate. The position titles of responders from the 1999 survey varied from one institution to the next and included deans of students, parent program directors, vice presidents for student affairs, academic support staff, student activities staff, orientation staff, university communications staff, and more. The 2003 survey attempted to limit responses to those who work directly with parents. Consequently, direct comparison between the two surveys may not be entirely accurate, but we have used the earlier survey to track changes over time in parent services.
Survey Results

Reporting Structure
The identification of departments to which parent services report is not an exact science. Different institutions have different names for similar offices, and in some cases, it was necessary to make assumptions about which categories to put some of the offices into. When Advancement, Development, and Alumni Relations/Fundraising were combined, 31 of the respondents (37.8 percent) fit into that category. College Relations/University Relations comprised two respondents (2.4 percent). Student Life/Student Development/Student Affairs, and Dean of Students offices were combined into a single category, and for lack of a better placement, we also put the one respondent from Residential Life into that “Student Affairs” category, which included 43 respondents (52.4 percent). The Admissions office claims two respondents (2.4 percent). Four indicated they were part of Academic Affairs (4.9 percent). Two respondents said they were part of both Enrollment Management and another office. For simplicity, those two have been combined with their “other” office (Student Affairs), but it should be noted that a growing number of APPI conference participants have said they either are now or may soon be reporting to Enrollment Management at their institution.

Chart A: Office or Department Where Parent Office Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Office</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancement/Alumni</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/U Relations</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Programs/Services
In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to list the types of programs or services they provide to parents. The most frequent answers are posted in Chart B, and it is noteworthy that Parent/Family Weekend and Parent Orientation are offered at the majority of colleges and universities. Fundraising is also fairly common, with more than 40 percent of institutions seeking donations from parents.

Chart B: Programs and Services Provided

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs/Services</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Family Weekend</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications/Newsletter</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbook</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Council/Association</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Orientation</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpline/E-mails</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move-In/Welcome Week events</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web site</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Scholarships</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a distinct difference between the programs and services provided, however, based on the department that oversees parent services. As would be expected, and as can be seen by comparing Charts C & D on the following page, fundraising is considerably more frequent under development and alumni offices; parent/family orientation is much more prominent under student affairs offices. While the general category of “communications” was more frequently cited by development/alumni respondents, student affairs staff were more likely to mention specific and time-sensitive types of communications and publications, including Web sites, helplines and e-mail communications, newsletters, and parent handbooks.
**Chart C: Programs and Services Offered By Development/Advancement/Alumni Relations Offices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development/Advancement/Alumni Relations</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Family Weekend</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications/Newsletter</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbook</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Council/Association</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Orientation*</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Web site, helpline, events are negligible)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Many noted they “help” with orientation*

**Chart D: Programs and Services Offered by Student Affairs/Student Life Offices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Affairs/Student Life</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Family Weekend</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications/Newsletter</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbook</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Council/Association</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Orientation</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpline/E-mails</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move-In/Welcome Week events</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web site</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Scholarship</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A significant question to be considered now and in the future is whether parent services are changing. Based on a comparison with the 1999 survey mentioned previously, there have been some notable increases in programs and services, as seen in Chart E. Parent/Family Weekend has become almost a staple in parent services; the adoption of fundraising, parent councils or associations, and parent orientation has increased dramatically; but the availability of parent handbooks is declining.

**Chart E: Comparison of Programs and Services from 1999 to 2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison of Programs/Services</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Family Weekend</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications/Newsletter</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbook</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Council/Association</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Orientation</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome/Move-In Events</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-identified Best and Weakest Practices

Best practices are broadly defined as those practices that lead to superior performance and that meet desired goals. They typically are considered to be practices that exhibit innovation, that involve collaboration, that can be replicated, and that have measurable outcomes. Because there are currently no “universal standards” for parent programming, we asked respondents to consider what tasks they perform or services they offer that they feel are most successful. Conversely, they were asked to note what areas are weakest.

The responses did not reveal areas where the majority of respondents shared best or weakest practices, but there were some trends to be noted. In general, parent programs seem to be most satisfied with their delivery of parents weekend and orientation events and with their general communications and customer service. Areas where there are concerns include newsletters and communications; volunteer coordination or work with a parents association; and dissatisfaction with the support or appreciation respondents receive from their work, either from other staff at their college or university or from parents themselves.

Chart F: Best and Weakest Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice/Service</th>
<th>Best</th>
<th>Weakest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents Weekend</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm/Newsletter</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer/Parent Assoc.</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Development</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund Raising</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional/Parent Support</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentages above represent the percent of respondents who listed each practice. Some respondents listed multiple practices; others did not identify a best or weakest practice.
Background/Qualifications of Parent Services Providers

Although the majority of respondents indicated they have a masters degree (48), more than one-fourth (25) of those responding list a bachelors degree as their highest level of education. Seven have earned PhD’s.

Chart G: Educational Background of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA/BS</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is notable that of those with post-graduate degrees, the most common fields are education, counseling, and student affairs/college personnel (38 of the total, or 47.5%). Looking further back than post-graduate education, there is no discernible trend in the interests of parent program professionals during their undergraduate years. Although one-third had undergraduate majors in the broad category of social science (including sociology, psychology, political science, and social work), there were also majors in art (theater, music, and art), cultural studies (international studies, American studies, European studies, and religion), health/sciences (health policy, chemistry, kinesiology, psychobiology, recreation, and physical education), English/language, education, business, and communication.

Similarly, respondents’ previous work experience was exceedingly varied. Half had experience in higher education prior to working in their current job (orientation, residential life, judicial affairs, Greek affairs, etc.), and 15 percent worked in fundraising or alumni affairs. Other careers ranged from various business positions (15 percent), arts administration, communications/public relations/journalism, church youth director, K-12 education, travel/tourism, and coaching.

More to the point, respondents were asked what previous experience was most helpful to them in their current position. More than 40 percent noted that previous higher education work—whether in orientation, judicial affairs, Greek life, residence halls, advising, or admissions—was most helpful. Significant numbers also noted alumni/development/volunteer training (15.9%); event planning (13.4%); communications or public speaking (13.4%), or being a parent (8.5%).

There is no standard job title for working with parents. Just as the position crosses departmental boundaries, it also falls under a number of position titles. The most frequently cited title was Director (37.8%), and there were titles related to “director,” including Senior Director, Executive Director, and Program Director. In addition, there were Associate Directors (8.5%), Assistant Directors (6.1%), and a Residential Director. Next most common was Coordinator (12.2%), as well as one Program Coordinator. On the upper end of the job title scale were Deans (3.7%), along with Associate Deans (3.7%) and Assistant Deans (8.5%). In different terminology, there was an Assistant Vice
Chancellor, an Associate Vice Provost, two Assistant Vice Presidents, and two Assistants to the Vice President. Finally, there were two Parent Liaisons and one Officer.

Respondents were asked why they chose to work in this field; of those who answered, 34.8 percent noted that parent duties were assigned to them as part of another position or instead of their previous work. One-third said they either wanted to work with parents, or they enjoy working in higher education, and this position was available. A smaller number, 10.6 percent, noted that they were graduates of the institution, and they wanted to work at their alma mater. Other responses ranged from “this is a way to use my communication skills” to “free education,” “I am a parent,” “I was looking for a promotion,” and “I needed a job.”

As more colleges and universities are adding parent services each year, we wanted to know how long respondents have been working with parents. The average number of years of experience turned out to be just over 4-1/2 years. The newest in the field had worked in the position for 1-1/2 months; the senior member had 22 years of experience. The average, however, was skewed by a relatively small number of respondents who have worked with parents for more than 14 years; the median length of service is 3 years. Nearly 30 percent have held their position for less than two years.

The question then becomes whether these parent program staff plan to continue working in the field, or if they regard it as a transition to another position. Respondents were asked to describe their career aspirations, including their “ultimate career goal.” Of those who answered this question, one-third plan to work into a better position in Student Affairs; 27.5% expect a better position in development/alumni work; and 20 percent expect to retire from their current position. Other goals include moving to an academic or admissions position in higher education or working for a non-profit or business outside of academia. Six percent simply indicated they are satisfied where they are now. Most of those who said they would retire from the position have worked with parents for more than seven years.
Salary Range
With the range of qualifications and experience that respondents bring to their position, it is not surprising that salaries cover a wide range. Based on salaries, parent services positions may be considered entry-level positions at some institutions, while they may be senior administrative positions at others. The median salary falls into the range of $40,000 - $49,000.

Chart H: Parent Staff Salaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30,000</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $39,000</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $49,000</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $59,000</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $69,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,000 - $79,000</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000 - $89,000</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $90,000</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The title of the staff person does not necessarily reflect salary range. The survey indicated that associate deans at some schools made more than deans at other schools. Assistant deans’ salaries ranged from $30,000 - $59,000. Directors fell into both the lowest-paid category and the top two ranges.

Education level was not necessarily a good predictor of salary, either. Those with Ph.D.’s tended to earn more than those with masters or bachelors degrees, but the median for masters and bachelors degree holders was equal:

Chart I: Relation of Education to Salary Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median salary based on education level</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. degrees</td>
<td>$50,000 - $59,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters degrees</td>
<td>$40,000 - $49,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degrees</td>
<td>$40,000 - $49,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The median was not affected by which area the parent program reports to. Those who serve in Student Affairs had the same median ($40,000 - $49,000) as those who were in development or “other” (alumni, academic affairs, or admissions).

Similarly, salary range was not affected by the institution’s designation as a public or a private school. Equal numbers of each responded, and the median was the same ($40,000 - $49,000) in both.

A disparity in salary was noted, however, based on whether the respondent self-identified as working at a small, medium, or large institution. We did not provide a definition for
size of institution, but 41 percent said they were from a small school; 35 percent identified their school as mid-size; 23 percent said they were from a large school. Although the median again was the same in all three ($40,000 - $49,000), the lowest salaries were in the mid-size and large schools. No one from a small school had a salary less than $30,000. Even more noteworthy, not one respondent from a large school had a salary higher than the $50,000 - $59,000 range. All salaries above $60,000 were at small and mid-size schools.

Program Budget
In the survey, we asked respondents what their annual budget is for providing parent services. The range of responses was dramatic and indicates that we should have been more specific about the question. Answers included a low of $1,800 and a high of $300,000. Some obviously included only operating costs; others included program costs and salary; still others may have included budgets for more than just parent services.
Conclusions

Parent services are a relatively new addition, or at least a changing office, at many colleges and universities. Anecdotal information indicates that different institutions are introducing parent programming and services to meet the general needs they identify within departmental areas, but as parents develop increased expectations, we will most likely see trends in specific service areas, such as newsletters, e-mail communications, Web sites, parent weekends, and other communication and event programming.

This survey can provide benchmarks for future examination of parent services nationally. The comparison with the 1999 study allows for some consideration of how services have been developing; the list of self-identified best practices provides a view of what parent directors believe to be both important and well executed practices.

At the time of this survey, there were two specific “tracks” that parents services were most likely to take:

- Parent services as a support mechanism for student success, housed within a student affairs or academic support department,
- Parent relations as an institutional support system, housed within a foundation, advancement, or college relations department.

Currently, most institutions emphasize one track or the other, although there seems to be a growing trend that student affairs-based offices may also request donations from parents, while advancement-based offices are beginning to provide student support by responding to parent questions about adjustment and student development issues.

There are good reasons why these jobs are changing. Research indicates that students and parents are different now than they were five years ago. When students have questions, they turn to their parents—sometimes before they turn to campus resources. With instant communication through cell phones, e-mail, and instant messaging, students can reach their parents any time of the day. Parents want to answer their students’ questions, and they are demanding their own campus representative to help them find information.

Moreover, college expenses have skyrocketed. When they’re paying as much for college as they are for their house payments, parents want to know they’re making a good investment.

The level of parental involvement is not likely to decline. The profile of parent services is increasing, and the portfolio for parent services staff is likely to grow. The professionals who are developing the field today have a responsibility to themselves and to the people who come after them to raise the credibility, standards, and professional standing of parent services in higher education.

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**Further Research**

The value of these survey results is limited by the relatively low number of responses. Based on anecdotal evidence, parent programs are still being developed at colleges and universities, and a follow-up survey in 2004 or 2005 would be helpful to determine if more institutions have parent programs and/or if more institutions recognize the existence of their parent services. A survey with statistically significant results would be most helpful.

This survey sought to develop a list of common parent services. Future surveys would be more helpful if a list of services were defined in order to allow respondents to indicate whether or not they provide those services. An accurate case-by-case comparison was not possible in this report because of the open-ended format of the question.

The budget question was not sufficiently answered in this survey; better definition of that question would allow a comparison of institutional commitment to parent services.

One of the questions that parent services staff most want to know is whether there is any evidence that parent involvement affects student retention at the college level. Anecdotal evidence from parent program directors indicates that involved parents play a significant role in keeping their students in school and on track to graduate in a timely fashion. Since retention is affected by many factors, it may be impossible to determine with any degree of certainty what the effect is of parent services on student retention, but statistically significant information on the correlation between parent involvement and student success would be welcome.

**Additional Questions**

Higher education experienced significant financial challenges during the months following this survey. Tuition increases were dramatic in many public institutions, which may eventually affect whether and how parent services are provided. On the other hand, the increased investment that families are required to make through higher tuition might raise parents’ demand for information and services from higher education institutions. It would be helpful for parent services staff to address the following questions:

- Does the current economy have an effect on your job?
- Do we need to position parent services differently in order to prevent our programs from being one of the services eliminated in budget reductions?
- How do we do that?

Perhaps the most important question, which has not been addressed, is to ask parents what services they expect from their student’s college or university. The vast range of services and differences in program missions would seem to indicate that institutions are discovering specific needs and responding to them on a piecemeal basis. We may, however, be missing important opportunities if we don’t survey our own parents for their needs, and if we neglect to collectively determine what would be considered “reasonable expectations.”
Appendix I—Survey Form

Parent Program Survey

Instructions: Please help us understand how parent services are delivered at colleges and universities around the country. Please answer the following questions, and return the survey in the enclosed envelope. We’re collecting information from a number of parent program staff to establish benchmarks on parent programs and the professionals who provide them. This information may be useful to you and your institution as you consider parent services in the future.

*Note: All information collected here is confidential. We will not identify any information with a particular person or institution.

1. What is your title?
2. What area or department do you report to at your institution (e.g., student affairs, foundation, academic affairs, alumni, university relations)?
3. How long have you worked in parent services?
4. What kinds of parent services are you responsible for (e.g., parent orientation, parents weekend, communications, fund-raising)?
5. How many staff members in your office work directly with parents?
   Full-time____ Part-time____
   Student Staff____
6. Do other offices or departments at your institution work primarily with parents? Please identify those offices and responsibilities.
7. What is your educational background?
   Major(s) __________
   Minor(s) _________
   Degree(s) _____________
8. What work experience did you have before obtaining a job in parent services?
9. Why did you choose to work in this field?
10. What prior work experience has proved most useful in your job in parent services?
11. Of the services you provide to parents, what service do you provide most successfully? What service area is weakest?
12. What is your budget for providing parent services?*

*see Note in instructions.
13. What is your salary range?*
   __ Less than $30,000
   __ $30,000 to $39,000
   __ $40,000 to $49,000
   __ $50,000 to $59,000
   __ $60,000 to $69,000
   __ $70,000 to $79,000
   __ $80,000 to $89,000
   __ More than $90,000
*see Note in instructions.

14. Are you currently (or planning on) working toward a higher education degree?
   __ No  __ Yes
   If yes, field of study________________________

15. Describe your career aspirations. Do you plan to retire from this position, or do you expect to move to a different position? What kinds of jobs would you qualify for with the experience you've gained from your current job? What is your ultimate career goal?

16. What advice do you have for someone who is considering working in parent services?

17. For what kind of institution do you work?
   __ Public college
   __ Private college
   __ Public university
   __ Private university

18. How large is your institution?
   __ Small school
   __ Mid-sized school
   __ Large school

19. What is the scope of your institution
   __ Two-year school
   __ Four-year school
   __ Graduate degree-granting school

20. What region of the country do you represent?
   __ East Coast
   __ Midwest
   __ South Central
   __ Central
   __ Great Plains
   __ Southwest
   __ West Coast

If you would like a report on the results of this survey, please e-mail Marjorie Savage, mbsavage@umn.edu. Please include your name, mailing address, and e-mail address.

Thanks for your opinions!
Please return this survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by March 14, 2003.
Appendix II—Advice from Survey Respondents

Respondents were asked the question, “What advice do you have for someone who is considering working in parent services?” The following is a summary of responses:

- Have “life experience”
- Know the institution
- Understand the demographics of the students and their parents
- Listen
- Don’t make parent councils too labor-intensive—for the parents or for you
- Learn what works for other schools
- Find one or two good ideas and go with them
- Help parents understand “student development”
- Remember that parents hear only one side, and it’s likely to be filtered and edited
- Do only two new things year
- Collaborate whenever you can
- Be flexible, be patient; parents are new constituency
- Work with residence hall staff; front-load your services for first-year students
- Be a generalist
- Be a parent!
- Be patient
- Keep an open mind
- Recognize that you are providing customer service
- Understand FERPA
- Sometimes you need thick skin
- Know student development & family psychology
- Understand parents, listen, ask for ideas from parents
- Have administration on your side
- Be honest, no matter what

Useful skills:
- Counseling experience
- Conflict resolution skills
- Good organizational skills
- Knowledge of event planning
- Public speaking
- Good writing, editing skills
- Experience working with committees
- Marketing, fundraising
- Diplomacy
- Sense of humor
Appendix III—APPI Workshop Questionnaire Results

Nine participants attended a presentation at APPI April 3, 2003, in Boston and answered a questionnaire about the education and career path that led them to their current professional position. All participants worked in a college/university setting and most worked in parent services. One worked out of a career office.

When you were 14 years old, what did you want to be when you grew up?
1. A star on Broadway
2. Dancer on Broadway
3. Airline stewardess
4. Lawyer
5. Olympic athlete, riding horses
6. A laborer
7. A historian
8. Successful businesswoman and mother or nurse or doctor
9. Psychiatrist

When you started college, what was your major? What did you think you would do after graduating?
1. Undeclared major; no career aspiration; ended up majoring in music & theatre
2. Undeclared major; “help the environment”
3. Business administration major; own a travel agency
4. Speech/communication major; teach
5. Music major; no plans for post graduation
6. Business major; work in an office
7. Undecided major; go to graduate school
8. Psycho-biology; something to do with people/business/psychology
9. Business; no plans after graduation

What job did you think you would get with your undergraduate degree?
1. Fundraising
2. Travel in Europe, then go to graduate school in counseling or speech pathology
3. Marketing manager for a large company
4. Go to graduate school
5. Work in a bank
6. Counselor-type social service
7. Totally unsure—museum or writing job
8. Unsure—retail management led to insurance underwriting
9. Administrative assistant to a personnel director
What job preceded your current position
1. Director of annual giving
2. Receptionist in student development
3. Assistant to VP for Student Affairs
4. Consulting firm—client team member
5. Manager of auto parts
6. Aca adviser
7. Working with parents as a program director
8. Stay-at-home mom; volunteer for hospital and schools
9. Program coordinator, advancement

What was your predecessor’s next career step?
1. I was the first
2. Moved to director of student development
3. Retired
4. Traveled abroad; returned to another office at the university
5. No predecessor
6. Left the university
7. Education in the philanthropy arena
8. Became leadership gifts officer, left the college, now in nursing
9. I am the first

What job do you expect to retire from?
1. Don’t know
2. Student Affairs, assistant vice chancellor, stay-at-home mom, or environmental agency public relations position
3. Parent program director
4. Executive assistant to the vice president or Director of Parent Services
5. No answer
6. Associate dean
7. Unsure
8. Business, either profit or non-profit
9. Parent relations liaison