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INTERACTIONS OF SENIOR-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS  
WITH PARENTS OF TRADITIONAL-AGE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

By

Tanya Winegard

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies  
(Educational Leadership and Higher Education)

Under the Supervision of Professor Richard E. Hoover

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2010

INTERACTIONS OF SENIOR-LEVEL STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS  
WITH PARENTS OF TRADITIONAL-AGE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Tanya Winegard, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Advisor: Richard E. Hoover, Ph.D.

The purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Student development theory had little to say about a role for the parents of college students, yet senior-level student affairs administrators who participated in this study acknowledged spending more time responding to parental concerns, questions, and complaints than they did five years ago. Semi-structured phone interviews were conducted with 16 senior-level student affairs administrators at mid-size, private, highly residential master's colleges and universities according to the Carnegie Foundation's classification (2009).

The researcher addressed the grand tour question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs, and activities at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education? In the process of addressing this question, the following were explored: 1) What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students? 2) What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on

institutional policies? 3) What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs, and activities? 4) What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?

The findings of this research shed light on the interactions between the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students and senior-level student affairs administrators. Six themes were identified: 1) role of parents in the lives of their student; 2) reasons for parental contact with senior-level administrators; 3) types of interactions that administrators have with parents; 4) institutional response to parental involvement; 5) institutional services, programs, and activities for parents; and 6) senior-level administrators' recommendations for their institutions. The researcher recommends that senior-level student affairs professionals lead institution-wide discussions on a comprehensive approach to partner with parents in order to promote student learning and success.

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## **DEDICATION**

*This dissertation is dedicated to the Colby family—  
Orville, Nancy, Sally and Hillary.  
A family I am privileged to know.  
May John rest in peace and may you know joy.*

*This one is for Buddy.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Much has been written about the increased involvement of parents of today's undergraduate students (Coburn, 2006; Donovan, 2008; Farrell, 2007; Hoover, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Lehmann-Haupt, 2004; Merriman, 2007; Rainey, 2006; Taub, 2008). These moms and dads are often referred to as helicopter parents (Farrell, 2007; Kantrowitz & Tyre, 2006; Merriman, 2007). One did not have to look far to find examples of parental involvement and advocacy in their student's life (Coburn, 2006; Merriman 2006; Mullendore, Banahan & Ramsey 2005). Examples from this researcher's experience reflected the descriptions others portray. A parent's phone call to an administrator with the parent's intent to resolve their student's roommate conflict. An e-mail message from a mom expressing frustration about the grade her student got on a paper. A father's request for a meeting to discuss his student's involvement in a disciplinary incident. A mother's request to locate her missing student. The mother has not spoken with her student for 24 hours and has left several messages for her student. These examples highlighted what student affairs professionals had been responding to since the current generation of students, the Millennials, and their parents started coming to college in 2000. "This is partly because of the revolution in communications, which lets parents stay in close contact through cell phones and email. Some parents go so far as editing drafts of their children's papers and protesting low grades" (Lehmann-Haupt, 2004, p. 50).

## **Purpose of the Study**

Student affairs professionals are committed to “educating the whole student and integrating student life and learning” (NASPA, 2009). This commitment did not waiver in the wake of increased parental involvement in the life of Millennial students. Parents served as advisors, consultants, and advocates for today’s undergraduate college student. This trend had caused concern among student affairs professionals because they perceived these interventions as detrimental to the development of traditional-age undergraduate students (Merriman, 2007; Mullendore et al., 2005).

The purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The researcher sought to answer the grand tour question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education? In the process of addressing the grand tour question, the following were explored: (a) What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students? (b) What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies? (c) What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs and activities? and (d) What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?



## Statement of the Problem

Senior-level student affairs administrators found themselves spending more time responding to parental concerns, questions, and complaints. They began to question the impact parental involvement had on the development of students. Student development theory had little to say about a role for the parents of college students. “The student affairs profession embraced student development theory as a new foundation for the profession at the same time that it embraced the new concept of college student as adult” (Taub, 2008, p. 15).

The phrase “partnering with parents” had become common language used by student affairs professionals. Found in the title of the monograph, *Partnering with the Parents of Today's College Students*, produced in 2005 by NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (Pennington, 2005). Karen L. Pennington, NASPA President, 2003-2004, wrote about the significance of parental involvement in the monograph's foreword. “Through partnerships with parents and families, we can create additional learning opportunities and also increase the likelihood of student success” (p. ix). These few, succinct words highlight the need for additional study of institutional relationships with parents of traditional-age college students.

A hot topic of discussion for student affairs administrators was how to manage the concerns brought to their attention by parents of college students. While some may have focused on how administrators should respond to parental concerns. The focus of this research was to understand why student affairs administrators need to examine their relationship with parents. As previously mentioned the idea of partnering with parents was emphasized in *Partnering with the Parents of Today's College Students* (Pennington,

2005). “We should work from the premise that part of our job is educating parents about the role we believe they should play in their students’ educational experiences” (Mullendore et al., 2005, p. 1). The authors go on to describe several reasons why parents get involved and, at times, intervene in their college student’s life. The reasons expressed for parental interventions are: lacking complete confidence in their student’s ability to resolve issues on his/her own; out of guilt; they assume their involvement will change the situation; and/or they are reaching out for information from student affairs professionals on how to advise their students (p. 2).

The reason(s) for increased parental interactions with student affairs administrators may vary, but the impact has had far-reaching implications on the way institutions of higher education approach working with the parents of their students. “Creating a structure that provides opportunities for parents to participate in the college experience can pay huge dividends in terms of increased student success, institutional financial support, and enhanced public relations” (Keppler, Mullendore, & Carey, 2005, p. xi). Today, more than ever before, developing an institutional philosophy on engaging parents in their student’s education has become important.

As senior-level student affairs administrators grappled with the question of how to manage parental concerns, they had to also remain cognizant of the legal implications about information sharing with parents of the traditional-age undergraduate students. Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) each place limitations on the information that administrators may be able to share with parents. But often times, it was the student herself that brought her parent into the discussion of confidential information. For

example, a student that has been found responsible for violating her institution's policies may pull out her mobile phone during her hearing to call her father and ask the hearing officer to explain exactly what occurred in the interaction between the student and the student affairs professional. For this reason and others, senior-level student affairs administrators need to be knowledgeable about the FERPA and other legal issues in order to facilitate better conversations with parents. In these moments, the action of partnering with parents may have the greatest impact on student learning (Lowery, 2005, p. 49).

In 2007 Gavin Henning published a model that defined the current relationship between colleges and traditional-age college students and their parents. *In Consortio Cum Parentibus*, "in partnership with parents," serves as a guide for student affairs professionals. Henning's model maintains that the primary relationship is between the college and the student, but also recognized that parents are "a valuable addition to the picture in this model" (p. 551). *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* is not a return to *In Loco Parentis*, rather "by including parents in the relationship, staff and faculty include another tool in their toolkit to foster student learning" (p. 557).

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The research sought to address the grand tour question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four year institutions of higher education? In the process of addressing the grand tour question, the following were explored:

- What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students?
- What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies?
- What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs, and activities?
- What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?

### **Definition of Terms**

Parent—“A custodial parent or legal guardian who has a primary responsibility for providing emotional or financial support for the college student. . . . The plural ‘parents’ describes parents as a group and does not assume a married couple” (Carney, 2004, p. 2).

Parental concerns—often time referred to as a crisis by parents, parental concerns are situations, experiences, or instances in a student’s college experience that are of interest of or important to parents (Merriman, 2006).

Student affairs professional—an individual that works in an institution of higher education. S/he is knowledgeable about human growth and development and how environments shape human behavior. The unique characteristics of the institution determine the role student affairs professionals play (American Council on Education & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1987).

Chief student affairs administrator—the senior/highest ranking student affairs professional on a college campus. This position typically reports to the president/chancellor or the provost.

Senior-level student affairs administrator—student affairs professionals that are in positions that typically have oversight of multiple departments/areas. For the purposes of this study, the positions considered senior-level student affairs administrator include assistant vice presidents/chancellors, associate vice presidents/chancellors, and may also include deans of students.

Interaction—“mutual or reciprocal action or influence” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009).

Millennials—Born in or after 1982, this generation of students is more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse than any other generation in living memory (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 4).

Medium four-year, highly residential institution of higher education—The Carnegie classification description for size and setting describes an institution’s size and residential character. This study focuses on one category defined by the Carnegie classification. Specifically M4/HR is defined as “Medium four-year, highly residential. Fall enrollment data show FTE enrollment of 3,000–9,999 degree-seeking students at these bachelor’s degree granting institutions. At least half of degree-seeking undergraduates live on campus” (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2009b).

Master’s colleges and universities—The Carnegie basic classification for institutions was developed in 1970 and recently updated and first applied to institutional

data collected for 2003-2004. Master's colleges and universities are defined as institutions that generally award at least 50 master's degrees per year and no more than 20 doctoral degrees per year (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2009a).

### **Assumptions**

The researcher made the following assumptions in preparation to commence this study. First, the researcher assumed that all participants were truthful and forthright during the interview. Second, the researcher assumed that chief student affairs officers selected the most appropriate senior-level student affairs administrator from his/her institution to participate in the study.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations were important to note because they help the reader understand to what extent the results may be generalized to other populations. This study was restricted to the responses of senior-level student affairs administrators currently working at mid-size, private, not for profit, highly residential institutions of higher education. The ability to generalize the results of this study is limited because of the population from which the study's sample has been taken.

### **Limitations**

Limitations were the built-in limits of method that will be utilized. The researcher had been a student affairs professional for more than 13 years and has been a senior-level student affairs administrator for 6 years. The researcher had also been the primary student affairs administrator contact for the parents of undergraduate students at her institution. These experiences may have biased the researcher throughout this study especially during

the interviews and when interpreting the information gathered in the interviews. To minimize this limitation the researcher bracketed her experiences in order to identify her biases, and used peer reviewers' feedback to validate her findings. The researcher recognized the importance of achieving substantial redundancy and saturation in this study, so the decision was made to conduct interviews by phone. Phone interviews allowed the researcher to control costs and to save time. These interviews allowed the researcher greater access to participants but the researcher was not able to witness body language of the participant, which could have given additional data for the study.

### **Significance of the Study**

Parents of today's college students are more involved than parents of previous generations (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 135). "Unfortunately, anecdotal advice and opinions about parent relations dominate the higher education literature; research on the impact of parent involvement on college students is limited" (Carney-Hall, 2008, p. 5). This research sought to describe how interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education. With a better understanding of the impact of increased parental involvement in the lives of traditional-age undergraduate students on the senior-level student affair's professional, the researcher has checked out the assumption made by some in the student affairs profession that parental involvement impedes student development and learning (Mullendore et al., 2005). Additionally, this researcher intended to contribute to the limited research on student affairs professionals' interactions with parents.

## **Summary**

As senior-level student affairs administrators struggle with the increasing demands of parents and their involvement in the lives of their students, the student affairs professional's role, as well as the student affairs professional's philosophy of the role of parents in the lives of traditional-age college students is changing. The purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Before delving into the exploration of the student affairs professional/parent relationship, a review of the literature is appropriate. The themes of the literature review include: (a) the parents of Millennial students and how parent expectations are changing the way that student affairs professionals interact with this constituent group; (b) student development theory including Chickering and Reisser's psychosocial theory, as well as attachment theory and emerging adulthood theory; (c) institutional efforts to partner with the parent's of Millennial college students; and (d) defining the institutional relationship with parents in the current legal landscape and with the changing societal expectations of student affairs professionals.



## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The study addressed the question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education? The review of literature for this study focused on four themes as the researcher attempted to answer the broader question of senior-level student affairs administrators' interactions between administrators and parents. The topics were: (a) parents of Millennial students and how parental expectations are changing the way that student affairs professionals interact with this constituent group; (b) student development theory with a special focus on the work of Chickering and Reisser's psychosocial theory, as well as attachment theory and emerging adulthood theory; (c) institutional efforts to partner with parents of today's traditional undergraduate students in an effort to focus on student growth and development; and (d) *In Consortio Cum Parentibus Model* as a framework for student affairs professionals to work within while defining the institution's relationship with parents and the changing expectations and legal landscape.

With the recognition by those in the student affairs profession that parental contact with them was on the rise, understanding the motivation for this contact, parental expectations, and the impact of parental involvement in the daily lives of their college-

age student has become important (Carney, 2004; Henning, 2007; Kennedy, 2009; Merriman, 2006; Mullendore et al., 2005). Also essential for student affairs professionals was to begin working with parents to help parents understand the nature of the student affairs profession and the theory behind their work. Developing students and creating opportunities for learning both inside and outside of the classroom was a top priority for the profession (American Council on Education & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1987). This commitment to students and learning did not waiver in the wake of increased parental involvement in a student's daily life and increased contact that parents of traditional-age college student have with student affairs professionals. Additionally, the literature provided an interesting model, *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* (Henning, 2007), as a framework for a relationship between an institution and a student that also includes the student's parent(s).

This research provided insights into a relatively new experience in the student affairs profession. Exploring the primary question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education? In the process of answering this question, the following questions were considered: What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students? What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies? What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs, and activities? What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities

are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations? The researcher turned to the literature to better understand the impact on parental involvement and contact with student affairs professionals.

### **The Parents of Millennial Students**

According to Howe and Strauss (2000), Millennial students first matriculated to college campuses during the fall of 2000. When Millennial students arrived, they were fortified with mobile phones and computers. Millennials also had a knack for emailing, instant messaging and text messaging, and their parents are often on the receiving end of these communications (Terry, Dukes, Valdez, & Wilson, 2005). “Parents are their children’s first support system, emotionally and financially, and that does not change just because a student starts college” (Savage, 2009, p. 2). Many student affairs professionals did not realize it at first, but in some respects, Millennial students were moving into their residence hall rooms with their parents.

Until recently, the term parental involvement was reserved for discussions in elementary and secondary education. During the K-12 educational experience “parents are typically told that more involvement is better, that students will achieve more, behave better, and socially adjust more successfully if parents stay involved in their child’s academic life” (Kennedy, 2009, p. 19). Today the term has “migrated into the vocabulary of college administrators. Since the late 1990s, colleges and universities have noted a cultural shift in the relationship between most parents and their traditional-age college students” (Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. 1). Looking back, this shift should be no surprise to student affairs professionals. Howe and Strauss (2000) wrote about the Millennials: “Starting as babies, kids were now to be desperately desired, to be in need of endless love

and sacrifice and care—and to be regarded by parents as the highest form of self-discovery” (p. 33). Parents of this generation of students were recognized as very involved throughout their children’s lives and that has not changed as their student enters into adulthood and goes to college. They had made raising their child the major focus of their adult lives, (Kantrowitz & Tyre, 2006), and as their students go off to college, parents are more resistant to letting go. The traits of the Millennial Generation in large part were shaped by their parents (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Table 1 describes the characteristics of the Millennials.

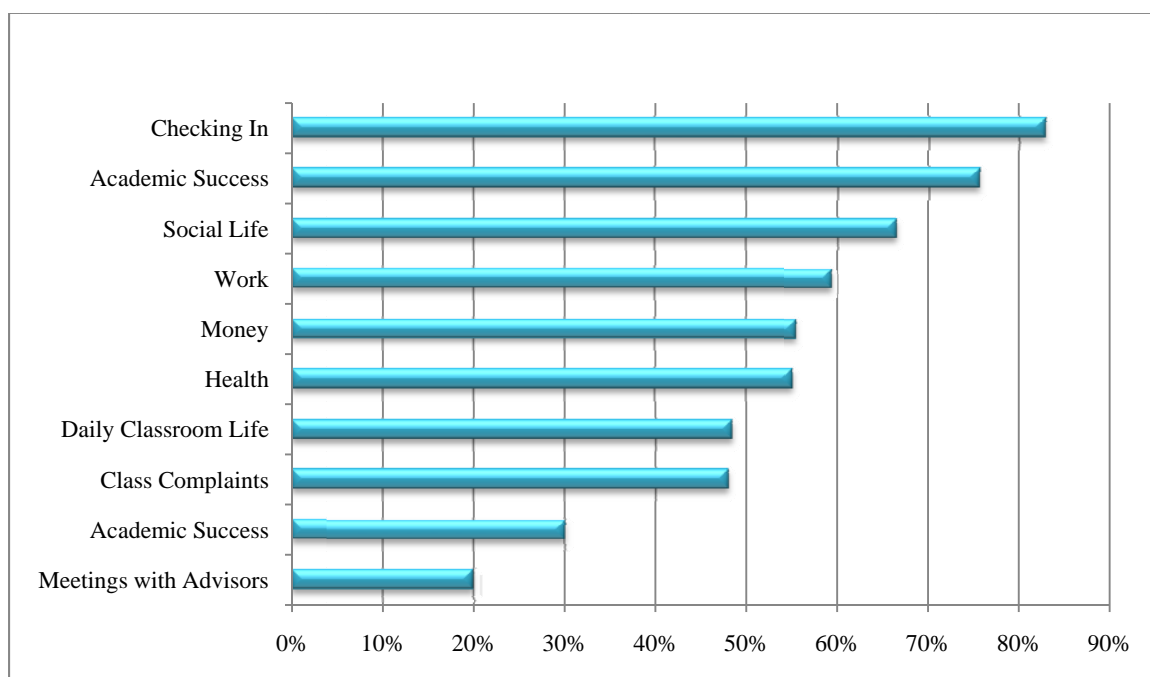
Table 1

*Millennial Traits*

Trait	Description
Special	From precious-baby movies of the mid’80s to the media glare surrounding the high school Class of 2000, older generations have inculcated in Millennials the sense that they are, collectively, vital to the nation and to their parents’ sense of purpose.
Sheltered	From the surge in child-safety rules and devices to the post-Columbine lockdown of public schools to the hotel-style security of today’s college dorm rooms, Millennials have been the focus of the most sweeping youth protection movement in American history.
Confident	With high levels of trust and optimism—and newly felt connection to parents and future—Millennials are equating good news for themselves with good news for the country.
Team-Oriented	From Barney and team sports to collaborative learning and community service, Millennials have developed strong team instincts and tight peer bonds.
Conventional	Taking pride in their improving behavior and comfortable with their parents’ values, Millennials provide a modern twist to the traditional belief that social rules and standards can make life easier.
Pressured	Pushed to study hard, avoid personal risks, and take full advantage of the collective opportunities adults are offering them, Millennials feel a “trophy kid” pressure to excel.
Achieving	As accountability and higher school standards have risen to the top of America’s political agenda, Millennials have become a generation focused on achievement—and are on track to becoming the smartest, best-educated young adults in U.S. history.

Source: Howe & Strauss, 2003, p. 4

Parental desire to hang on to their student was demonstrated time and again with the amount of contact college students and their parents had. In 2006 the Net Generation Survey (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007) was administered to students enrolled at seven institutions of higher education. The online survey had 6,869 student responses. The survey revealed that students spoke to their parents on average one-and-a-half times a day and that 57.6% of the time the calls were initiated by the student (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). The survey also asked questions regarding the topics of conversations students have with their parents (p. 72). The findings are illustrated below in Figure 1.



Source: Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007, p. 72

*Figure 1.* Conversation topics between parents and students.

Based on the findings of this survey, students were in frequent contact with their parents about everyday life. Anecdotally, the increase in parent-student communication was

reinforced by the everyday experiences of student affairs professionals. Students were often in contact with their parents “with a tap of a computer key or speed dial on their cell phone” (Coburn, 2006, p. 11).

A Pew Research Center report further emphasized the frequent contact that Millennials had with their parents. According to its survey administered in 2007, eight out of ten 18 – 25 year olds surveyed indicated that they had been in contact with their parents in the past day (Kohut & others, 2007). Additionally, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Survey on College Parent Experiences administered by College Parents of America, 30.7% of parents of college students indicated that they communicate at least daily with their student (College Parents of America, 2007, p. 2). Further support of the notion that college students and their parents were in frequent contact comes from the National Survey of Student Engagement 2007 Annual Report. Table 2 indicates the frequency of contact students reported having with their parents, and Table 3 reveals the portion of students that followed the advice they received.

Table 2

*Proportion of Students who had Frequent\* Contact with Their Parents*

	First Year		Senior	
	In-Person Contact	Electronic Contact	In-Person Contact	Electronic Contact
Mother	62%	86%	65%	86%
Father	54%	71%	57%	73%
Guardian	55%	71%	53%	67%

\*Frequent = ‘Very often’ or ‘Often’

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007, p. 24

Table 3

*Proportion of Students who Frequently\* Followed the Advice of Their Parents*

	First Year	Senior
Mother	77%	73%
Father	71%	69%
Guardian	71%	70%

\*Frequent = 'Very often' or 'Often'

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007, p. 25

Parents were advisors, consultants, and strong advocates for their students. This phenomenon had caused concern among professionals in student affairs that parental interventions on behalf of their student are detrimental to the student's development (Merriman, 2007; Mullendore et al., 2005).

The student affairs professional was also on the receiving end of an ever-increasing number of phone calls from parents because parents have typically taken care of matters for their student and the fact that the student was enrolled in college was not a reason to change that behavior (Coburn, 2006; Merriman, 2006, 2007). "Independence no longer happens in college, where officials are acknowledging more and more interference from parents than ever before" (Setoodeh, 2006, p. 60). Parents are no longer silent partners in the relationship that students have with their college. Parents are involved, engaged, and wanting to see a return on their investment (Kennedy, 2009; Merriman, 2007; Mullendore et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

### **Student Development Theory and Research**

The traditional purposes of higher education are to preserve, transmit, and create knowledge; to encourage personal development; and to serve

society. In addition, college and university programs help individuals cope with significant life transitions—from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to personal autonomy, from one occupation to another. (American Council on Education & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1987, p. 7)

*A Perspective on Student Affairs* (Plan for a New Century Committee, 1989) was written in 1987 marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “The Student Personnel Point of View.” This statement articulated the foundation of the student affairs profession, and its purpose in higher education and revealed the perspective from which student development theories have evolved. The profession was founded on two basic principles: (a) a commitment to the development of the whole person, and (b) in support of the academic mission of the college (Nuss, 1996). Early in the 20th Century the student affairs profession grew, and by the late 1960’s and early 1970’s some interesting theories on college students and their development were introduced.

Current student development theories and models had developed out of three distinctive perspectives—psychosocial, cognitive-structural, and typology. The psychosocial perspective, specifically the work of Chickering and Reisser (1993), is the focus of this review. The psychosocial perspective was based on the work of Erik Erikson. His theory suggested that development occurred over a series of eight stages. “A successful resolution of each developmental crisis leads to the development of new skills or attitudes” (Evans, 1996, p. 166). Erikson’s work did not specifically address college students, but others, like Arthur Chickering, used Erikson’s theory as a foundation to build student development theories.

In 1969, Chickering proposed his theory on student development after studying undergraduate students at thirteen small colleges (Evans, 1996).



Chickering built on the work of Erikson (1959, 1968), who identified the establishment of identity as the central developmental task of the college years. Chickering (1969) believed that the concept of identity was too abstract to provide guidance for practice to those who worked with college students; he developed his model to provide greater specificity and concreteness to the developmental task of establishing identity (Taub, 2008, p. 17).

Widely used in student affairs, Chickering's seven vectors were later revised in 1993 in cooperation with Linda Reisser. Table 4 describes the seven vectors.

Table 4

*Chickering's Seven Vectors Revised*

Vector	Description
Developing Competence	Focus on the task of developing intellectual, physical and manual, and interpersonal competence.
Managing Emotions	Develop the ability to recognize and accept emotions, as well as to appropriately express and control them.
Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence	Develop increased emotional independence, self-direction, problem-solving ability, persistence, and mobility, as well as recognition and acceptance of the importance of interdependence.
Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships	Acceptance and appreciation of difference as well as the capacity for healthy and lasting intimate relationships.
Establishing Identity	Comfort with body and appearance, comfort with gender and sexual orientation, sense of social and cultural identity, clarification of self-concept through roles, sense of self in response to feedback from others, self-acceptance, self-esteem, and stability and integration.
Developing Purpose	Developing plans that integrate vocational aspirations, family commitments, and personal interests.
Developing Integrity	Moving from rigid application of beliefs to a more personalized value system that acknowledges and respects the beliefs of others.

Source: Chickering and Reisser, 1993, pp. 45 - 52

Chickering's theory had stood the test of time. And while not a perfect model, it did provide a framework for student affairs professionals. Several studies had been conducted to test the validity of all or some of the vectors. "As Chickering's theory has been tested and refined over time it has been partly validated, partly revised, and partly reconfigured" (Foubert, Nixon, Sisson & Barnes, 2005, p. 461). In *Revisiting the Seven Vectors*, Reisser wrote "that no single theory can apply to all human differences. Rather than arguing over the nuances of sequence or wording, we should be trying out emerging theories as additional lenses to inform day-to-day practice" (Reisser, 1995, p. 510).

Chickering's vectors were developed after surveying traditional-age students at 13 colleges in the late 1960's. In 1993, drawing on new research including gender and cultural difference, Chickering and Reisser revised and reordered some of the vectors. The moving through autonomy towards interdependence vector was placed before the developing mature interpersonal relationships vector. Unlike many of the psychosocial theories, Chickering's vectors are not hierarchical in nature. It is a sequential model "suggesting that earlier vectors form a foundation for later vectors" (Foubert, et al., 2005, p. 462).

Research by Foubert et al. (2005); Mather and Winston (1998); Taub (1995); and Taub and McEwen (1991) all found that men and women moved through some of the vectors differently. Most notably these studies found that women moved through the vectors moving through autonomy towards interdependence and developing mature interpersonal relationships in different ways than men. Also notable in the Foubert et al. (2005) longitudinal study is a finding in the tolerance subset of the developing mature interpersonal relationships vector. The study revealed that "women not only were more

tolerant than men throughout their college experience, but women also were more tolerant at the beginning of their college experience than men were after four years of development during college” (Foubert et al., 2005, p. 469).

An additional finding in the Foubert et al. (2005) longitudinal study was that significant development in the developing purpose vector occurred throughout the college experience. According to Foubert et al. this finding was contradictory to Chickering and Reisser’s theory (1993), “developing purpose is the sixth of seven vectors, postulating that it is addressed late in the college years after successfully completing the five prior vectors” (Foubert et al., 2005, p. 468).

Taking Reisser’s advice the researcher looked to other theories to assist in understanding the impact that the perceived increase in parental contact with student affairs professionals has on students and their development. Attachment theory and studies about relationships and college-age students add to what student affairs professionals know about student growth and development. According to Schwartz and Buboltz (2004), Bowlby’s (1979) theory of attachment suggested that an individual’s early relationship experiences with their parents affect a person’s relationships for the rest of their lives. The theory went on to state that psychological development and future relationships could be negatively impacted if there were issues in early attachment. Schwartz and Buboltz (2004) found that there may be a link between attachment and psychological separation from parents and undergraduate students. Their study’s findings also implied that “a parenting style that maintains positive communication while allowing children to challenge parental values and develop individual identities separate from the parents appears optimal” (p. 575).

Also, a 1998 study by Larose and Boivin on attachment of matriculated first-year college students to their parents found that perceived security to parents was stable during the transition to college life, which suggested that students remained close to their parents (p. 22). A 2009 study by Hiester, Nordstrom, and Swenson found that students that reported having deteriorating relationships with their parents during the first semester in college “had significantly lower perceived self-worth and scholastic competence; significantly higher scores on anxiety, phobia, and depression; and significantly lower academic and personal/emotional college adjustment” (p. 536) when compared to students reporting a minimal change or a positive change in the relationship with their parents. A 2007 study by Lee, Hamman, and Lee found “family closeness has positive association with students’ exercising self-regulated learning skills and their school adjustment” (p. 785). Student development researchers found that “adolescents accustomed to a warm, emotional, and caring environment associated with open communication may have an advantage when making the transition into a college environment. . .” (Hickman, Bartholomae, & McKenry, 2000, p. 49). A 2008 dissertation study by Madigan found a positive correlation between parental attachment and spiritual development (p. 87). Additionally, a 2009 dissertation study by Stephens found a significant correlation between moral judgment competency and parental attachment in sophomore students (p. 125). These studies suggested that involving parents in the college experience may support student growth and development.

Another theory that may shed some light on the development of college students in lieu of the increase of parental contact and involvement with student affairs professionals was the theory on emerging adulthood. Arnett’s theory on emerging

adulthood (1998, 2000, 2007) applied to individuals in their late teens through early twenties. According to the theory, an important task for emerging adults was identity exploration (Arnett, 1998, 2000). Additionally, Arnett (1998) suggested that demographic changes like the delayed age of marriage and parenthood has made this period of emerging adulthood possible in American culture.

Arnett distinguished emerging adulthood (18 – 25) from adolescence in today's society because adolescence (ages 10 – 18) was marked by three commonalities. Individuals in adolescence typically live with their parents, experience physical changes from puberty, and attend secondary school (Arnett, 2000). Arnett distinguished emerging adulthood from young adulthood because young adulthood suggested that adulthood had already been reached, and that most individuals in the 18 – 25 age group do not consider themselves adults (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults are still pursuing education or in training preparing for their long-term occupation. By age 30 most individuals had accomplished this task and move into young adulthood (Arnett, 2000). According to Arnett, emerging adulthood “is a period characterized by change and exploration for most people, as they examine the life possibilities open to them and gradually arrive at more enduring choices in love, work, and worldviews” (Arnett, 2000, p. 479).

Nelson et al. (2007) conducted a study of parents of individuals in the 18 – 25 age group to learn if parents consider their children adults. The study revealed that most parents did not believe that their emerging adult child was an adolescent, but most parents did not consider their child to be full adults either (p. 668). In a study by Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, and Berzonsky (2007), the findings emphasized the importance of support and guidance from parents during emerging adulthood because this

is a time for anxiety and uncertainty (p. 670). Study participants' parents that were considered psychologically controlling were associated with students that were impaired in their ability to establish identity commitments throughout the first two years of college (Luyckx et al., 2007, p. 672).

As student affairs professionals struggled to find answers to questions about what impact increased parental contact has on student development, refocusing on the basic principles of the profession and the theoretical base can be an important part of the solution. Reviewing student development theories and other theories was important because it brought into focus the importance of a student's development and learning during the college experience. "Student affairs professionals should be equipped with knowledge of the literature linking student family environment and academic adjustment so that they are better equipped to address noncognitive needs for adjustment to college life" (Hickman et al., 2000, p. 51).

### **Institutional Efforts to Partner with Parents**

Best practices in parent programming . . . include components for not only educating parents on what is appropriate interventions but also helping them to understand why colleges and universities want students to handle their own college and university responsibilities. An intentional parent program with the purpose of student development is designed to provide advice on parenting a college student, relieve a parents' common fears, proactively address issues and expect preemptive phone calls and emails, promote campus events and activities, and open dialogue between parents and students. The benefit of parental involvement should be two way, with some positive impact directed back to the institution in form of parents' goodwill, advocacy and potential funding. (Wartman & Savage, 2008, pp. 79 – 80)

Parents' expectations of colleges and universities had changed in recent years (Jackson & Murphy, 2005; Kennedy, 2009; Merriman, 2006; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Institutions of higher education were rethinking their relationships with the parents of Millennial

students. Ward-Roof, Heaton, and Coburn (2008) suggested that programming for parents was the ideal time for student affairs professionals to partner with parents (p. 44). A multi-year survey of parent services offered at institutions of higher education, The National Parent Program Survey, (Wartman & Savage, 2008), found a significant increase in services ranging from parent orientation to fundraising. The survey results are found in Table 5. As student affairs professionals saw their roles expanding, it had been suggested that they were becoming a profession of *family affairs*, rather than *student affairs* (Merriman, 2006, 2007).

Table 5

*Parent Services, 1997 - 2007*

	1999	2003	2005	2007
<i>What parent services does your office or institution provided for parents?</i>				
Family Day/Weekend	43%	74.4%	96%	94.9%
Parent Orientation	35%	61%	97%	95.2%
Newsletter	33%	54.9%	56%	54.3%
Parents Council/Advisory Board	5%	36.6%	60%	65.4%
Fundraising	12%	43.9%	84%	85.2%
Welcome Week/Move-In	NA	7.3%	75%	73.8%
Handbook	31%	12.2%	75%	78.6%

*Note: Surveys were conducted with schools that have parent services; 1999 survey listed only six programs or services, while 2007 survey listed fourteen.*

*Source: Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. 79*

Student affairs professionals needed to contemplate how to encourage positive and appropriate parental involvement with their student and the institution (Jackson &

Murphy, 2005; Merriman, 2006, 2007; Mullendore et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008). In *Managing Expectations: My How Times Have Changed*, Jackson and Murphy (2005) noted the following recommendations for student affairs professionals:

- Create a clear and articulate position that frames the institution's relationship with parents;
  - keep in mind the primary objective is providing quality learning experiences for students;
  - when what is perceived to be an inappropriate parental involvement, create opportunities for thoughtful discussions with parents and then partnership with them;
  - take time to understand the parents of the Millennial students;
  - work with institutional leadership to develop a common understanding of how to interact with parents;
  - develop a campus-wide philosophy on working with parents;
  - create persuasive messages that can be articulated to parents addressing their concerns and the institution's ability to successfully resolve them;
  - create talking-points for professionals that have frequent contact with parents and hear parental concerns;
  - educate professionals that have the most frequent contact with parents about the latest trends in parental behavior; and
  - look to other institutions for best practices and models to potentially.
- (pp. 57 – 59)

Many had suggested that student affairs professionals needed to take the lead on behalf of the institution to forge this new partnership with parents (Jackson & Murphy, 2005; Merriman, 2007; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Student affairs professionals had the potential of being catalysts to bring clarity and focus to institutions desiring to have a better understanding of today's parents and should proactively work with new models, assumptions, and expectations about parents (Mullendore et al, 2005, p. 3). Merriman (2008) also concluded that parents wanted assurances that the institution of higher education was prepared to take care of their student in the time of crisis (p. 65).

Limited research had been conducted on student affairs professionals and their perceptions of parental involvement in the lives of the college age students. A study



conducted by Merriman (2006) found that there were no consistent practices for managing parental concerns. The study revealed that only 16% of the student affairs professional respondents stated that their institution had a formal, written philosophy regarding their relationship with parents, and of those only 4% indicated that the philosophy had been adopted throughout the institution (Merriman, 2006).

Partnering with parents was an important concept for student affairs professionals to contemplate. “Because many parents want to continue to be involved in the lives of their students, colleges should in an intentional, purposeful way provide structure and opportunity for that involvement” (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005, p. 35).

### ***In Consortio Cum Parentibus Model***

With the increase of parental involvement in the daily lives of their students, some student affairs professionals had suggested that higher education may be returning to the days of *in loco parentis*. As described in “Is *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* the New *In Loco Parentis*?” Henning (2007) stated that *in loco parentis* has its roots in English common law.

The father may also delegate part of his parental authority, during his life, to the tutor or schoolmaster of his child; who is then *in loco parentis*, and has such a portion of the power of the parent committed to his charge, viz. that of restraint and correction, as may be necessary to answer the purposes for which he is employed. (Blackstone, in Henning, 2007, p. 539)

In the United States *in loco parentis* was adopted as legal doctrine as a result of two court rulings, *State v. Pendergrass* (1837) where the court ruled that a teacher had the right to discipline a student and *Gott v. Berea* (1913) where the court ruled that the college could prohibit its students from patronizing local restaurants because the college stood *in loco parentis*. These rulings gave colleges the right to discipline students. Henning (2007)

suggested that a perceived duty to protect evolved, expanding the college's responsibility to protect students in all areas of the student's life, much in the way a parent protects a child. While colleges and universities may have accepted the responsibility of protecting their students, "as technical, legal doctrine, *in loco parentis*, was not—ever—a liability/responsibility/duty-creating norm in higher education law. *In loco parentis* was only a legal tool for universities when they deliberately chose to discipline students" (Bickel & Lake, 1999, p. 29).

Recent court cases shed some light on the concept of the special relationship that exists between the institution of higher education and students. "A special relationship in a postsecondary setting means that a distinctive set of circumstances has arisen that operates to place a legal obligation upon the university to undertake reasonable actions designed to protect the student from reasonable harm (Kaplin & Lee, 1995)" (in Baker, 2005, p. 521). In three recent cases, *White v. University of Wyoming*, 1998; *Jain v. State of Iowa*, 2000; and *Schieszler v. Ferrum College*, 2002, the courts rejected the families' claims that the institution of higher education had the general duty to supervise students living in the residence halls. Even so, Baker (2005) in *Notifying Parents Following a College Student Suicide Attempt: A Review of Case Law and FERPA and Recommendations for Practice*, recommended that institutions of higher education have a system in place to notify parents after a suicide attempt (p. 257).

Henning (2007) reviewed other models proposed to replace *in loco parentis* that define the relationships that institutions of higher education have with students. Table 6 gives an overview of each. Henning (2007) recognized that parental involvement was not a part of any of the models and that parents should be viewed as partners in the classroom

and outside of the classroom (p. 551). Acknowledging that today's parents are more connected to the daily lives of their students, Henning proposed a new model,

Table 6

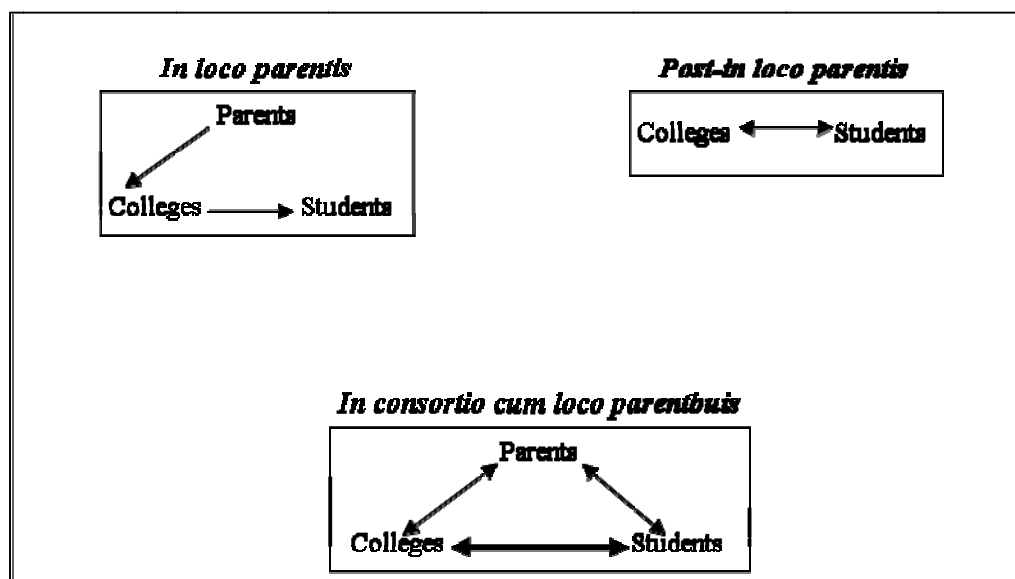
*Models Defining the College/Student Relationship*

Model	Description
Constitutional Model	Rose after the death of <i>in loco parentis</i> in <i>Dixon v. Alabama Board of Education</i> (1961). Recognizes college students as adults and afforded them minimal due process rights. It was not equally applied to students at public and private institutions.
Contract Model	Rose as students were more concerned about their civil and economic rights. Outlines the rights and responsibilities of the student and the institution, but the student was unable to negotiate the terms of the contract.
Fiduciary Model	Introduced in 1990 by Stamatakos, the model imposes a duty on the institution to act in the best interest of the student in all matters, which minimizes a student's responsibilities.
Bystander/No Duty Model	Bickel and Lake (1999) suggested that this model was the most appropriate model after the fall of <i>in loco parentis</i> in the United States in 1961. The model suggested that the institution has no duty to get involved in a student's life outside of the classroom.
Bystander/Duty Model	In the mid-1980s institutions were subjected to new liability. The three sources of duty—as a landowner, the duty to protect anyone on campus from known hazards and dangers, as a protector of foreseeable risks, and a duty to ensure safety for sponsored events.
Facilitator Model	Bickel and Lake (1999) suggested that the new millennium brought in a new model in which colleges provided parameters and consequences for student decision-making but students make their own choices.

Source: Henning, 2007, pp. 541 - 545

*In Consortio Parentibus*, in 2007 based on six assumptions: 1) students learn from the decisions they make; 2) students learn by becoming autonomous; 3) students have rights (FERPA and HIPAA) that institutions must acknowledge and uphold; 4) today's students are more connected to their parents; 5) parents can be a significant influence on their

student's behavior; and 6) college can provide support and accountability for students and their decisions (pp. 552 -553). Figure 2 illustrates the difference between the *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* model and previous models that described the relationship between institutions of higher education and students.



Source: Henning, 2007, p. 551

Figure 2. *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* model

In the *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* model there were three important relationships; the relationship between students and their parents, the relationship between colleges and parents, and, most importantly, the relationship between colleges and students. There was a partnership between the institution, student, and parent(s) focused on the student's education. The model stated that colleges cannot control every aspect of campus, but had the responsibility to protect students from danger. Also, students were responsible for the decisions they make. The model also acknowledged that

parents were actively involved in their student's lives and education. The importance of the parent/student relationship and attachment had already been described in the student development theory and research section of this chapter. Studies by Lee et al. (2007), Hickman et al. (2000), and Larose and Boivin (1998) all found that involving parents in the college experience may support student growth and development. Finally, the model called on student affairs professionals to provide assistance to students and their parents by teaching how to facilitate autonomy for the student and how to communicate with each other (Henning, 2007, p. 557).

### **Summary**

Parents of Millennial students were impacting student affairs professionals and the work they did. Gone were the days when parents dropped their student off in the fall and return at the end of the semester to retrieve their student and find out how the semester went. The literature revealed that student affairs professionals were recognizing the change in the relationship between students and their parents and institutions of higher education and the parents of students. Parents of Millennial students seemed more interested in a student's life at college.

This new level of family involvement does not fit with the personal history of today's educators, nor does it fit with the student development theory they were taught. It also represents a shift in the relationship between student and institution. (Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. vii)

Student affairs professionals could be leaders in developing an institutional philosophy on partnering with parents of today's students (Jackson & Murphy, 2005).

The review of literature for this study focused on four themes as the researcher explored senior-level student affairs administrators' interactions with parents: (a) the parents of Millennial students and how parental expectations are changing the way that

student affairs professionals interact with this constituent group; (b) student development theory with a special focus on the work of Chickering and Reisser's psychosocial theory, as well as attachment theory and emerging adulthood theory; (c) institutional efforts to partner with parents of today's traditional undergraduate students in an effort to focus on student growth and development; and (d) the *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* model as a framework for student affairs professionals to work within while defining the institution's relationship with parents and the changing expectations and legal landscape. This review served as a spring board for the researcher as she moved forward to describe how interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four year institutions of higher education. The review informed the researcher in developing the research questions and reinforced the importance of studying this topic. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **Overall Approach and Rationale**

The purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students and senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education (see Appendix A). A qualitative approach was selected as the means for understanding, exploring and bringing meaning to this topic (Creswell, 2009). This research was also anchored in a social constructivist worldview. This perspective assumed that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because little research has been conducted on this topic and the researcher was a key instrument in the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is further defined by the following characteristics:

- Natural setting—study of behavior as it occurs naturally;
- Direct data collection—researcher collects data directly from the source;
- Rich narrative descriptions—detailed narratives that provide in-depth understanding of context and behaviors;
- Process orientation—focus on why and how behaviors occur;
- Inductive data analysis—generalizations induced from synthesizing gathered information;
- Participant perspectives—focus on participants’ understanding and meaning; and
- Emergent research design—research design evolves and changes as the study takes place. (McMillan, 2004, p. 257)

The researcher sought to address the grand tour question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four-year

institutions of higher education? In the process of exploring this question, the following questions were considered:

1. What language does student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students?
2. What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies?
3. What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs, and activities?
4. What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?

### **Design Overview**

The main objective of this study was to understand the interactions between the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students and senior-level student affairs administrators. Interviews were determined to be the most appropriate research method to explore this research problem.

### ***Clarifying Researcher's Bias***

Qualitative research is interpretative in nature. Therefore it was important for the researcher to disclose her role, biases, and background (Creswell, 2009). The researcher bracketed her experiences, setting them aside, as much as possible, in order to take a fresh look at the topic that was the focus of this research. The researcher was a senior-level student affairs administrator with 13 years of experience in the student affairs



profession. She spent almost her entire professional career at the same institution, which was a private, medium-size, highly residential institution in Nebraska. It was also religiously affiliated. Her institution was identified as one of the institutions on the Carnegie Classification list of criteria for this study. Her institution was not a part of this study because of her role at her institution and her involvement with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.

The first experience that the researcher had with the topic that was the focus of this research was during the five years she spent overseeing her institution's new student orientation program for undergraduate students. The summer orientation sessions had a parent program where she and other student affairs administrators were very accessible to parents in both structured formal presentations and informal times including meals and a parent reception. During these informal times the researcher began to identify how involved the parents were with their soon-to-be college student.

In her experience the researcher recognized a diversity of parenting styles, but common among the parents that she interacted with was a desire for their student to be successful in college and in life. The researcher heard the range of emotions from parents because in this setting the parents often freely discussed their hopes and fears. They also often had questions that were of a practical nature so they could better understand the institution's environment, policies, and expectations. The researcher assumed that many of the parents did this to be a resource and an advocate for their student.

In addition to her involvement with her institution's new student orientation program, the researcher served as the institution's liaison to the parent council for four years. The council met twice each year and a variety of topics that the researcher and the

council chairs brought forward for discussion included high-risk drinking behaviors, on-campus housing options for upper-class students, the institution's response to psychological emergencies, student misconduct, campus expansion, and job placement for students upon graduation. During this time the researcher gained more insights into what parents want for their student and the student's college experience.

Currently, the researcher serves as her institution's senior conduct officer, as well as the primary contact for parents if a student is involved in a psychological or health emergency. She has served in this role for the past four years. The experiences that the researcher has with parents in her current role often are initiated by what most would perceive as negative situations. The researcher has developed parental notification policies and continues to actively engage her peers in conversations regarding an institutional philosophy on partnering with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.

The researcher has been actively involved in several professional organizations in the student affairs profession. Because of her involvements, she knew some of the individuals identified as study participants. The researcher considered these relationships as collegial and professional. The nature of the relationships included minimal interactions that typically included exchanges at annual meetings and on rare occasions limited email correspondence related to a current issue or topic relevant to the student affairs profession.

### ***Study Approval and Ethical Considerations***

Recognizing that there were ethical issues inherent in this research and acknowledging that when collecting data the researcher needed to respect the participants

and the institutions that they represented in this study (Creswell, 2009), the researcher sought approval of her research from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval was received for the research on July 16, 2009. The application and approval letter are found in Appendix B. The researcher also sent information regarding the interview to participants prior to their scheduled interview time. The interview questions and an informed consent form were sent to each participant. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Informed consent forms were signed by all the participants and returned to the researcher. These signed forms were locked in a desk drawer in the researcher's office.

To protect the identities of the survey participants and their institutions, different names were used. The identity was stored in a locked box owned by the researcher, and she was the only person with access. Additionally, the interview transcripts were stored on two computer hard drives. Both computers had password protected login screens and the folder the interviews were stored in was password protected.

### ***Pilot Study***

Prior to commencing the study, the researcher piloted the study conducting three phone interviews using the interview protocol in Appendix C. The pilot interviews were with three senior-level student affairs professionals. One interviewee had primary responsibilities in student retention services, the second interviewee's responsibilities were in residence life and assessment, and the third interviewee had oversight of several traditional student affairs units. Based on feedback from the pilot participants, six of the interview questions were revised to clarify what was being asked of the study participants. Additionally, two questions were added to the study's interview protocol

based on the feedback received in the pilot phase of the research. The questions added were: “What personal/life experiences affect your interactions with parents?” and “When you respond to parents, do you incorporate student development theory in your explanation? If yes, tell me more.” The revised interview protocol was submitted to IRB, and the changes to the protocol were approved on August 10, 2009. The revised interview protocol is found in Appendix D.

### ***Participant Selection***

Using purposeful criterion-based selection the researcher explored the intricacies of the student affairs administrator-parent interaction. Specifically, the study focused on senior-level student affairs administrators that have the most parental contact according to the chief student affairs officer of the institution. More specifically, the participants in this study were senior-level student affairs administrators at mid-size, highly residential institutions according to the Carnegie Foundation’s classification that were at private not-for-profit institutions. At the time 85 institutions of higher education fit these criteria.

The researcher further limited the sample to Master’s Colleges and Universities as defined by Carnegie Foundation’s classification in order to define the boundaries of the study. These institutions typically granted at least 50 master’s degrees per year and no more than 20 doctoral degrees per year (2009). At the time of the study there were a total of 45 institutions of higher education that fit this classification (see Appendix A). One institution, Creighton University, was eliminated from consideration because it was the employer of the researcher, and because of the researcher’s position at the institution and her role in working with parents and parental concerns at that institution. A total of 44

institutions made up the population from which the sample set for this research study were drawn.

An initial email (see Appendix E) was sent to 41 of the 44 chief student affairs administrators at the institutions in the identified population. Multiple attempts were made to locate contact information for the chief student affairs administrators at the remaining 3 institutions without success. Of the 41 chief student affairs administrators contacted, 17 responded identifying the senior-level student affairs administrator at their institution for the researcher to contact. Of the chief student affairs administrators, 12 identified themselves as the individual at their institution that had the most contact with parents of traditional-age students. The researcher sent an email (see Appendix F) to the senior-level student affairs administrator, including 12 chief student affairs administrators identified by his/her chief student affairs administrator as the individual that had the most contact with parents with an invitation to participate in the study. Of those 17 administrators, 16 individuals participated in the study. The 17th declined to participate after learning of the time commitment for the study, citing a lack of availability during the timeframe when the interviews were conducted. There was an 18th response to the request. One chief student affairs administrator declined to participate due to the fact that the appropriate individual was taking a medical leave of absence.

The 16 participants represented 16 of the 44 institutions identified for the population (see Appendix A). The descriptions provide some additional information about the participants' institutions:

- Alan's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 8,320 students with females making up 56% of the population and 44% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 63% Caucasian with 37% of the students representing

other ethnicities. Undergraduate students living on campus made up 79% of the student population.

- Bill's institution—The university was located in the Northeastern region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 3,326 with females making up 62% of the population and 38% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 79% Caucasian with 21% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 55% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Carol's institution—This university was located in the Western region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 2,820 students with females making up 56% of the population and 44% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 75% Caucasian with 25% of the students representing other ethnicities. Undergraduate students living on campus made up 72% of the student population.
- Dave's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in a urban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 4,132 with females making up 57% of the population and 43% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 91% Caucasian with 9% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 53% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Ethan's institution—The university was located in the Midwest in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 4,167 with females making up 54% of the population and 46% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 87% Caucasian with 13% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 73% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Frank's institution—The university was located in the Midwest in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 6,343 with females making up 56% of the population and 44% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 77% Caucasian with 23% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 55% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Gina's institution—The university was located in the Northeastern region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 3,552 students with females making up 50% of the population and 50% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 77% Caucasian with 23% of the students representing other ethnicities. Undergraduate students living on campus made up 69% of the student population.

- Henry's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in an urban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 4,270 with females making up 63% of the population and 37% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 70% Caucasian with 30% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 60% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Ian's institution—The university was located in the Southeastern region in an urban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 4,403 with females making up 69% of the population and 31% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 59% Caucasian with 41% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 70% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Josh's institution—The university was located in the Northeastern region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 4,084 with females making up 58% of the population and 42% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 85% Caucasian with 15% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 79% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Kim's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 5,331 with females making up 53% of the population and 47% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 85% Caucasian with 15% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 62% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Luke's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 7,161 with females making up 51% of the population and 49% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 79% Caucasian with 21% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 72% of its undergraduate students living on campus.
- Mitch's institution—The university was located in the Southeastern region in an urban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 5,128 students with females making up 59% of the population and 41% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 74% Caucasian with 26% of the students representing other ethnicities. Undergraduate students living on campus made up 60% of the student population.

- Nathan's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 4,257 students with females making up 40% of the population and 60% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 76% Caucasian with 24% of the students representing other ethnicities. Undergraduate students living on campus made up 80% of the student population.
- Olivia's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 2,796 students with females making up 39% of the population and 61% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 91% Caucasian with 9% of the students representing other ethnicities. Undergraduate students living on campus made up 79% of the student population.
- Peter's institution—The university was located in the Mid-Atlantic region in a suburban setting. The undergraduate enrollment was 3,937 with females making up 59% of the population and 41% male. The ethnicity of the undergraduate population is 87% Caucasian with 13% of the students representing other ethnicities. This religiously affiliated institution had 53% of its undergraduate students living on campus (U.S. News & World Report, 2010).

### ***Interview Protocol Design***

As previously stated, the qualitative method chosen to collect this data was interviews. The researcher designed the interview protocol to guide her through the interview process and to provide the participants with a semi-structured interview intended to elicit the perceptions that the participants had of the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students, and the impact these parents had on their student's college experience (see Appendix D). The protocol began with questions that confirmed that the participant had frequent contact with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The questions that followed were intended to obtain better information that could further understanding of the perceptions of the participants regarding the roles that parents played in the lives of their students. The interview protocol also sought to obtain a better understand of the use of student development theory by participants in their interactions



with students. The protocol concluded with questions that reflected on programs, events, and services that institutions provided to parents.

### ***Interview Data Collection***

The researcher reflected on the advantages and disadvantages of the interview method as defined by Creswell (2009) and determined that it was the most appropriate method for the research topic.

- *Advantage #1: Interviews were useful because participants could not be directly observed.* Because of ethical considerations and potential FERPA and HIPPA violations the researcher was not able to observe participants in their work environment while interacting with parents. Time constraints and financial limitations for the researcher to travel to 16 different institutions made face-to-face interviews unfeasible. Also, as confirmed in the interviews, parental contact with senior-level student affairs professionals was often initiated by the parent, therefore it was not always predictable when this contact occurred. This meant that the researcher would not be able to observe the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The researcher determined that phone interviews were the most feasible method to explore the research problem.
- *Advantage #2: Participants provided historical information.* The researcher took advantage of the benefit identified by Creswell (2009). She designed an interview protocol that inquired about the changes in the contact that senior-

level student affairs administrators had experienced with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.

- Advantage #3: *Interviews allowed researcher control over the line of questioning.* The researcher designed a semi-structured interview protocol to provide structure to the interview process and defined parameters to explore the research questions.
- Disadvantage #1: *Interviews provided indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees.* The researcher recognized and accepted this limitation because of the limited research on this topic. The findings added new knowledge to the field.
- Disadvantage #2: *Interviews provided information in a designated place rather than natural field setting.* The researcher recognized and accepted this limitation because of ethical considerations. As mentioned above, the researcher determined that was not appropriate or feasible for her to directly observe the interactions between senior-level administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.
- Disadvantage #3: *The researcher's presence may have biased responses.* The researcher acknowledged this limitation and controlled for this by bracketing her experiences prior to commencing the interviews to minimize the potential impact she would have.
- Disadvantage #4: *Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive.* The researcher recognized this limitation and piloted her interview protocol revising the protocol to more clearly articulate the questions. She also had

probes for her questions if participants were unclear about the meaning of the questions asked. (Creswell, 2009, p. 179).

As previously noted, the researcher decided to conduct interviews by phone due to time and financial constraints. “A telephone interview provides the best source of information when the researcher does not have direct access to individuals. The drawbacks of this approach are that the researcher cannot see the informal communication and the phone expenses” (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). Prior to the phone interview, the researcher contacted by email the chief student affairs administrator at the 41 institutions of higher education identified for her study. The email message served as an invitation to participate in the study. Also included was information about the purpose of the study. The message asked the chief student affairs administrator to provide the researcher with the name and contact information of a senior-level student affairs administrator at his/her institution that has the most parental contact. The researcher received responses from 18 chief student affairs administrators from the initial email inviting the chief student affairs administrator to identify the senior-level student affairs administrator at his or her institution that had the most contact with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Of those participants that responded, 17 of the 18 participants agreed to participate in the study. One participant declined indicating that he was taking a medical leave of absence from work. Of the 17 chief student affairs administrators that responded affirmatively to the researcher’s email, 12 indicated that they were the individual at their respective institution that had the most frequent contact with parents, and that they were willing to take part in a 60-minute phone interview. Five chief student affairs administrators provided the researcher with the names and contact

information of the appropriate senior-level student affairs administrator at his or her institution that best fit the criteria for the study. The 12 chief student affairs administrators who agreed to participate in the interview did partake in the study. Four of the five senior-level student affairs administrators also participated in the interview. The fifth participant was unable to participate due to time constraints. The researcher conducted a total of 16 interviews, which allowed the researcher to established saturation, the point where no new important information was obtained (Creswell, 2007).

Once the participants were identified, the researcher contacted them and provided them with information about the study, including an informed consent form for the participants to sign and return prior to taking part in the interview. The researcher scheduled a 60-minute interview appointments with the participants. Using the established interview protocol, the researcher conducted interviews by phone, and the interviews were recorded with a digital recorder. The interview protocol (see Appendix D) included a heading with date, name of interviewer and interviewee; instructions for the interview to ensure standard procedures were used from one interview to the next; the interview questions and probes; spaces between questions for notes; and a thank you statement acknowledging the interviewee's participation (Creswell, 2009). The average time length of time for interviews was 34 minutes, with the shortest interview lasting 17 minutes and the longest interview lasting 49 minutes. The researcher took notes identifying potential themes and notable remarks during the interview.

The digital recordings were transcribed using the services at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Bureau of Sociological Research. The transcriptionists at the Bureau of Sociological Research signed confidentiality agreements in order to ensure the

anonymity of the participants and their institutions (see Appendix H). One digital recording did have some sound quality issues due to some background interference on the phone line. The researcher noted this during the interview and took additional notes during this interview to compare to the transcript of this interview. The researcher also sent all the interview participants a copy of their individual interview to review and give feedback on accuracy. The researcher received feedback from 12 of the 16 participants. They reviewed their transcripts and gave feedback to the researcher. Nine participants responded that the transcripts reflected the interview and their comments. Three participants had minor grammar and spelling corrections for their individual transcripts.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

“Qualitative research does take time, involves ambitious data analysis, results in lengthy reports, and does not have firm guidelines” (Creswell, 2007, p. 51). The researcher used multiple levels of abstraction to analyze the data. This included identifying narrow themes to broader, interrelated themes to more abstract dimensions. Creswell (2009) emphasized the following data analysis approach:

- Step 1—*Organized and prepared data for analysis*. The researcher had her interviews professionally transcribed. The digital recordings were converted into Word documents. The researcher also organized the notes she took from each interview.
- Step 2—*Read through all the data*. The researcher read all the interview transcripts taking notes in the margins and began identifying potential themes and codes as she gathered her general thoughts about the data.

- Step 3—*Began detailed analysis with a coding process.* The researcher reread the 16 transcripts coding for statements that she expected to find, statements that were not originally anticipated, statements that were unusual, and statements that addressed broader theoretical perspectives. Initially, the researcher identified 209 codes. For the next step of the coding process, the research enlisted the support of a consultant (see Appendix I). Prior to sending the transcripts to the consultant, the researcher removed all information that could identify the participant or his/her institution. The researcher sent the de-identified transcripts to the consultant. The consultant used the computer software application, QSR NVivo7 to assist in the coding process. The consultant organized the data for the researcher creating Word documents for each of the 22 interview question listing all the individual participant's responses to each question.
- Step 4—*Used the coding process to generate a description of the people and codes for analysis.* The researcher again read the data, but this time the participants' responses were organized by question. The researcher continuing the analysis and coding process. She reduced the codes to 16 codes and 28 sub-codes. The researcher organized this information into a codebook for her consultant (see Appendix J). The codebook guided the consultant as she organized the data using the QSR NVivo7 software. The consultant returned the reorganized data to the researcher, and the researcher used the information to identify the major findings and subsequently to develop a small number of themes.

- Step 5—*Advanced how the description and themes represented in the qualitative narrative.* The researcher first wrote a descriptive narrative summarizing her interview with each participant. These participant profiles described each of the participants from information obtained from interview questions 1 - 8 (see Appendix D). The researcher used charts to describe the participants and some of their experiences with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate parents. The researcher then further analyzed the codes and developed six themes and four subthemes. These themes were connected to one of the four research questions to further describe the interactions between the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students and senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education (see Appendix K).
- Step 6—*A final step in data analysis involved data interpretation.* The researcher began the process of interpreting the data with an awareness of the biases she brought to the process, and used rich, thick descriptions and discrepant information from the interview transcripts to help ensure the accuracy of her findings. The interpretation of the research findings is in Chapter Four (pp. 185- 190).

## **Validation**

Validation is a process that the researcher utilized to check for the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2009). The strategies described by Creswell (2009) to validate the research included:

- *Triangulate* different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for the themes;
- Use *member checking* to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report of specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate;
- Use of *rich, thick descriptions* to convey the findings. This may transport the readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences;
- Clarify the *bias* the researcher brings to the study. This self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative;
- Present *negative* or *discrepant information* that runs counter to the themes;
- Spend *prolonged time* in the field;
- Use *peer debriefing* to enhance the accuracy of the account; and
- Use an *external auditor* to review the entire project. (pp. 191-192)

The researcher used several validation strategies to ensure the accuracy of the data reported in the study. First, in an earlier section of this chapter the researcher clarified her biases when she bracketed her experiences. Second, the researcher used thick, rich descriptions to communicate the findings. Third, the researcher presented discrepant information that ran counter to the identified themes. Fourth, the researcher used the expertise of her consultant to give feedback on her study and the results. As previously stated, the researcher also sent each participant his/her transcripts to review for accuracy.



**Summary**

“Unquestionably, the backbone of qualitative research is extensive collection of data, typically from multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2007, p. 43). This chapter provided an overview of the design and methodology of the research study. The researcher conducted multiple interviews using the described protocol in order to portray a rich description of interactions between the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students and senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education. The findings are reported in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

The findings of this research shed light on the interactions between the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students and senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education. The researcher sought to address the grand tour question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education? Additionally the researcher wanted to explore the following: (a) What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students? (b) What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies? (c) What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs, and activities? and (d) What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?

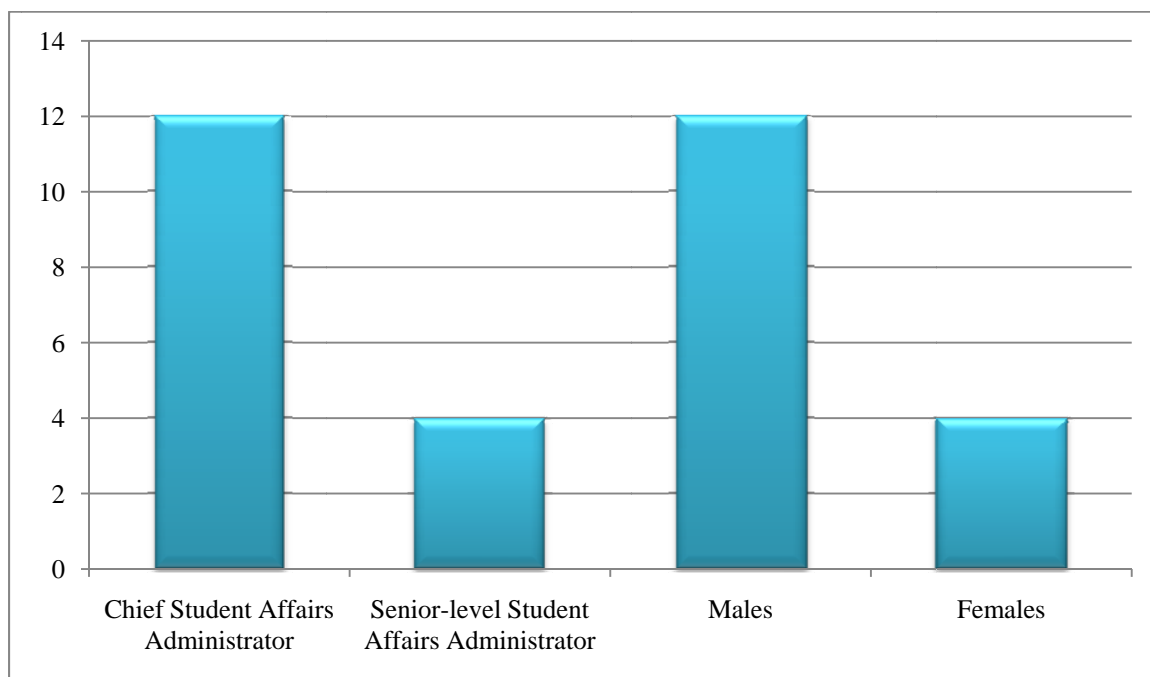
The researcher efforts to make meaning of the information obtained in the interviews resulted in her first describing the individual participants in this study. The researcher then addressed each research question by interpreting the data collected in the interviews and organizing it into six themes.

## **Participant Overview**

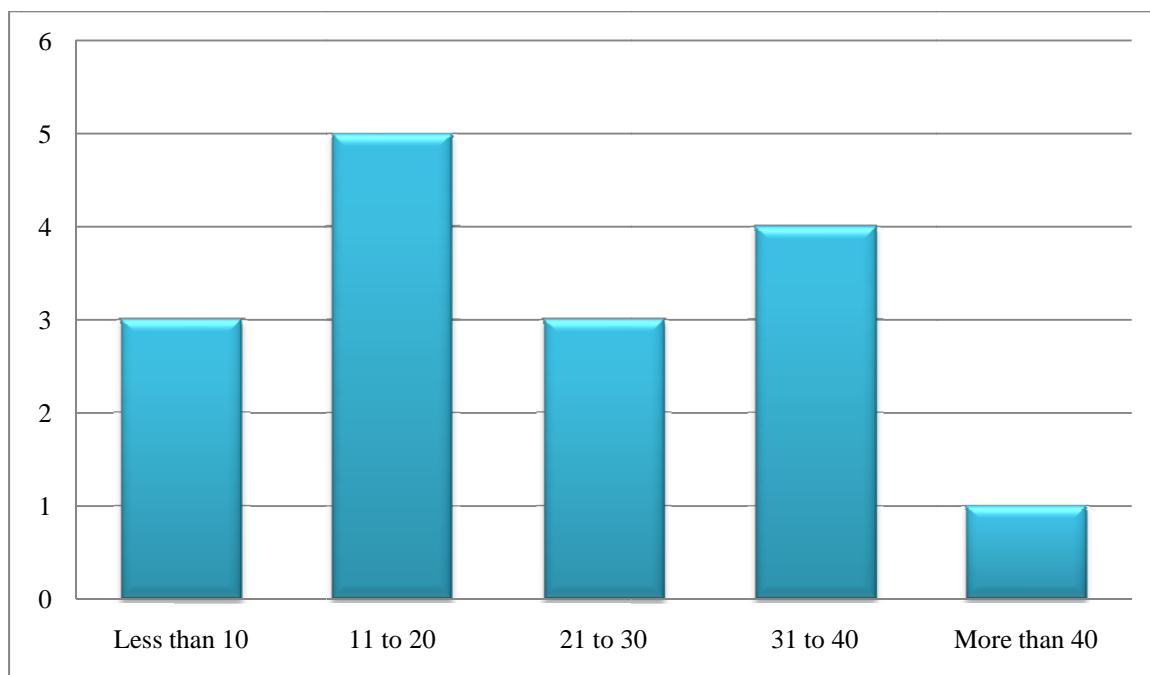
As described in Chapter Three, the researcher employed participant selection methods where she initially contacted 41 chief student affairs administrators requesting their assistance. The researcher asked the chief student affairs administrators to provide the contact information for the senior-level student affairs administrator who had the most contact with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.

Several of the chief student affairs administrators identified themselves as the professional at their institution that fit this criterion. Chief student affairs administrators made up 12 of the 16 participants. The remaining four participants were identified by their chief student affairs administrator as the senior-level student affairs administrator who had the most frequent contact with parents at his/her institution (see Figure 3). The gender of participants was also noted by the researcher. The researcher noted the gender of the participants. There were 12 male participants and four female participants (see Figure 3). Three of the four female participants were chief student affairs professionals. The remaining participant was a senior-level student affairs administrator.

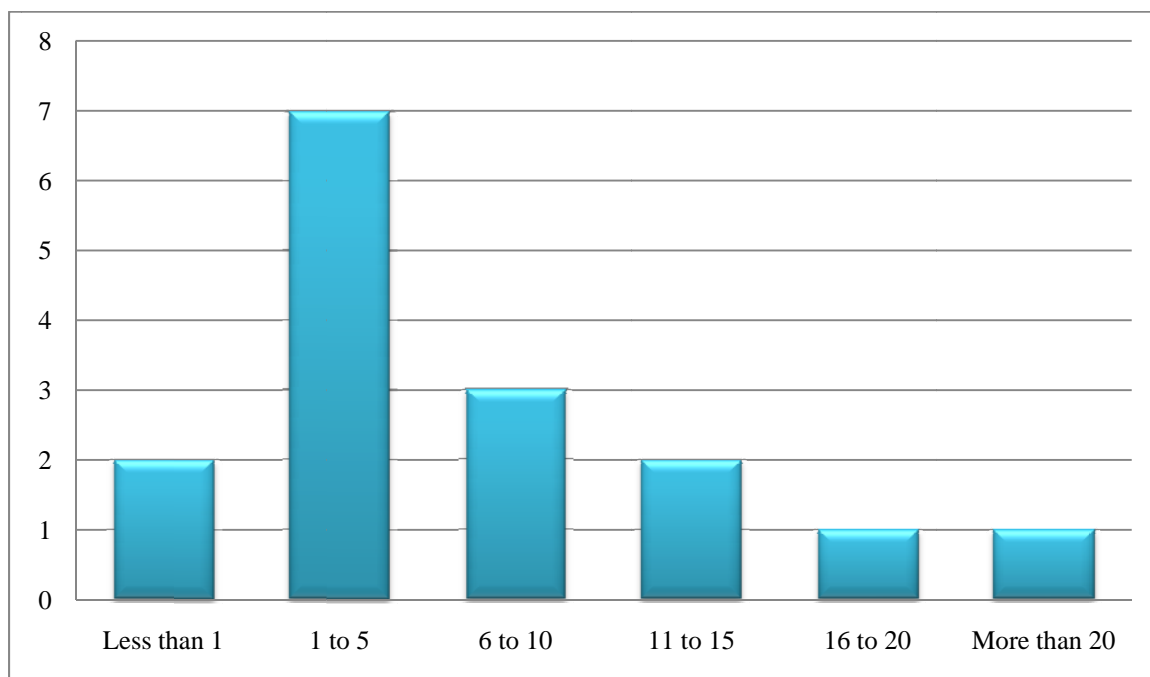
Participants shared the length of time that they had been in the student affairs profession (see Figure 4). Three stated that they were in the profession for less than 10 years. Five indicated that they have been in the student affairs profession for 11 – 20 years. Three said they have been student affairs professionals for 21 – 30 years. Four indicated that they have been in the profession for 31 – 40 years. One had been in the profession for more than 40 years. Participants also shared the length of time they were in their current position (see Figure 5). Two were in their position for less than a year. Seven had been in their positions for 1 to 5 years. Three held their current position for



*Figure 3.* Professional position and gender.



*Figure 4.* Number of years in the student affairs profession.



*Figure 5.* Number of years in current position.

6 to 10 years. Two were in their current role for 11 – 15 years. One was in his position for 16 years. Another had been in her position for 28 years.

## **Participant Profiles**

### ***Alan***

Alan was the dean of students at his institution. He had worked at his institution for 13 years and had begun his second year as dean at the time of the interview. Alan was the chief student affairs administrator and had a doctorate. Several areas reported to Alan: the wellness center, which included health services and counseling services; judicial affairs; student activities; leadership development; diversity education; evening/weekend programming; residential services; housing; career services and the campus pub.

Alan reported having frequent contact with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Reflecting that parental contact was almost a daily occurrence for

him, but Alan did not consider himself the primary contact for parents at his institution. He indicated that the university's alumni relations department has an individual that oversees the parent council and that this individual is considered the formal contact for parents. Alan indicated that starting with the "move-in" program for new students, he actively engaged parents letting them know to contact him with questions and concerns. About the parent reception on move in day Alan reflected, "I greet 1,500 to 1,600 parents and handout a bagillion business cards, and they start calling me later that night."

Alan stated that he believed that "parents today are a partner in their child's education." He acknowledged that parents were actively involved in their students' lives and believed that many of them "should take a much farther backseat in the process." Alan stated that in all of his interactions with parents he focused on the positives. He emphasized the importance of listening to parents and their concerns, of being empathetic, and of educating parents to direct students to resolve their issues. When asked if Alan had any personal or life experiences that have affected his interactions with parents he indicated he had. Being a parent, Alan shared, "My oldest child who is entering fourth grade has a significant learning disability and I've become frustrated with the public school system, and knowing that have taken a sympathetic stand to interacting with parents."

### ***Bill***

Bill was the dean of student affairs at his institution. He worked there for 25 years, serving as the dean for 16 years. Bill was a senior-level student affairs administrator with the following areas reporting to him: drug and alcohol programs;

counseling center; health services; residence life; judicial affairs; housing; and first year experience class.

Considering himself the primary contact for parents at his institution, Bill reported having frequent contact with parents. He described the contacts as constant and “in a good way. Probably two times a day, whether it be by email or telephone calls.” Bill reflected that for many years he and his colleagues were able to partner with parents but that today that has changed. “It was like 2005, up until then, we really were partnering with parents . . . then all of the sudden, one day, everything changed, and it was like every parent since then is completely different.”

When asked if Bill had any personal or life experiences that have affected his interactions with parents he indicated he had. Bill shared that his experience as a father of a high school senior and the issues that he and his son were dealing with impacted his parental interactions. Bill stated that he shared stories about his experiences at summer orientation because the parents “just have a better understanding once they know that I’m going through the same things that they’re going through.”

### ***Carol***

Carol was the vice president and dean of student life at her institution. At the time of the interview she was at her university for 40 years and had served as its chief student affairs administrator for 28 years. Carol indicated that she “oversees everything outside of the classroom”: athletics; food services; counseling; student employment; new student orientation; academic success; judicial affairs; residence life; student involvement; community service learning; and the health center.

Carol did not consider herself the primary contact for parents at her institution, indicating that there are probably three individuals at her institution that share in that role. She shared, “One person on my staff is the triage officer for parent issues. One person is a programmatic person who works specifically with parents council and on parent days, . . . and I’m the main speaker and the main public face for parents, and I get a lot of parent calls as a result of that.”

When asked about the role that parents play in the lives of their students, Carol shared, “I think many of them are perhaps overly involved, but I understand why.” She shared her belief that the safety of their child and wanting their student to be successful as the primary reasons for their involvement. “And that’s a natural parent instinct. I think parents just go about it today in a different way than they used to.” Carol also reflected on a personal experience that she stated affected her interactions with parents. She said that she works closely with students that have issues with alcohol and that one of her parents was an alcoholic and that has influenced her “interest in helping kids early on to get out of that dilemma.”

### ***Dave***

Dave had his doctorate and was the chief student affairs officer at his institution, serving as vice president for student affairs. He worked in the student affairs profession for 21 years and had been in his current role for nine years. Dave stated that he has the typical responsibilities of a chief student affairs officer: residence life; student activities; new student orientation; counseling services; career services; the women’s center; athletics; and the music program.



Parental contact is almost a daily occurrence for Dave, but he does not consider himself the primary contact for parents at his institution. Dave shared that most of his parental contact likely comes from the public role he has at the orientation program for incoming students. In his annual public address to parents, Dave stated that he gives out his business cards, “so if they do have some difficulty the vice president for student affairs office is typically the number that they call when they don’t know who else to call.”

Dave shared his belief that parents are partners in the educational process, citing two primary roles. The first was the role of parent as advisor to their student, “as it relates to choices of major, [students] bouncing ideas off [their parents] about the possibility of studying abroad, being involved with activities and programs and services.” The other role was the parent as an investor “trying to set up their children for future success, and I think that comes through loud and clear when we deal with issues like financial matters.” He also indicated that his personal experience of being a parent had affected how he interacts with parents. When interacting with parents Dave shared, “I think that being a parent in and of itself . . . has prepared me more for understanding where they’re coming from when they ask the types of questions that they do.”

### ***Ethan***

Ethan had a doctoral degree and was the chief student affairs administrator at his institution serving as the vice president for student life and dean of students. He had worked in the student affairs profession for seven years and was in his current position for five years. Ethan reported that he oversees the entire student life division at his

institution: student conduct; disability services; first year experience; residence life; campus life; health services; and multicultural student services.

Ethan shared that he had frequent contact with parents, but he did not consider himself the primary contact for parents indicating that his institution did have a position for alumni and parent relations. Ethan stated that for the division of student life that he was the primary contact. Ethan reflected that he believes that today parents are playing a greater role in the lives of their college age students than they did in the past: “Parents are much more involved with students’ education and personal lives, and I think we have a trend toward delayed adolescence as well.”

When asked if Ethan had any personal or life experiences that have affected his interactions with parents he indicated he had. Ethan shared that while growing up his father was a high school principal and his mother was a teacher. “I think that I was influenced greatly by them as far as how to work and relate to parents but also how to navigate the troubled waters of an angry parent.” Ethan also revealed that prior to his work in student affairs, he worked as a high school teacher and coach for 10 years interacting with parents on a regular basis.

### ***Frank***

Frank was the assistant vice president for student development and special projects at his institution. He worked in the student affairs profession for eight years served in his current position for more than two and a half years. Frank was a senior-level student affairs administrator that assisted with the oversight of the following areas: admissions, financial aid, athletics, dean of students office, student healthcare center,

international office, career services, housing, enrollment management, freshman year programs, and management of several facilities.

Frank stated that he did have frequent contact with parents averaging approximately eight calls a week during the academic year, but did not consider himself the primary contact for parents. He responded, “I don’t have the most [contact with parents], but I receive a majority of the difficult problems with parents.” When asked about the role that parents play in the lives of their students today, Frank focused more on his institution’s position of working more with students rather than with their parents. He shared, “If something happens and the parent wants to know about it, we don’t actually share much, unless the student has given us permission to, ‘cause ultimately we think the student is supposed to be their own adult while they’re here.” Frank also shared that his parents were university administrators and that he grew up in the higher education environment.

### ***Gina***

Gina was the chief student affairs administrator at her institution. Her position was the associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students. Gina had been in the student affairs profession for 32 years and had served in her current role for the past six years. She provided supervision to all of the student affairs areas at her institution: residential life; counseling; health services; disability services; international student services; multicultural services; student activities; student conduct; and learning communities.

Gina reported having frequent contact with parents mentioning summer orientation, campus crisis issues and parental dissatisfaction as the primary catalysis for

interactions with parents. Gina was uncertain if she would consider herself the primary contact for parents at her institution citing that residential life probably received the largest call volume from parents. Gina shared that she perceived that parents have become “strong advocates for their students so that their students are not learning the skills that they need to advocate for themselves.”

When asked about any personal or life experiences that she may have had that affect her interactions with parents, Gina shared that she is the parent of two college graduates. She went on to share that prior to having college students Gina felt that she could respond to parent issues and concerns. But after sending two children to college, Gina believed that she was “a little more sensitized to, you know, how a parent is feeling when their child is not close by and something happens.”

### ***Henry***

Henry was the newly appointed chief student affairs administrator at his institution, serving as the vice president for student affairs/dean of students. He had worked in the student affairs profession for 36 years and had his doctorate. Henry described his responsibilities as an executive officer at his institution with all areas in student affairs reporting to him: residence life; off-campus students; student discipline; housing; student union; student activities; multicultural programs; international programs; campus ministry; and volunteer services.

Being new to his position, Henry did not report having frequent contact with parents, but in his prior positions considered the contact he had with parents as periodic. He indicated that his institution has an individual in the advancement office that was the institution’s designated contact for parents and for the parents’ association. When

describing the roles that he perceived parents playing in the lives of their students today, Henry shared that he believed that parents are preparing their children for adulthood, and that “some have been very intimately involved in every aspect of that child’s life . . . and some are a confidant for students, and I think there’s a good share of students who talk with their parents on a regular basis.”

When asked about any personal or life experiences that Henry may have had that affect his interactions with parents, Henry shared that he is the parent of two college graduates. He shared, “Well, once my kids were in school, I had to laugh at myself for all the years before then that I’d talked to parents.” Henry also revealed that he used illustrations from his own experiences when he talks with parents at new student orientation. He further reflected, “It rounded out my understanding through personal experience and it allowed me to relate in a different way to [parents], and more importantly them to me.”

### ***Ian***

Ian was the chief student affairs administrator at his institution, serving as the vice president and dean of students. He had his doctorate and had been in the student affairs profession for approximately 20 years. Going into his 6th year in his current position, Ian has responsibilities for all the departments in the student affairs division. He indicated that there are 10 departments and in which he had general supervision and oversight: budgets; student support services; student life programs; student advocacy; student conduct; and student crisis response.

Ian did not identify himself as having frequent contact with parents but acknowledged that he had a public role during new student orientation with parents and

that he was the primary contact for parents when there was a student issue that needed to be addressed. Ian also shared his perception of the role that parents play in the lives of their students. He stated, “I haven’t seen too many of the helicopter parent role, but I see clearly the fiduciary responsibilities that they have with their kids. . . . Most of our students come from families who are paying for their educations so they have a dog in the fight so to speak.”

When asked about any personal or life experiences that he had that affected his interactions with parents, Ian shared “When I had kids it changed the way I did my job. You know, I’d like to think I was a decent professional with parents, but until I actually had kids and you start understanding what parents are going through, it changed the way I did my job.” Ian went on to reflect on another personal experience that affected him stating that “all of us are shaped by the experiences we had in college, so I would say that’s a secondary one.”

### ***Josh***

Josh was a senior-level student affairs administrator serving as the associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students at his institution. He had his doctoral degree and had been in the student affairs profession for five years. Josh has been in his position for three years. He reported that his responsibilities included: residence life; university activities, recreation; counseling; health services; student conduct; and career planning.

Josh reported that he has frequent contact with parents speaking with parents multiple times a week. He did not consider himself the primary contact for parents because his institution does not have anyone designated in that role. He indicated that

“contacts with the parents is usually a function of the question that they have, and the office that they’re looking to speak to.” He shared his thoughts on the role that he believed that parents play in the lives of their students acknowledging that not all parents are alike. He relayed, “They want to be there, to advocate for their student, and sometimes be an ally, and sometimes a friend, which is not always necessarily consistent with some of the things we’re trying to do, but certainly understandable.”

When asked about any personal or life experiences that Josh may have had that affected his interactions with parents, he reflected on becoming a parent. “When I became a parent, it did set a different framework for how I saw the culture and some of the approaches that parents take to their students, to their children.” He went on to share that as he has gotten older he views the parents of the students enrolling today as peers. “So I have more of a kinship with some of their life experiences, because we’re a similar age group.”

### ***Kim***

Kim was a senior-level student affairs administrator and served as the assistant vice president for student development. She had worked in the student affairs profession for 31 years and had been in her current position for three years. The areas of responsibility in her position included: student leadership, student activities, counseling center, career development, student health, wellness awareness that includes drug and alcohol education, and a liaison to parents. Kim also shared, “And I’m the utility player as I like to say. Anything that sort of doesn’t fall neatly into someone else’s area is usually turf to me.”

When discussing the role that parents play in the lives of their students, Kim identified several roles. She said, “I see in many cases parents wanting to almost want to be their [child’s] manager or agent, calling on their behalf and doing things on behalf of the student.” She noted that parents sometimes become the voice of their student, and that parents want to be informed about what is going on with their student. She also perceived that parents at times intervene to make issues go away for their student. “[Parents] just want to make everything nice for their son or daughter because you know, [their children are] in college and they have a lot on their plate and they shouldn’t have to deal with a judicial case or something of that nature.”

Kim indicated that she was currently the parent of two college students, and this personal experience had affected the way she interacts with the parents of students. She also reflected that she believed that being a parent of college age students has affected how the parents respond to her. She stated, “It has affected how I interact with them, how I look at them, how I respect their concerns.”

### ***Luke***

Luke was a senior-level student affairs administrator currently serving in his only position as a student affairs administrator, the dean of students at his institution. He has been in the student affairs profession for 11 years, and had these primary responsibilities: student conduct; student requests for a leave of absence; off-campus living; and other student life areas.

Luke stated that he had regular contact with parents and that his institution’s publications direct parents to him with their inquiries. He shared, “In fact, many of our publications say if you don’t know where to go, you don’t know what to do, call the dean



of students.” Luke did not consider himself the primary contact for parents at his institution. Rather, he shared, “We try to publicize who does what and where so parents have a sort of key to that, but I also realized over the years that our ‘bureaucracy’ is maybe not the English language they speak.”

There were two significant life experiences that Luke discussed that had an effect on his interactions with parents. Luke shared that he is a parent of three children who have completed college. Luke used this personal experience in his interactions with parents. For example, he shared,

But often times I’ll say to them look, I can empathize where you are. I had three children go through school. . . . I’m talking to you not just from a position of authority perhaps or from a position of experience on a campus as a bureaucrat, but I’m also talking to you as a parent.

Luke also indicated that his 30 years of experience in the Marine Corps impacted the way in which he interacted with parents. He resonated that the young people he worked with while serving as a Marine were going through many of the same maturational and family issues as the students and families he worked with at the time of the interview. He stated, “You’re dealing with families out there when a Marine is sick or injured.”

### ***Mitch***

Mitch was a chief student affairs administrator and was the dean of students at his institution. He had his doctorate and had worked in the student affairs profession for 43 years, serving in his current position for 14 years. Mitch stated that he was on the senior staff at his institution and that the following areas reported to him: student conduct; alcohol and other drugs; career services; residence life; student leadership and engagement; student health; and counseling services.

When asked about the frequency of contact that Mitch had with parents, he indicated that contacts were “a last resort kind of thing, because each area handles their own parent issues.” He indicated that residence life and student conduct had the most frequent contact with parents. Mitch stated he was the final appeal for the student conduct process and some parent contact comes from that process. He also indicated that parent calls to the president’s office are referred to him to handle. Mitch also shared that he speaks to the parents of new students during orientation in a formal program.

Mitch reflected on the role that parents play in the lives of students, characterizing them a time for parents to let go. “Well, I explain to the parents that college is different and this is a time for the students to cut the apron strings and that the parents need to let go.” Mitch indicated that he integrates some of his personal life and his role as a father into his presentations to the parents of new students. He tells them a story involving a time when his youngest child wanted Mitch to intervene on his behalf.

He told me he wasn’t responsible for [the issue] and wanted me to call the offices to iron it all out, and I refused to do that and gave him hints on what to say and what to do. And he did it, and he was happy because he got it resolved.

### ***Nathan***

Nathan was the chief student affairs administrator at his institution, serving as the dean of students. He had his doctorate and had been in the student affairs profession for 15 years, serving in his current position for the past five years. His responsibilities as dean included: residential life, housing, student affairs administration, health and wellness center, multicultural center, international programs, student activities, judicial affairs, and new student orientation.

Nathan stated that his institution does not have a person designated as the primary contact for parents, and that the president's office seems to receive most of the parent inquiries. He shared, "We don't have a central parent office, although we're moving in that direction." He also acknowledged, "When the parent can't get the answer they're looking for, it comes to me and that way I'm the primary person." Nathan reflected on the role that parents play in the lives of their students. He recognized that parents are involved in many ways. He replied,

So my guess is that the vast majority of our parents are doing the cheerleader role, and doing that well. But I do find that students have a much closer relationship with their parents than they used to. . . . Parents are actively involved in making sure the experience for their student is the one that they want it to be.

Nathan reflected on his colligate experience and the impact that it had on him as a student affairs professional. He shared that his parents were supportive and interested in his college experience, but they were not overly involved or contacting faculty on his behalf. He recalled, "They dropped me off at school and expected that I would work my way around it, and they would offer advice that they wouldn't get involved in fixing issues for me, so I would say that's the one issue that probably impacts how I look, view education."

### ***Olivia***

Olivia was a chief student affairs administrator and was serving as the vice president for student affairs and dean of students at her institution. She had worked in the student affairs profession for 24 years and was new to her current position. Olivia indicated that she did have frequent contact with parents, stating that she and the president of her institution was the primary contacts for parents. She shared, "I really want the parents to contact me."

Olivia described the role that parents play in the lives of students:

One of a concerned individual, and some are concerned parents, some are concerned consumers, some are concerned that their son or daughter has gotten in some difficulty, and some of them come as pseudo lawyers and questioning what our policies and procedures are, and what that looks like.

When asked about any personal or life experiences that have affected how she interacts with parents, Olivia replied, “I think just the full complement of the maturation in my professional career, probably even more so than my personal life, has helped me with this process.”

***Peter***

Peter was the chief student affairs administrator at his institution, serving for the past 3 years as the vice president for student life. He had his doctoral degree and had worked in the student affairs profession for 13 years. Prior to working in student affairs, Peter had spent 14 years in secondary education. Peter described his current responsibilities. The areas he oversaw included: residence life; student conduct; student union; student activities; student leadership; multicultural center; learning development; counseling center; health center; and career services.

Peter indicated that he did have frequent contact with parents, citing most of his contact is with “unhappy parents,” and also acknowledging that he interacts with parents in his formal role with summer orientation. Peter considered himself the primary contact for parents when parents have a concern about their student. He also reflected on life experiences that have affected his interactions with parents. He shared that he was a father of three, saying, “I think it makes all the difference in the world.” Peter shared that he understood what it costs to send a child to college and the sacrifices parents make to afford college. He also stated he understood the challenges of raising a family. He stated

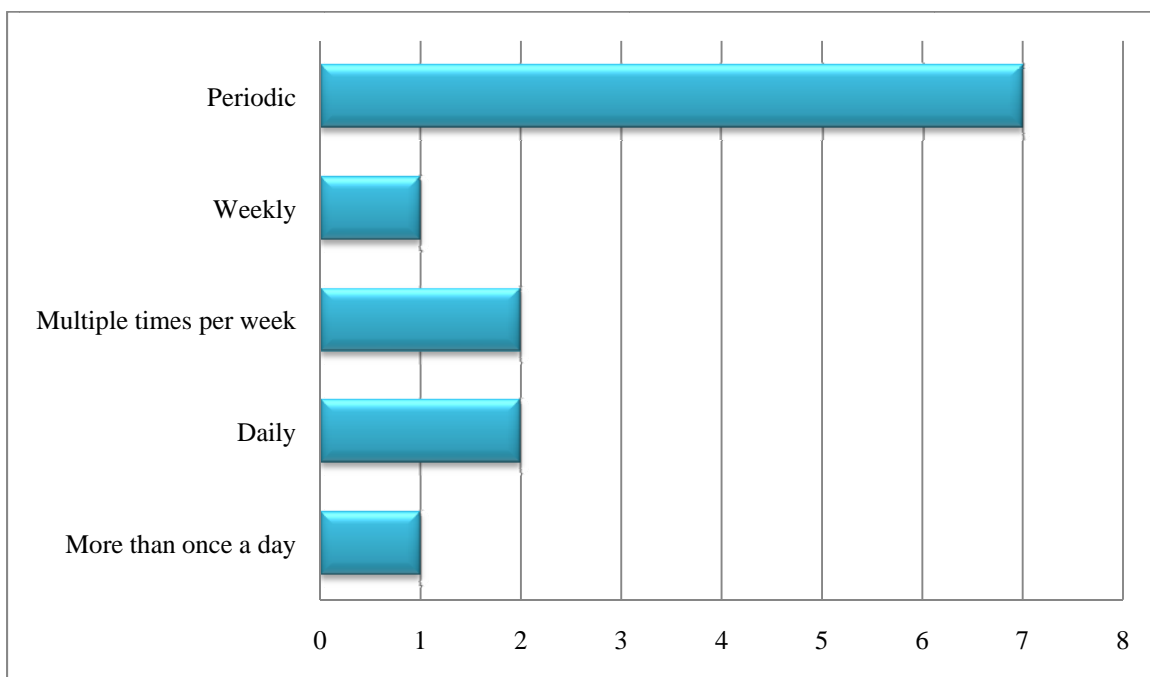
many of the people that worked for him have not had these personal experiences because they are much younger. Peter further shared, “I clearly know from the president’s perspective, he’s particularly grateful that there’s that sort of parent compassion that comes from our office.”

### **Participant Summary**

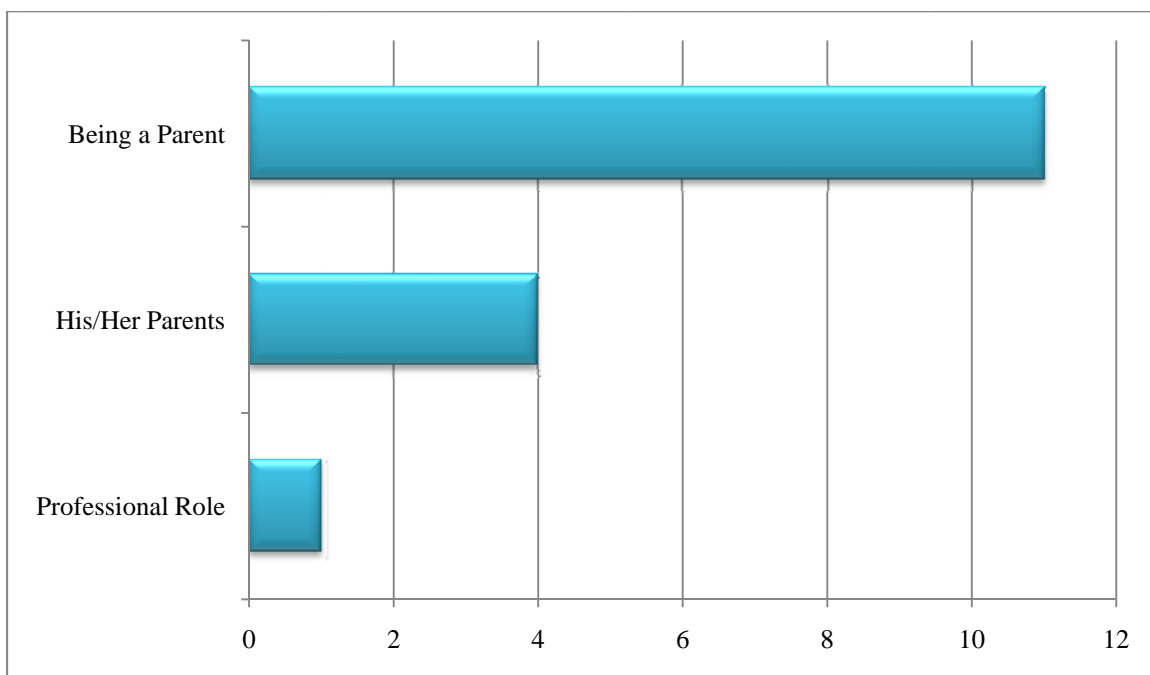
The participants all discussed the impact that increased parental involvement in the lives of their traditional-age undergraduate students had on their work. Each participant acknowledged having contact with parents during the academic year. When asked the question: “Do you have frequent contact with parents?” All participants indicated that they did. Four participants responded yes with no additional comments. The remaining 12 participants further defined what frequent contact meant to them. Some described the parental contact as periodic or episodic, while others reflected that parental contact was an everyday experience of their work (see Figure 6). Participants also reflected on the influence of their own personal/life experiences had on how they interact with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. According to 11 participants being a parent affected the way they interacted with parents. Four indicated that their own parents were the primary influence on how the administrators interacted with parents, and one participant stated that her professional experience was what impacted the way she interacted with parents (see Figure 7).

### **Research Questions and Themes**

The purpose of this research was to address the grand tour question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs, and activities at highly residential, private, four-year



*Figure 6.* Frequency of contact with parents.



*Figure 7.* Personal/life experience that impact parental interactions.

institutions of higher education? In order to answer the grand tour question, the researcher explored the following research questions:

- What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students?
- What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies?
- What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs, and activities?
- What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?

The information obtained during the 16 interviews that the researcher conducted was analyzed, and six themes were identified. Three themes were related to the first research question. The remaining research questions each had one theme connected to it.

### ***Themes Related to Research Question One***

The first research question was: What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students? This research question was addressed in the interviews in questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 (see Appendix L).

**Theme 1: Role of parents in the lives of their students.** Participants shared their thoughts on the roles that they believed that today's parents are playing in the lives of

undergraduate students. They also expressed the ideal role of parents of today's undergraduate students. Their insights are described below.

*Sub-theme 1: Administrators' perceived role of parents.* Many of the participants articulated the perception that parents of today's undergraduate students were much more involved in the lives of their students. Ethan talked about parental involvement:

I think we have moved in a direction where parents are much more involved with student's education and personal lives and I think we have the trend toward delayed adolescence as well. Which finds parents even involved in their children's lives beyond college age, so I see the role as being, I guess, parent a little bit longer than usual. And that the student is staying child a little bit longer through the college years.

Gina also shared her thoughts about increased involvement of parents in the lives of their students:

But I think they're very, very involved. I think technology has helped that, but I also think that just the way that their kids grow up and the kind of involvement that parents had taking kids to and from activities and you know, all that has added. How the relationships are.

Luke also had something to say about parental involvement:

I think it's a more hands on time. The students seem to be more comfortable telling their parents lots of things. Which is wonderful that they communicate and they have closeness and that bond and trust, uh, it creates other challenges for us in that regard.

Alan and Nathan shared their insights on parental involvement and both indicated what they perceived to be the underlying motive for increased parental involvement. Alan indicated, "Many parents want to be actively involved and want access to information." Nathan believed that parents want to remain in the driver's seat of their student's education:

I think parents are actively involved in making sure the experience for their student is the one that they want it to be, and I'm not sure sometimes whether the



experience they want it to be is the experience that we think is, uh, is the best experience.

*Summary of Sub-theme 1.* Many participants perceived that parents of today's college students were more involved in their children's lives. This translated to increased contact with their student and with their students' institution. This also meant that parents were more connected to their student's institution.

*Sub-theme 2: Administrators' ideal role of parents.* Participants discussed a couple of ideal roles for parents. The first was related to the appropriate level of support the parents offered their student. The second was recognizing that the ideal parental role evolved as the student progressed through his/her college experience.

Many participants discussed the appropriate level of support that parents should provide their students while in college. Dave talked about parents letting go and letting students test the waters:

I think that they should probably, in a perfect world, maybe let go a little more. Free up the reins a little bit more, if you will, so that the, um, so that the students have more of an opportunity to take some risks and try different things, uh, and maybe think outside the box a little bit more, um, you know, parents are very proscribed about what they want their sons and daughters to do, and sometimes that really is in conflict with what the sons and daughters actually want to do.

Luke also spoke of the value of parents allowing students to make mistakes in order to promote student learning:

The old adage, you know, uh, good decisions come from experience, experience comes from bad decisions. So, how do you let them make some decisions that are going to have some consequences, not life altering in a sense, but let them grow. And, and that's a tough balancing act, but that's, that would be my thoughts that you know what they should be is still their parent, uh, in a sense, but giving them that leash, giving them that freedom. Letting them make those decisions, you've raised them, you trust them, you, you've said right and wrong and, um, they're going to make mistakes, we all do. Um, and then, you know, learn and grow from that.

Olivia shared her thoughts on the ideal parental role. She shared, “I hope a parent will play that of an advocate and also a secondary teacher, given some of the logistics and some of the policies and procedures of the campus.” Gina also spoke about the role parents can play as a resource to their student:

I think that parents should be well versed in the resources that are available on the campus that their, where their student is a student, and then when their student has a problem or concern, the parent should be directing their student to utilize those resources.

Others also stated the importance of parents supporting their student. Henry shared that a parent’s role was one that should be “conveying confidence in their child, that they know they can do it, is very important.”

Some participants focused their remarks on the fact that they perceived the ideal role of parents changed as the student progresses through college. Ethan said:

I think parents on the front end, they need to be supportive to the point of they are in the know of what their children are doing, what they aren’t doing as well to be, to assure that those- their students are taking responsibility. But I think that has to transition to the student taking all of that responsibility and parents being more of just encouragement as the years go on.

Nathan also discussed the changing role of parents during the college experience:

I see that it’s evolving over time, I mean, certainly, you know, I’m okay with, you know, parents, you know, I want parents to contact me directly during the first month of school, freshmen year, if things are not going well, so we have an opportunity to engage with the student to try and work through some issues that the students having, you know, some adjustment issues, um, and that should evolve over time and the parent understanding that, um, some of the challenges that, you know, the student needs challenges during their experience in order to grow and learn from them. Um, and go forward. We’re, um, you know, so by senior year, I would expect parent involvement to be very, very small.

*Summary of Sub-theme 2.* Participants discussed the ideal roles for parents.

Participants discussed what they perceived to be the appropriate level of support the

parents should offer their student, and the changing nature of a parent's role during a student's college experience.

**Theme 2: Reasons for parental contact with senior-level administrators.**

Participants noted many reasons why they believed parents were in contact with them.

Olivia summarized the reasons why parents contact senior-level administrators in a succinct way:

Pretty much all the good stuff and all the not-so-good-stuff. So I get parents of folks that staff has done a really good job, folks will call for information, will call [with] their concern, will call to vent, [or] will call to negotiate a particular situation that their son or daughter is involved with. They'll call to get angry, they'll call to question, [and] they'll call for more information, pretty much the full complement of human experience. They'll call with joy, they'll call with sadness, they'll call with the sense of "Can I know more information about this process?" or "Here's what happened, I want to tell you what this is doing to my son or daughter."

In his remarks Ian acknowledged some of the unrealistic expectations that parents have of their student's institution:

I think there's also, um, some level of expectation from parents that we, keep all their sons and daughters perfectly safe and from making any mistakes as well. And that's not possible. It's unrealistic. I would, typify those, that group of parents into a smaller group as opposed to the majority who understand and are comfortable with the role we do play.

*Sub-theme 3: Looking for information or assistance.* Some participants stated that parents reach out to them looking for answers to questions. Luke shared, "[T]hey're really just looking for assistance. They don't know where their way around the campus. . . . [T]heir student has some problems. It could be discipline problems [or] academic problems. . . . Sometimes they call about financial assistance." Bill indicated that he directs parents to contact him if they need assistance. He said, "Well, first off, we tell them that they should if they have a problem, uh, so we're, we're letting them know

right from the beginning that my office is available to help them.” Dave also told parents that he could be of assistance when they were looking for answers to questions:

When I talk with parents at orientation, what I tell them is, call me whenever you want, I'll be more than happy to try and answer your questions, however, recognize that I'm probably not the person on campus who knows most about the subject matter, and therefore, I will refer you to somebody who is. For example, parents call me all the time about the financial aid formula, and I say, you know what, let me get you in touch with our director of financial aid who knows a lot more about this than I do. So, I think they see me as an entrée, if you will, into the university, and as a person that they can, uh, look to as a referral, and say, I don't know the answer to this, I don't know who at the university handles it, but if I call Dave, maybe he can direct me to the right place.

Kim also revealed that she sometimes helped to facilitate communication between parents and others at her institution:

[I] get them to the right person and, you know, sometimes really to sit down with the parent and maybe with someone from that office and just sort of work through a situation. I'm almost an objective third party. Or to help them understand why we will not do certain things or why we do do certain things.

Participants also reflected on some of the unrealistic expectations that parents have of them when parents are seeking assistance. Olivia shared, “Sometimes basically it's that I have a magic wand that I can make all the bad things go away, or that I can change a difficult roommate assignment just based upon this one phone call conversation.” Frank also had some insights to share. He said, “[Parents think] I can snap my fingers and make all the problems go away when a good majority of the time, it, the problem, has very little to do with the institution, it has to do with the student taking care of their side of the business.”

*Summary of Sub-theme 3.* Many participants indicated that one of their roles with parents is to provide assistance and give guidance. Senior-level administrators indicated that they have the knowledge and the institutional expectation to respond to some

inquiries, and in other instances they serve as a conduit to get the parent to the appropriate institutional resource or department.

*Sub-theme 4: To resolve their questions or concerns.* Participants also shared that parents contact them to address concerns and to get resolution. The inquiries that the parents made were numerous and covered the full gamut of the college experience. Carol discussed parental involvement that occurred when a parent was worried or concerned about his/her student. She spoke about a roommate situation that resulted in a parent phone call:

[S]ometimes [parents] just, they know that their student isn't going to speak up and so they want us to try to help with that. Which we do and try to educate the student so they'll better be able to articulate their own feelings in the future.

Dave also recalled another type of parent inquiry that came from parental concern over student involvement:

And I think that at times, parents call and say, I'd really like to get my son or daughter to be involved with this and they don't really want to do that, can we get somebody to talk to them, can we get somebody to do this, [or] can we get somebody to do that.

Alan shared that he received parent inquiries to confirm information that the parent has received from the student. He talked about some of the random questions he received like, "My son says there's nothing to do on the weekend, is this true?"

Carol discussed times when parents may not be realistic about the response to their questions that stem from parental concern. She said, "I think [parents] think you're here for them. And that is where it starts and stops. . . . [Many] of them just want things fixed." Kim also spoke of parents' unrealistic expectations of institutional follow through to their concerns:

When a parent would come in and they have set in their mind what they need or want for their student, and they are not interested in listening to the fact that we have four or five thousand other students here. And that everything can't be adjusted to address the needs or wants of their child.

Ian spoke about parental inquiries that involve revealing information about a student to a parent. He recounted, "I think sometimes parents will think you're there to tell them everything that is going on."

*Summary of Sub-theme 4.* Participants indicated that parents were reaching out to them with questions and concerns in hopes of seeking answers and solutions to the parents' concerns about their students' college experience. Participants also shared that some parents were not realistic about the actions or steps that the institution would take to resolve their concerns, placing higher expectations on the participants or their institution than the participants thought were reasonable.

*Sub-theme 5: To change an institutional action.* Several participants commented on parental contact that involved the parent trying to influence or to change institutional decisions, outcomes, and policies. Many of the participants' comments revolved around conversations with parents who were appealing a decision made at the departmental level to the senior-level student affairs professional. Gina summarized the nature of the interaction when parents intervene in conduct situations:

[Parents] just want to make sure they can intervene as best as possible to stop the action. They call because they know their student is going to be in trouble, maybe they heard from a student in the middle of the night that they did something and so they want to beat [the institution] to the punch and make sure they know that they are going to take care of things on their own end.

Peter also discussed parental contact involving student discipline. He revealed:

If I have a contact from a parent it's because they're angry about something. . . .  
[I]n most instances, it has something to do with conduct adjudication, uh, so their

kid got in trouble for something and they think that the consequences is not fair and, so they're looking to appeal the decision somehow.

Other participants told about their experiences with parents that attempted to intervene in roommate issues:

So many times it's roommate issues where [parents] usually get frustrated by our response that we don't just move your child's roommate because you don't like them and you say they do all these bad things. . . . [Nathan's response to parents], "Well, we can move your child if they want to put in a room change request and go through the process, but we're not just going, you know, that's somebody else's son." [Parents] get very frustrated by that because they believe, you know, their child is, is perfect.

Gina also talked about parents contacting her when parents did not believe that the residence life department was handling the issue appropriately and expected her to intervene on their parents' behalf.

Other participants talked more in general about the requests that they received from parents for exceptions to policies. Josh talked about the appeals that he received from parents to reconsider a department's decision. He shared,

A lot of it is for appealing [a] decision that go below. . . . The phone calls that I respond [to] are just [parents] who contacted somebody in residence life, somebody in the department of public safety on parking and got a decision on something that they disagree with. And they say, "Well, who can I talk to? Who is your supervisor?" And those are the kind of things—it's kind of an informal one-up that they'll reach me."

Gina also shared her experiences with parents that did not want to follow her institution's policies. She spoke of the nature of the calls and the sentiment of the parents as one of "wanting their son or daughter not to have to comply with the university policies such as a meal plan issue [or] a health related issue." Frank noted that parents really looked to him to make the exception. He acknowledged that he was in the position to make exceptions, but does so cautiously.

*Summary of Sub-theme 5.* Participants spoke of parental requests to change institutional actions. Senior-level administrators found themselves in the position of listening to and responding to request by parents for special considerations or exceptions. Participants indicated that parents were likely to advocate for their student and request a different outcome than what originally had been presented or an exception to an institutional policy. Senior-level administrators found themselves in the position of reviewing decisions made at the department level and in some respects have become an appeal for parents to have their issue reconsidered.

**Theme 3: Types of interactions that administrators have with parents.** The way in which parents and senior-level student affairs administrators interact with one another left quite an impression on the participants. Participants were able to report both positive and negative experiences with parents and the impact that these interactions had on student learning.

*Sub-theme 6: Positive interactions.* Positive interactions are best described as a partnership that places responsibility on both the senior-level administrator and the parents. Ethan reflected on the attitude parents have when engaging with senior-level student affairs administrators. He described a positive interaction:

It's when a parent has some understanding of what we are trying to do and what our goals as an institution are for their child. When they have that understanding then even if there are differences it gives us a foundation to work toward a resolution to the issue. And so I think positive interaction is when the university and the parents have similar goals for their child.

Henry also noted the importance of the parents' attitude. He reflected on the value of partnering with parents to resolve student issues:

[When parents] listen, they ask clarifying questions, they may come with a preconceived idea, but they're open to—they're trying to understand what the full



range of the picture, because they've only received one perspective. And so once they hear the big picture, they back off and realize that we're dealing with their child responsibly, that their child has not provided them all of the information and they will let us do our thing, or support us in that process, and/or they'll do what they need to do from their end, to deal with their son or daughter.

Josh also noted the importance of partnering with parents, indicating having parental support was important to resolve some student issues. He said, "When parents come in and basically say, 'We're on board with it, we'll support the university and we understand that the university is trying to help our student. And we're going to team up with you and help you out.' That's very helpful." Luke described what he believed to be the most important characteristics of a positive interaction with parents:

[T]he parents, they're listening, they're supportive, uh, there's a productive dialogue going on. They may not agree on every item but it's a productive adult conversation. They're not demanding and dictatorial. There's no sense of entitlement. It would be considered a good healthy discussion.

Participants described positive interactions when parents shared their gratitude with senior-level student affairs administrators. Peter shared:

I think that there is a lot of care and attention that we strive to give to our students and, when that's done really well and students are well responded to particularly when they've struggled with something, and somebody has been particularly attentive to the kids often times we'll hear a word of gratitude [from parents] for that kind of thing.

Frank also commented about receiving words of thanks from parents. "[Parents] are able to say thank you very much, you really helped us out, you made our experience worthwhile, my son or daughter wants to stay here." Luke shared a recent letter he received from a parent of a former student:

I got a letter the other day from a mother, and I looked at the envelope and I remembered the name but I couldn't place it and the opening line says, "you saved my son" and I was like wow, it, you know, it's sort of an interesting, interesting sort of attention getter and as I went on I remembered the student and it was almost nine years ago and she had just written to me.

*Summary of Sub-theme 6.* Senior-level administrators focused on positive interactions that they had with parents of today's college students. They recognized the importance of working with parents forming a partnership to address concerns. Participants also commented on times that they received positive feedback in the form of gratitude from parents. The kind words from parents seemed to affirm the participants and the work that they did with students.

*Sub-theme 7: Negative interactions.* Many participants identified some of the negative interactions that they had with parents of undergraduate students. Participants described the characteristics of these interactions. Mitch explained a recent interaction with a father regarding the parent's dissatisfaction with his son's housing accommodations. "[The father] became very heated in his discussion, and I politely told him that if he's going to yell I have to hang up because that's not part of my role. I'll be glad to listen and educate, but I'm not here as a whipping board." Dave also recalled a specific negative interaction. "[The father] berated me for about another two to three minutes and in the heated passion of the conversation, he decided to slam the phone down in my ear. I think that proved to me that there was no getting through to this dad as it related to the issues involved with his son."

Gina also described on negative parental interactions. She shared that these interactions sometimes involved raised voices and threats. "[Parents] that call and scream and threaten lawyers, or demand something that's totally unreasonable." Kim also recounted interactions where parents were yelling at her or her staff. "When [parents] just shut down and won't, you know, don't want to listen. And yell. I don't like the yelling. And really treat me and other staff with disrespect."

Participants also discussed parental motives and their perceptions of the underlying reasons why parents engaged in what participants perceived to be negative interactions. Josh summarized his thoughts:

College is expensive. And people paying a lot of money, but they do take a consumer mentality that it's sort of quid-pro-quo relationship. That for the amount of money I'm spending for my son or daughter to go here, I expect this. And it ranges everywhere from I expect them to be given good grades; I expect them to have great residence hall relationships. It's a contractual business transaction. And it falls outside of the developmental model, where you assume that there's going to be mistakes, there's going to be bumps in the road, it's going to get a little ugly in places. They don't see that. For what they pay in tuition, they don't expect bumps, they don't expect ugliness, [and] they don't expect gray areas.

Luke and Nathan described entitlement issues as an underlying issue in some of their negative interactions with parents. Luke shared:

It's sort of this entitlement, uh, I know that gets to be a trite word, but you know, mom and dad have been fairly successful in their lives, perhaps they've been in positions and, and whatever role they have in a company or whatever. They're used to being in charge, making the decision, giving directions, kind of ordering people. Um, and they're not used to the word 'no' and certainly the students now-a-days don't seem to get the word 'no'. . . . [T]he parents don't want to believe that their son or daughter has a problem or is facing some sort of, uh, thing that they're not perfect, you know, grade A student, has no issues going on in life.

Nathan also shared his thought on parents' sense of entitlement:

I don't totally blame the parent but the entitlement issue of we're an expensive institution and it sort of like I'm, you know, a desk clerk at the Ritz Carlton in the way that I'm being treated and some outrageous expectations. I think they're outrageous because they're bypassing the opportunity for the student to figure out some issues on their own.

A few participants spoke of a type of negative interaction with parents that resulted from the parent not caring about or having concern for the student. Carol talked about interactions with parents who don't wish to partner with senior-level administrators. "Not because [the parents] believed that [the student] should stay in

school as much as [the parents] don't want [the student] at home." Henry also spoke of a parent type that "wash their hands of the student."

*Summary of Sub-theme 7.* Senior-level administrators acknowledged having negative interactions with parents. These interactions were often described as adversarial or combative. They did not promote the notion of partnering with the goal of the student's success. The outcome of these less than positive interactions were described as having a negative impact on the student's ability to learn and grow.

### ***Theme Related to Research Question Two***

The second research question asked: What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies? This research question was explored in interview questions 14, 15, and 16 (see Appendix L).

**Theme 4: Institutional guidance for administrators responding to parental involvement.** Participants were asked about their institutional policies and procedures that guided administrators in their interactions with parents. Many participants indicated that they had few, if any policies or procedures, that guided them. Josh shared:

I wouldn't say—policies and procedures per se in terms of like written policies or guidelines. But certainly this is an issue we talk about amongst colleagues, both within student affairs and certainly I talk about it with folks in academics. And when we talk about it, we do it in the context often of—both informal discussions and case studies.

Luke talked about an underlying institutional philosophy that guided him in his interactions with parents. He reflected, "So, um, do we have specific written down policies? No. But, I don't think there's a person on our campus that doesn't know what our underlying philosophy and goals and guidance are."

Nathan also acknowledged that his institution did not have policies and procedures. He said, “I think we intuitively know where we stand on these issues, um, and have, you know, many of us have been here for quite awhile so we, we have a real sense of where we stand with parents. . . .” Frank also spoke about the guidance his institution provided without written policies and procedures:

I don’t believe there’s any written policy outside the simple fact that, uh, we kind of have a purpose statement for how we treat all people that are affiliated with the institution and that touches on sort of like the dignity of human life, respect for one another, it’s just sort of a general well being policy, but nothing that talks about, uh, let’s say the escalation of a conflict with a parent.

Ethan’s remarks expanded on the notion of institutional guidance without policies:

We don’t have any policies written or procedures written. We try to relate to parents and respond to parents the way we would want to be treated. And so when we follow that as closely as we can, we usually will have a good experience and good visit with parents. But no policies.

Alan revealed another institutional expectation for administrators at his institution when working with parents:

Make them happy so they stay enrolled. We’re extremely tuition driven and it’s kind of one of those unspoken things, uh, when our endowment’s probably \$20 million, uh, every student counts. And we need to make sure the parents are happy to keep the students happy.

Participants were also asked about their use of student development theory when engaging with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Many participants indicated that they loosely incorporated student development theory in their interactions with parents. Alan shared:

Uh, loosely, I’ll use the framework but I won’t quote Chickering or anyone by name. I’ll talk about the developmental needs of the child, of the student and how it would be best for them to proceed and how they need to start taking responsibility for their own actions and handle the conversation themselves but I’m not going to try and explain any student developmental theory.

Carol shared similar sentiments:

I don't per-se, I don't tell them you know, student development theory would say 'x.' But I think by virtue of just the way I deal with people and who I am I have a lot of that imbedded in myself. So, yes I do but I don't, I guess I don't label it.

Peter also talked about loosely incorporating theory into his interactions with parents. He said, "I try as best I can and, you know, without intellectualizing it, making it, you know, more accessible." Ian also talked about how he integrates theory into conversations with parents. "I don't think we actually quote theory as much as, uh, talk about developmental stages the students may be going through."

Some participants indicated that they did not use theory during their interactions with parents. Rather the participants discussed a common sense approach when working with parents. Frank revealed,

To be honest, I use a common sense approach most of the time. I've found that, uh, over the years, that parents, at least with what I deal with, typically don't respond too well when I start preaching academic theory to them, they just want to know how to resolve the problem.

Luke also acknowledged that student development theory is not typically a part of his interactions with parents. He expressed, "I'm really not trying to prophesize with the parents or, you know, or get on a pedestal about policies and theories of, uh, education. It's more like a discussion level thing and maybe some real world examples about acting like a good citizen." Mitch commented, "Well, when it gets to me, it's probably past that . . . I try but I don't have much chance when, when they're very angry.

**Summary of Theme 4.** Participants indicated that they are not guided by policies and procedures, nor do they rely heavily on student development theory in their interactions with parents. Rather, participants relied on institutional philosophies and their own judgment in their interactions with parents. Additionally, it was revealed that

participants depended on their own skills and experiences in their interactions with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.

***Theme Related to Research Question Three***

The third research question asked: What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs and activities? This research question was explored through interview questions 18 and 19 (see Appendix L).

**Theme 5: Institutional services, programs and activities for parents.**

Participants shared information about the services, programs, and activities that their institution had in place for parents. Participants also discussed which of these services, programs, and activities were added within the last five years. Some participants talked about programs and activities for parents starting as early as the admissions process and as a part of the summer orientation program. Ethan shared, “Beginning with our admissions recruitment process when we invite prospective students to campus, we have parent programs in place and so parents are always invited.” Peter also recognized that programs for parents started in the admissions process. “On the admission side there’s a, uh, any kind of, any number of contacts that we, that we’ll make with the students and invite students and parents to tour the campus and interview and all of that sort of thing.” Specific information for parents was shared at Olivia’s institution during the admissions process. “So some of the programs that are done naturally to bring people into the campus are focused really on the parental role of the financial part, the emotional part and the physical part of people being in the full complement of this family discussion.”

Summer orientation programs for many of the participants were another parent programming opportunity for institutions. Dave shared, “during summer orientation, we have a program, a day and a half program that is devoted pretty particularly to a separate track that parents have from students who are matriculating to the university. That’s where I talk with them.” Josh also shared information about his institution’s orientation program. “I think certainly we’ve geared a lot of our orientation sessions for June, for incoming students, we gear a lot of our sessions towards parents, and information and educational pieces we want to get across to new parents.” Kim also shared information about orientation:

We have a day of orientation for the parents, you know, if they choose to come and most do. And that’s an opportunity to provide them with information about different services on campus, about academic programs. We have a woman who is the parent of a former student now, who has, who did her master’s work in pastoral counseling in family relationships. So she talks with parents about letting go.

Ian shared that his institution offers some programming for parents:

I’ll be honest, we are kind of behind the curve in having parent programs like a lot of institutions, probably woefully behind the curve. But since you’re asking what we do have, we do have the typical family weekend and the typical parent sessions for orientations, but outside of that, not a whole lot.

Parent/family weekend programs were common at the participants’ institutions. Carol spoke of her institution’s program, stating, “Well, we have a parent day coming up actually next month in October. We include parents, and we have a separate track for new parents.” Josh stated, “We have a parent’s—our homecoming weekend is also tied into parent’s weekend. And the parent’s weekend, amongst all the social and fun schedule of events we also have information sessions for parents.” Gina noted a change in her institution’s fall program for parents. “We have a family day program, which we used to



have a weekend, but we've pared it down to a day just because a day is enough." Alan also spoke about the parent's weekend program at his institution:

[W]e do have a formal parents weekend, and that's wrapped into our homecoming. I'm trying to get it separated away so that it's a standalone event because homecoming is for the alumni per se and the mission of serving those two constituency groups is often times divergent.

Some participants also discussed the different ways in which they communicate with parents. Kim talked about her institution's newsletter: "We have a parent newsletter that I and one of the administrative assistants here work on, and we have staff members throughout student life who write articles about their different areas." Josh also had some remarks on communicating with parents:

We have the online communication piece. I do think—I think all institutions understand that they have to have a relationship with parents. I do think we make a concerted effort to, as painful as it is from time to time, we do make a concerted effort to be responsive to parents. You know within the constraints of confidentiality, FERPA, HIPPA, whatever the case may be, we make a concerted effort to be responsive to inquiries from parents, whether they're by phone or by letter.

Ethan also discussed the use of technology in communicating with parents when he remarked, "there's an e-newsletter that goes out and then periodic announcements that are sent by email, just different things that are happening on campus."

Parent associations were also discussed by many of the participants. Luke talked about the parents' committee at his institution:

We have a more invigorated parents' committee in the last five years. It stems out of our board of trustees, and key members of our faculty and/or administrators sit on that and then we meet with parents who are on this parents' committee.

Alan also discussed his institution's parent council. "We have a parents' council, which is a loose knit group of parents that come together quarterly to address how to make life better for their students." Others mentioned that they do not have parents' associations

on their campuses. Bill reflected, “We don’t have a parents’ organization where parents sit down, and you know, and discuss issues with each other.”

When participants were asked to discuss any services, programs, or activities that had been added to their institutions in the last five years, many indicated that there had not been any new additions. Ethan shared that his institution’s services, programs and activities for parents had been in place for more than five years, but he also acknowledged that the programs had been altered. “Of course, they’ve been altered and hopefully enhanced in the last five years but none that have been created since then.” Carol also shared that there had not been much change. “I don’t believe we really have tried to, I’d say we tried to be more communicative with them.” Josh also talked about enhancing existing services, programs, and activities for parents. “We’ll probably just build upon what we currently have.”

Some participants recognized that technology has influenced changes in services, programs, and activities for parents. Dave shared his thoughts on electronic communication: “[I]t’s become so easy to do to just add another one or two thousand email addresses to our group list, you know, we’ve taken the opportunity to do that to try and expand ways to communicate with parents.” Kim also talked about using technology:

We did the parent resource website and started the parent resource email alias that goes to myself and one other staff person so that as parents write in with questions we’re able to help them and get answers to their questions. So that’s been really the only big change.

**Summary of Theme 5.** Participants shared information on a wide array of programs, services, and activities provided to parents by their institutions. Programs, services, and activities for parents begun in the admission process, and they continued for parents throughout the students’ college experience. Most participants indicated that

while new programs, services and/or activities for parents have not been developed, enhancements to existing programs, services, and activities have occurred in part due to the increased involvement of parents in the lives of undergraduate students. Many also revealed that increased communication with parents was emphasized at their institutions.

***Theme Related to Research Question Four***

The fourth research question asked: What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations? This research question was addressed in interview questions 17, 20, 21, and 22 (see Appendix L).

**Theme 6: Senior-level administrators' recommendations for their institutions.** Participants shared their thoughts on the future and offered some suggestions for their institutions recognizing that parental involvement in the lives of students and with their students' institution will likely continue in the future.

*Sub-theme 8: Future institutional policies.* Several participants indicated that they did not believe that there would be any policy changes in the next five years at their institutions. Alan acknowledged that he was interested in changes in policies, but did not believe that change would come about: "I highly doubt it. I would love to see them change. I don't see it in the cards." Dave commented, "I think that what we've always said is, as a general rule, we want to keep the parents involved, so I think that unless something drastic really changes, I don't see us changing the approach that we have." Peter also commented that his institution would not likely develop formal policies involving parents in the near future:

[T]he policies and procedures have a double bind to them. . . . They're wonderful because they can guide you. The problem can be if you don't use them then you

can get yourself in a whole lot of problems, in a whole lot of trouble, because you had a policy and you didn't you, you bypassed the policy. . . . Sometimes, you know, particularly in personal interactions, I think that there still is a place for the use of people's good judgment and their, you know, and the good minds and hearts that we try to hire into positions of responsibility

Other participants also acknowledged that their institutions relied on individual judgment and experience in parental interactions:

[I]t hasn't been an issue for us. . . I'm sure that if we had professionals that were starting to say inappropriate things, or if we had a deluge of parents requesting information that created some parameters, we might look at it.

Bill also commented on how his institution does not have policies, rather his institution relies on Bill to handle issues with parents. He shared, "I think as long as I'm here, and as long as I'm involved with these summer registration programs, they're going to see me as the frontline person, so I don't see that changing."

Other participants indicated that change would only occur if mandated by changes in the law. Both FERPA and HIPPA were referenced. Ethan said, "Probably none outside of perhaps some privacy law issues and educating our entire campus in how we can visit with parents." Dave agreed, "I guess if federal legislation were to change, it would probably dictate what we would need to do to comply with the law."

Some participants thought that there would be changes in institutional procedures. Henry acknowledged that he believed in the future that the demographics of the student population would continue to change, and that their parents will need support too. Henry noted:

[I]n addition to focusing on how do we adjust to the changing student population, we will need to adjust to the parents of those students and how we structure our interactions with them, provide support to them, um, provide information to them that enables them to fulfill that positive role that parents could play in helping their child mature.

Other participants also indicated the need to put policies or practices in place that increased institutional sharing of information with parents. Josh expressed:

Yeah I think we'll have an increased focus on how we get messages out to parents, particularly electronically. . . . I think college in general and certainly our institution is continuing approach education as this dynamic blurring of the lines between what happens in the classroom and what happens outside the classroom. And I think to the extent that parents, and I would include myself in this, still think back to their own college experience and think that's the experience their son or daughter is getting.

Gina also encouraged increased parental communication with parents saying, "[W]e're making a concerted effort to communicate directly, you know, with them." Kim also desired increased communication: "We will continue to provide information for parents and probably partner with them in a productive way more if anything."

*Summary of Sub-theme 8.* Most participants did not believe that significant changes or additions to their institutions' policies and procedures regarding parental involvement would occur in the next five years. Participants went on to discuss the reality that student affairs professionals entrusted to use their own judgment when working with parents. In general, participants believed that their judgment, paired with an institutional philosophy or campus culture, had served them well and would continue to serve them well in the future. Some participants did offer insights into potential policy changes for the future. These changes were believed to come about from changes in laws and due to the changing demographics of the future students coming to their campuses.

*Sub-theme 9: Future institutional programs, services, and activities.* Many commented on adding, enhancing, or formalizing communications to parents. Also some participants whose institutions do not have a parent association indicated the need to have one. Additionally, the participants reflected on the possibilities of new programs for their

institutions starting with recruitment of new students and throughout the college experience.

Participants reflected on some of services they thought could be added at their institutions. Carol suggested “some kind of seminar about how to budget for college, how to, you know, given the prices of a private school, how to think about being able to afford it.” Peter stated “whatever we can do to make the student financial services stuff side of things, more user friendly is going to be critical.” Peter also shared, “[T]he biggest challenge that that parents face is paying the bill so where you know, where we can, uh, where we can, you know, friend-lify that whole process, um, uh, it would be a good thing.”

Other participants reflected on the need for a formalized parents association or reviewing the purpose of their institutions’ parent association. Gina shared:

[W]e had at one point a long, long time, a parent, ago, a parents’ organization that was started by some interested and concerned local parents. And then once those people’s children graduated, it kind of, you know, it was linked up with the development office, um, kind of fizzled. You know, maybe a parents’ association. There are some schools that have very strong parent associations for current students. We, we’re not one of them at the moment, but . . . could be.

Dave also commented that his institution has considered adding a parent association.

Dave said, “We do not have a formal parents’ association. But I know that at times, myself and our president have talked a little bit about that, about do we need such an office to try and keep parents even more involved with the life of the university.” Henry spoke about where in the institutional organization a parents’ association should be assigned:

So I think both we here, but really, across the country really need to look at that. Frankly I don’t think that a parents’ association, where a parent’s connection to the institution should be the advancement office or the development office, I think

there was an intent years ago that parents would be providing financial support to the institution. Most parents' groups that I've dealt with already feel like they're providing a lot of financial support through tuition, which keeps going up. So I see that this is really a part of student life, and especially given where our students are today, where they've had so many close interactions with their parents.

Nathan reported the need for a fulltime position at his institution that would be dedicated to parents. He shared that the position that was being considered would have responsibilities in development, student affairs and admissions. His institution envisioned a position that:

It's really going to cross those three boundaries and certainly each of those three areas, well, I think we get along very well and we have similar philosophies, our philosophies are also very different, so, as opposed to fundraising, you know, recruiting students to come here and then working on their education while they're here so, I think we are going to need someone to lead the charge on that and sort of be our point person for parent issues, you know it's tough right now. . . . [I]t's sort of all, sort of all over the place and everybody has a little piece of it and we're small enough to give people those opportunities, but I think we're going to have to be more consistent.

*Summary of Sub-theme 9.* Participants discussed the need for increased services for parents including assistance with finances and planning were possible programs of the future. Additionally, participants whose institutions did not have a parent association recognized that this type of group may be added in the future.

*Sub-theme 10: Senior-level administrators' recommendations for institutional change.* Participants had some insights for their institution and how to more effectively work with parents of today's college students. Some participants discussed that institutions, in general, and student affairs divisions, more specifically, should state their philosophy for educating parents about their values. Nathan discussed the importance of articulating a student affairs philosophy in order to set boundaries:

[H]igher education in general hasn't done, uh, you know we've bemoaned the helicopter parent and we talk about it a lot, but we haven't figured out how to

balance, the selling of amenities, and you know, selling of at least a private residential colleges of, you know, what many would consider country-club like things with the educational philosophy that we do and in student affairs, we don't, you know, when you're looking at what they do to recruit, most institutions, I don't think, they talk about community, but they don't, they don't sell the student affairs program in the same way they would talk about the quality of faculty and the level of expertise and research and ranking of faculty and academic piece. They talk about the amenities that you can see and then they talk about in general, oh it's a fun place to be, it's a community, it's all these other kinds of things, but we don't articulate the learning that happens, you know, in the extracurricular environment in the admissions process or in the recruitment process, as an industry. So I think it's hard then when, you know, and some of our learning comes from negative things, so I think that's one of the things we've got to articulate better to parents as they're coming in is this is, this is what you should expect your role to be when your child comes here. I think that would make it easier for us to be talking about and for us to be able to talk about this is what expensive gets you and this is why, when your son has a roommate conflict, why it won't be resolved the same way it would be resolved at the Four Seasons if you didn't like your room.

Kim reflected on her institutional philosophy and the impact that it has on her campus culture. She expressed the need for her institution to clearly state a philosophy guiding interactions with parents:

We have the opportunity, I think, to care for students as individuals. And that's, that is what I think makes my job much easier. While I can't talk to them about, you know, tell them about their students grades, I really feel I can sit with them as though I would sit with a family member or neighbor and say let's talk about your son or your daughter and let's talk about this girl that when I look at her on paper she shouldn't be walking around here in flannel pants looking like she hasn't slept in three days, you know. And I can have those conversations with parents in a way that lets them know that I'm watching her, I'm caring about her and we want to do something to help and support her. So, I'm not recommending, really a change in that but I guess just acknowledging the freedom that that sort of institutional philosophy, um, provides me in my interactions with parents. And so I would say if anything that we continue on that path.

Several participants reinforced the need for institutions to partner with parents and to keep the lines of communication open. Dave said, "The approach we take, which is trying to keep the parents close to the university." Ethan also acknowledged the importance of connecting with parents:



[W]e have to continue to communicate more and more with parents. So I wouldn't recommend a specific change, I think my recommendation would be that we all understand that times have changed, people have changed, and that we are no longer working just with young adult students. We are working with young people and their parents at the higher education level.

Henry reflected on the importance of sharing knowledge with parents: "helping parents understand how they can be a part of that process is something I think institutions need to be more intentional about." Gina talked about the need to improve communications to parents while recognizing her institution has limited resources: "Providing [parents] with the information that they need. . . . [W]e're stretched very thin, so we have some things that we do on a regular basis, but there are other things that we should be doing that we need to plug in there."

Frank also spoke of the need to communicate with parents, but did not emphasize partnering with them. Frank did not focus on articulating the university's position:

[O]ne thing that we can do to improve it is just spending more time communicating the rules to the parents, because in my position, again, it's usually, it's a conflict over the rules. You know if they just don't like the policy in one particular office, they want to, they want to change it. . . . We just make sure they know the rules.

*Summary of Sub-theme 10.* Participants' recommendations for their institutions' future interactions with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students fell into two primary topics. The first focused on clearly articulating a philosophy on the relationship they have with parents. The second topic focused on institutions more intentionally creating opportunities to partner with parents.

## **Summary**

The findings of this research shed light on the interactions between the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students and senior-level student affairs administrators at

highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education. This chapter shared information about the individual participants in this study and identified six themes that were connected to the study's four research questions. The implications of these findings are discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Five

### Summary of Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

#### Overview

The first chapter identified the purpose of this research, which was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Howe and Strauss (2000) identified the current generation of college students as Millennials. These students were born in or after 1982. Millennials are “more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse than any other generation in living memory” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 4). The Millennial generation’s parents are perceived by student affairs professionals to be very involved throughout their children’s lives, including when their students enter into adulthood and go to college (Kantrowitz & Tyre, 2006).

In the second chapter the researcher turned to the literature to gain insights into interactions between senior-level student affairs professionals and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students: (a) the parents of Millennial students and how parental expectations are changing the way that student affairs professionals interact with this constituent group; (b) student development theory with a special focus on the work of Chickering and Reisser’s psychosocial theory, as well as attachment theory and emerging adulthood theory; (c) institutional efforts to partner with parents of today’s traditional undergraduate students in an effort to focus on student growth and development; and (d) the *In Consortio Cum Parentibus Model* as a framework for student affairs professionals to work within while defining the institution’s relationship with parents and the changing expectations and legal landscape.

Chapter 3 outlined the methodology of this study. A qualitative approach was selected for this study because little research has been conducted on this topic. The researcher conducted 16 semi-structured phone interviews with senior-level student affairs administrators at master's colleges and universities that were mid-size, private, and highly residential institutions according to the Carnegie Foundation's classification.

The findings of this research were revealed in chapter four. They shed light on the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Six themes were identified: 1) role of parents in the lives of their student; 2) reasons for parental contact with senior-level administrators; 3) types of interactions that administrators have with parents; 4) institutional response to parental involvement; 5) institutional services, programs, and activities for parents; and 6) senior-level administrators' recommendations for their institutions.

Chapter Five summarizes the findings of this research and the implications. This chapter also provides conclusions and recommendations for future research. It is organized by the research questions and further detailed by themes and sub-themes. In conclusion this chapter shares implications of this study including recommendations for future research and future practice.

As first stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. In this chapter the research addresses the grand tour question: How have the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents changed policies, services, programs and activities at highly

residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education? In the process of addressing the grand tour question, the following questions are explored:

- What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students?
- What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies?
- What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs, and activities?
- What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?

### **Summary of Findings and Implications**

#### ***Research Question #1: What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students?***

Research question one was designed to identify perceptions and working assumptions of senior-level student affairs professionals about parents of Millennial students. More specifically, the question was developed to gain understanding about the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of college students. “College and university leaders must also understand that today’s parents want to play an important role in the continuing developmental and educational process of students enrolled in their institution” (Jackson & Murphy, 2005, p. 54).

The “role of parents in the lives of their students” was the first of six themes that developed during the interviews with senior-level student affairs administrators and spoke to the first research question. This theme was further explored, and two sub-themes were identified. The first sub-theme was “administrators’ perceived roles of parents.” Many participants perceived that parents of traditional-age undergraduate students were more involved in their children’s lives than they were five years ago. This translated to increased parental contact with their students and with their students’ institution. Participants also articulated that it was their belief that parents were more connected to their student’s institution.

This finding was important because the participants’ perceptions reinforced an assumption in the literature that parents were more involved in the lives of their students (Carney-Hall, 2008; Kantrowitz & Tyre, 2006; Savage, 2009; Setoodeh, 2006). The finding was also significant because it confirmed a previously identified void in student development theory, which focused on the traditional-age undergraduate student changing and growing in college into adulthood (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Taub, 2008). Student development theories have traditionally focused on the student as an individual separating from her/his parents (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Wartman and Savage (2008) encouraged student affairs professionals to look at student development in a new way and to use attachment theory by student affairs professionals to better understand their relationships with students and with students’ parents.

The second sub-theme described the “administrators’ ideal role of parents.” Participants discussed what they perceived to be the appropriate level of support the parents should offer their student and the changing nature of a parent’s role during a

student's college experience. This finding was important because the participants expressed an appropriate role for parents in the lives of their students. "If we stop seeing college as a time when students make a sudden transition from children to adults and view this construct as a false dichotomy, perhaps we would be better able to understand the phenomenon of parental involvement" (Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. 43).

The finding also supported best practice literature that encouraged student affairs professionals to develop positive relationships between parents and their students' institution (Jackson & Murphy, 2005; Merriman, 2006, 2007; Mullendore et al., 2005; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Best practices also encouraged student affairs professionals the opportunity to articulate their philosophy on student learning and how parents can be a partner in the learning process (Jackson & Murphy, 2005). In particular, student affairs professionals can lay a foundation that prepares both students and their parents for learning that can come from the student making mistakes.

The second theme was also connected to the first research question. The theme was "reasons for parental contact with senior-level administrators." This theme was further investigated and three additional sub-themes emerged. The third sub-theme was parents' need to contact administrators for the reason of "looking for information or assistance." Senior-level administrators indicated that one of their roles with parents was to provide assistance and give guidance. Many participants stated that they often had the knowledge and the institutional expectation to respond to parental inquiries and, in other instances; they served as a conduit to get the parent to the appropriate institutional resource or department.

This finding is important because it reports one of the reasons why parents reach out to senior-level student affairs administrators for assistance. Participants were the recipients of inquiries from parents because parents believed that senior-level student affairs administrators could provide them with the information or assistance the parents needed. “Some parents feel it is simply best to ‘go to the source’ especially when the consequences of failure are significant and/or students are vague, unconcerned, confused, or overwhelmed by the situation facing them at college” (Mullendore et al., 2005, p. 2).

The fourth sub-theme theme described parents’ needs to contact administrators “to resolve their questions or concerns” is also connected to the second theme—“reasons for parental contact with senior-level administrators.” Participants indicated that parents were reaching out to them with questions and concerns in hopes of answers and solutions about their students’ college experience. Participants also shared that some parents were not realistic about the actions or steps that the institution would take to resolve their concerns, placing higher expectations on the participants or their institution than the participants thought were reasonable.

This finding was important because it recognized that “some parents do not have full confidence in their student’s ability to resolve issues independently” (Mullendore et al., 2005, p. 2). The sub-theme reaffirmed the theoretical postulate that traditional-age undergraduate students were a part of an age group known as emerging adults (Arnett, 1998, 2000, 2007), meaning that students were still in the pursuit of their long-term occupation and goals (Arnett, 2000). The finding also reinforced the results of a study by Nelson and others (2007) that parents of emerging adults did not consider their children as adolescents or as adults.



The fifth sub-theme theme described parents' needs to contact administrators "to change an institutional action" and is also connected to the second theme—"reasons for parental contact with senior-level administrators." Participants spoke of parental requests to change institutional actions. Senior-level administrators found themselves in the position of listening to and responding to requests by parents for special considerations or exceptions. Participants indicated that parents were likely to advocate for their student and request a different outcome than what had already been communicated to the student by the appropriate administrator. Parents were also likely to request an exception to an institutional policy. Senior-level administrators found themselves in the position of reviewing decisions made at the department level, and in some respects, have become an appeal for parents to have their issue reconsidered.

This finding was important because it also reinforced the notion that parents do not view their traditional-age undergraduate students as adults (Nelson & others, 2007). The finding also supported the postulate that the reason why parents intervened was because parents believed that their intervention would change the outcome (Kennedy, 2009; Mullendore et al., 2005). This finding also identified an opportunity for senior-level student affairs professionals to set appropriate boundaries for parents, educating parents of traditional-age undergraduate students of the appropriate amount of involvement that they should have in the lives of their students (Kennedy, 2009; Mullendore et al. 2005; Taub, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

The third theme was also connected to the first research question. The theme was "types of interactions that administrators have with parents." This theme was further explored and two additional sub-themes emerged. The sixth sub-theme described one

type of interactions between senior-level administrators and parents—“positive interactions.” Senior-level administrators focused on positive interactions that they had with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. They recognized the importance of working with parents to form a partnership to address concerns. Participants also commented on times that they received positive feedback in the form of gratitude from parents. The kind words from parents seemed to affirm the participants and the work that they did with students.

This finding was important because the sub-theme introduced collaboration between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Recent student development literature described the need for institutions of higher education to partner with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Mullendore et al., 2005; Price, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008). “Through partnerships with parents and families, we can create additional learning opportunities and also increase the likelihood of student success” (Pennington, 2005, p. ix).

The seventh sub-theme identified in this research described another type of interactions between senior-level administrators and parents—“negative interactions.” This sub-theme was also connected to the third theme— “types of interactions that administrators have with parents” Senior-level administrators acknowledged having negative interactions with parents. These interactions were often described as adversarial or combative. The interactions did not promote partnering with senior-level student affairs professionals and parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The outcome

of these less than positive interactions was described as having a negative impact on the student's ability to learn and grow.

The importance of this finding acknowledged the sometimes adversarial relationship between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents. The outcome of these less than positive relationships can have negative impacts on students and their success.

As institutions and parents communicate about the student's experience at college, it can be easy to get caught up in small details or debates over specific institutional policies or procedures. If student affairs professionals allow themselves to get too involved in these debates, parents may completely miss the larger message: institutions and parents are partners aiming for the same goal—the success of their son or daughter. (Price, 2008, p. 40)

The significance of this finding also recognized that student affairs administrators may find themselves holding firm on their response in certain circumstances because of their role as an educator and in hopes of promoting student learning, but that did not mean that parents of traditional-age undergraduate students were going to be satisfied with the response. When a parent made a demand s/he was responding from a consumer mentality, and if the student affairs professional remained focused on student development and learning perspective they were fundamentally at odds (Jackson & Murphy, 2005).

***Research Question #2: What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies?***

Research question two was designed to determine if increased parental involvement in the lives of the traditional-age undergraduate students has caused institutions of higher education to revise or change their policies. The fourth theme was connected to the second research question. The theme was developed through the

interviews and described “institutional guidance for administrators responding to parental involvement.” Participants indicated that they are not guided by policies and procedures, nor do they rely heavily on student development theory in their interactions with parents. Rather, participants relied on institutional philosophies and their own judgment in their interactions with parents. Additionally, the finding revealed that participants depended on their own skills and experiences in their interactions with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.

This finding was important because the theme affirmed student affairs best practices literature that identified the need for an institutional philosophy to guide student affairs professionals in their interactions with parents. The literature suggested a well-developed philosophy that was clear and concise. The philosophy set expectations for students and their parents and invited parents to participate in their student’s college experience while establishing appropriate boundaries.

The findings revealed that participants were not guided by institutional policies or procedures when interacting with parents. Rather their own experiences and knowledge often times guided them in their interactions with parents. Best practice literature emphasized the importance of creating policies for institutional responses to parents (Kennedy, 2009).

The finding also was counter to student affairs best practices literature that promoted the use of student development theory into student affairs professionals’ interactions with parents was important for establishing the partnership (Taub, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Participants responded that they loosely or rarely integrated student development theory during their interactions with parents of traditional-age

undergraduate students, yet best practices suggested that integrating basic student development.

While student development theory did not speak directly to the role that parental involvement had in the lives of traditional-age undergraduate students, attachment theory (Hickman et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2007; Schwartz & Buboltz, 2004) and Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Nelson & others, 2007) recognized that parents have a role in the lives of their college age students. Additionally, in 2007 the *In Consortio Cum Parentbuis* Model was developed by Henning and it identified three important relationships: the relationship between students and their parents, the relationship between colleges and parents, and, most importantly, the relationship between colleges and students.

The model also acknowledged that parents were actively involved in their student's lives and education. The importance of the parent/student relationship and attachment were described in the third chapter in the student development theory and research section. Studies by Lee et al. (2007), Hickman et al. (2000), and Larose and Boivin (1998) all found that involving parents in the college experience may support student growth and development. The model also called on student affairs professionals to provide assistance to students and their parents by teaching how to facilitate autonomy for the student and how to communicate with each other.

***Research Question #3: What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs and activities?***

Research question three was designed to determine if increased parental involvement in the lives of the traditional-age undergraduate students had caused institutions of higher education to revise or add services, programs, and activities for parents. The fifth theme was connected to the third research question. The theme was developed through the analysis of the interview transcripts and described “Institutional services, programs, and activities for parents.” Participants shared information on a wide array of programs, services, and activities provided to parents by their institutions. Programs, services, and activities for parents began in the admission process, and they continued for parents throughout the students’ college experience. Most participants indicated that while new programs, services and/or activities for parents have not been developed, enhancements to existing programs, services, and activities have occurred in part due to the increased involvement of parents in the lives of undergraduate students. Many also revealed that increased communication with parents was recognized at their institutions.

This finding was important because best practices in student affairs encourage institutions of higher education to offer programming and activities for parents (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Ward-Roof, 2005; Ward-Roof et al., 2008). These programs were an extension of the partnership between parents and their students. “Programming for parents and family members is an optimal time for staff to partner with

them to embrace the positive growth and development of students” (Ward-Roof et al., 2008, p. 54).

“Across institutions, higher education needs a more coherent and systematic approach to communicating with parents” (Kennedy, 2009, p. 25). The increased communication from the institution to the parents of Millennial students was another important aspect of this finding. Best practices literature suggested that colleges and universities had the additional responsibility of sharing information, educating parents, and setting parental expectations in order to assist parents in understanding their role (Kennedy, 2009; Price, 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Senior-level student affairs administrators discussed the efforts both they and their institutions made to enhance and increase institutional communications with parents. Effective communication through the use of the technological resources and programming opportunities available to senior-level student affairs professionals was revealed in the interviews as important.

***Research Question #4: What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs, or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?***

Research question four was designed to glean insights from the senior-level student affairs administrators who were identified as having the most contact with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. Specifically the question was framed to learn what recommendations for changes to policies, services, programs, and activities were recommended by the study’s participants. The final of six themes developed during the interviews with senior-level student affairs administrators was the “senior-level administrators’ recommendations for their institutions.” This theme was further explored

and three sub-themes were identified. The eighth sub-theme was “future institutional policies.” Most participants expressed that they did not believe that significant changes or additions to their institutions’ policies and procedures regarding parental involvement would occur in the next five years. Participants went on to discuss the reality that student affairs professionals were entrusted to use their own judgment when working with parents. In general, participants believed that their judgment, paired with an institutional philosophy or campus culture, had served them well and would continue to serve them well in the future. Some participants did offer insights into potential policy changes for the future. These changes were believed to come about from changes in laws and due to the changing demographics of the future students coming to their campuses. This finding was important because the result contradicted the best practices reported in the student affairs literature that encouraged the development of institutional policies to guide student affairs professionals in their interactions with parents (Baker, 2008; Jackson & Murphy, 2005; Kennedy, 2009).

Many participants discussed their institution’s philosophy on working with parents, which is reinforced by literature on best practices. This was one of the proactive measures encouraged by the literature to support the notion of partnering with parents (Jackson & Murphy, 2005; Mullendore et al., 2005). Kennedy (2009) encouraged institutions to take their efforts a step further:

More colleges and universities need policies that guide their employees and extend beyond the mandates of law. Each institution’s culture and approach to parents should dictate the content of these policies and drive decision making about the kind of organization needed to take direct responsibility for parent relations. (p. 25)



The ninth sub-theme described as “Future institutional programs, services, and activities” was also a part of the sixth theme—“senior-level administrators’ recommendations for their institutions.” Participants discussed the need for increased services for parents, including assistance with financial planning. Additionally, participants whose institutions did not have a parent association acknowledged that this type of group may be added in the future.

This finding was important because the result identified programmatic needs that senior-level student affairs administrators at mid-size, private, highly residential institutions identified to better serve parents. The finding supported best practices that encouraged institutions of higher education to provide programs and services for parents that promote appropriate involvement, share information, and connect the student’s parents to campus life (Jackson & Murphy, 2005; Mullendore et al., 2005; Ward-Roof et al., 2008; Wartman & Savage, 2008).

The tenth sub-theme described as “senior-level administrators’ recommendations for institutional change” was the final sub-theme of the sixth theme—“senior-level administrators’ recommendations for their institutions.” Participants’ recommendations for their institutions’ future interactions with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students fell into two primary topics. The first focused on clearly articulating a philosophy on the relationship they have with parents. The second topic focused on institutions more intentionally creating opportunities to partner with parents.

This finding was important because the result reinforced many of the previous findings of this study. Participants expressed the need to do more than their institutions were currently doing to articulate the role of parents in higher education and to recognize

the benefits of partnering with parents. Carney-Hall (2008) expressed ways that student affairs professionals can enlist appropriate parental support. She suggested that student affairs professionals keep the following in mind:

- Today's parents of traditional-age undergraduate students are invested in being good parents. They are highly motivated and open to learning about what good parenting of a college student looks like;
- Student affairs professionals and parents share the same goals of student success and student growth and maturity;
- Teaching parents a little about student development may be helpful because it normalizes for parents what they will be experiencing with their students and it establishes a common language for communication; and
- Research supports the idea that parental involvement can be helpful to students' development. Knowing this, student affairs professionals should explicitly acknowledge that parents have a role in their traditional-age undergraduate students' college experience. (pp. 24 & 25)

Participants' responses demonstrated that there was a recognition that parents are more involved in the lives of their students today and that their institutions have responded by putting some programs, services, and policies in place but that their efforts are a work in progress.

### **Recommendations for Future Practice**

Chief student affairs administrators with the support of their senior-level administrators who have frequent contact with the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students should evaluate current policies and procedures, programs, and services to determine if their institution is best meeting the needs of students and their parents. Student affairs professionals should ask and answer key questions: (a) Does our institution articulate a clear and consistent philosophy on the relationship it has with the parents of our students? (b) Do we communicate effectively to parents on the issues and

topics that concern them? (c) Do we communicate effectively our expectations of parents and how parents can support their student's success? (d) Do all student affairs professionals at our institution know our expectations in the interactions that they have with parents? (e) Do we clearly articulate policies and procedures for how student affairs professionals interact with parents? If not, should we? and (f) Do we understand attachment theory and Arnett's theory on emerging adulthood and the impact these theories have on our work with traditional-age undergraduate students and their parents?

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

This research focused on the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The results provided insights into a void in the limited research on parental involvement in higher education. The interview responses expressed perceptions of senior-level student affairs professionals of the impact of increased parental involvement on senior-level administrators and their institutions. This research cannot be generalized beyond the senior-level student affairs administrators at medium-size, four-year, private, highly residential institutions of higher education.

The first recommendation for future study is a more in-depth review of student development theory as it relates to the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of their traditional-age undergraduate students. Learning from and applying knowledge about attachment theory and Arnett's theory on emerging adulthood may be considered. More specifically, future research could strive to understand parental influence in the development of college age students (Taub, 1997). Some student affairs professionals recognize that many traditional-age undergraduate students are in a transitional stage, not

children, but not yet adults. “It might be more helpful to administrators if we construct college student development more fluidly and understand college students to be on a continuum somewhere between but also including childhood and maturity” (Wartman & Savage, 2008, p. 43).

Second, this study focused on the perceptions of senior-level student affairs professionals at mid-size, four-year, private, highly residential institutions of higher education. The results of this study are not generalizable to senior-level student affairs administrators at other institutions of higher education. Future research could replicate the procedures for this study identifying different types of institutions of higher education for the studies’ populations.

Third, future studies should make an effort to understand the perceptions of parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. This study focused on the perceptions of senior-level administrators. There was no attempt to compare the senior-level student affairs administrators’ perceptions with the perceptions of the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. As stated in the *In Consortio Cum Parentibus* Model, “parents are viewed as partners in their students’ educational process” (Henning, 2007, p. 557). The perceptions of parents of traditional-age undergraduate students have not been studied.

Fourth, this study did not look at race, ethnicity or gender.

Existing developmental theories are for the most part based on the values of Euro-American, middle-class, educated people. Such values may contribute to a limited sense of what is important in the lives of students, especially those from other traditions (Evans et al., 1998, p. 283).

Future studies should explore race, ethnicity, and gender to better understand the impact interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students.

The fifth and finally, future studies should make an attempt to understand the impact on students and their success when institutional practices, programs and policies are in place to partner with parents. Are these efforts effective? Do these efforts have a positive impact on student retention, graduation rates, or student learning?

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to explore the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. This study contributed new insights to the limited research on this topic. Student affairs professionals need to acknowledge that parents are a part of the college experience for the students of the Millennial generation. Often time parents play a significant role in the student's life. Student affairs professionals should not be insistent on cutting the apron strings. Rather, they must look at the opportunities that present themselves with increased parental involvement.

In order to maximize the potential of the relationship with parents, student affairs professionals should take the lead in institution-wide discussions on the topic of parental involvement, and develop an institutional philosophy on appropriate parental involvement with traditional-age college students (Mullendore et al., 2005). The next step in creating a comprehensive approach to partnering with parents is to develop programs to educate parents about expectations and use technology more effectively to

communicate with parents. Student affairs professionals can accomplish this by creating policies or guidelines for their institution to guide them in their interactions with parents.

There will always be times when student affairs professionals will be reacting and responding to issues or tensions that parents bring to their attention. There is also an opportunity for student affairs professionals to be more proactive in their relationship with parents. Clear and consistent communications that articulate parents' roles in the lives of college age students; services, programs, and activities that engage parents throughout the students' college experience; and communicating to parents that they are a valued partner have the potential of creating a powerful partnership that promotes student learning and success.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Carnegie Classification**



Master's Colleges and Universities that are  
Medium four year, highly residential, private not-for-profit institution of higher education

- Ashland University
- Baldwin-Wallace College
- Belmont University
- Bentley College
- Bethel University
- Bob Jones University
- Bradley University
- Bryant University
- Butler University
- Creighton University
- Elon University
- Fairfield University
- Fairleigh Dickinson University-  
College at Florham
- Gonzaga University
- Hampton University
- Harding University
- Ithaca College
- John Carroll University
- La Salle University
- Lindenwood University
- Loyola College in Maryland
- Marist College
- Mercer University
- Mercyhurst College
- Mississippi College
- Niagara University
- Olivet Nazarene University
- Pacific Lutheran University
- Providence College
- Quinnipiac University
- Rider University
- Rollins College
- Saint Josephs University
- Seattle Pacific University
- Simmons College
- Springfield College
- Stetson University
- University of New Haven
- University of Portland
- University of Redlands
- University of Scranton
- University of Tampa, The
- Valparaiso University
- Villanova University
- Western New England College

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2009). *Master's colleges and universities*. Retrieved March 4, 2009, from  
<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/index.asp?key=790>

## **Appendix B**

### **IRB Application, Change in Protocol, and Approval Letters**



RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

**Message**

\* Indicates Required Fields

[Printer Friendly Version](#)**Sent By:** IRB NUgrant System**Sent On:** 07/16/2009 04:21 pm**Reference:** IRBNewProjectForm - 10025**Subject:** Official Approval Letter for IRB project #10025**Message:** July 15, 2009

Tanya Winegard  
Department of Educational Administration  
17312 Redman Cir Omaha, NE 68116

Richard Hoover  
Department of Educational Administration  
119 TEAC UNL 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20090710025 EX  
Project ID: 10025  
Project Title: Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-Age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study

Dear Tanya:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 07/15/2009. This approval is Valid Until: 07/14/2010.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (Winegard ICF-Approved.pdf file). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that

involves risk or has the potential to recur;

- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board. For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,



Mario Scalora, Ph.D.  
Chair for the IRB



Close

Attachments:

No Data



RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

**Message**

\* Indicates Required Fields

[Printer Friendly Version](#)**Sent By:** IRB NUgrant System**Sent On:** 08/15/2009 09:59 am**Reference:** IRBChangeRequestForm - 1596**Subject:** Official Approval Letter for IRB project #10025**Message:** August 10, 2009

Tanya Winegard  
 Department of Educational Administration  
 17312 Redman Cir Omaha, NE 68116

Richard Hoover  
 Department of Educational Administration  
 119 TEAC UNL 68588-0360

IRB Number:  
 Project ID: 10025  
 Project Title: Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents  
 of Traditional-Age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study

Dear Tanya:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed  
 its review of the Request for Change in Protocol submitted to the IRB.

1. It has been approved to revise the interview protocol based on results of pilot  
 interviews.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to  
 this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This letter constitutes official notification of the approval of the protocol change. You are therefore authorized to implement this change accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,



Mario Scalora, Ph.D.  
Chair for the IRB



Close

Attachments: 

No Data
---------

## **Appendix C**

### **Pilot Interview Protocol**

**Pilot Interview Protocol**

**Project:** Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study.

**Time of Interview:**

**Date:**

**Interviewer:** Tanya Winegard

**Interviewee:**

**Interview information to be shared with the interviewee:**

The purpose of this research is to describe how interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of Millennial students impact the functional role of senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education.

- The interview should take approximately 60 minutes.
- I will be recording this interview and hiring a professional transcriber to convert the interviews into transcripts. Once transcribed, the voice recordings will be erased. A copy of the transcription will be emailed to you for your review.
- You will then be asked to review the transcript for accuracy of the details of our conversation.
- After the transcript has been checked for accuracy, the digital recordings will be erased to protect the confidentiality of the subjects and pseudonyms will be assigned. The pseudonyms will be the only identifying information used from that point on.
- Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for three years after study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in research journals or presented at research meetings but the data will be reported using pseudonyms for each participant.
- Verify that the consent form has been signed and returned.

**Interview Questions**

1. How long have you worked in the student affairs profession?
2. What is your current position?
3. How long have you been in your current position?
4. What are your responsibilities?



5. Do you have frequent contact with parents?
6. Are you the primary contact for parents at your institution?
7. What do you see as the role(s) that parents play in the lives of their student?
  - How are parents involved in the lives of their student?
8. What do you believe to be the role that parents **should** have in the lives of today's student?
  - How **should** parents be involved in the lives of their student?
9. Do you believe that parental involvement in the lives of their student has increased in recent years?

If yes, how do you know this?

- Has the nature of your work changed because of parental involvement in the lives of their student?
  - Has your institution added additional programs or services to address increased parental involvement?
10. Why do parents contact you?
    - What is the nature of the calls or contacts that you have with parents?
  11. Describe a typical conversation that you may have with a parent.
    - What is the purpose of the conversation?
    - Are you expected to resolve an issue or concern?
    - Are you sharing information/serving as a resource?
  12. Describe a positive interaction that you have had with a parent.
    - What made the interaction positive?
  13. Describe a negative interaction that you have had with a parent.
    - What made the interaction negative?

14. What do you perceive to be the expectations that parents have of you?

- What request do parents make of you?
- How do parents let you know what they expect of you and the institution?

15. Do the expectations parents have of you differ from your assigned responsibilities? If yes, how?

- Is there a disconnect between what your assigned duties are and what parents want from you?

16. How have you educated yourself about the topic of increased parental involvement in students' lives?

- What professional development opportunities have you engaged in on the topic of increased parental involvement in students' lives?

17. Do you have the resources you need to respond to the expectations of parents? Please explain.

- Can you respond in an efficient and timely manner to parents expectations?

18. Does your institution have policies and procedures in place to guide you in your interactions with parents? Please explain.

- What guidance do you get from your institution or your leadership in how you respond to parents and their concerns?

19. In your role, do you provide training or support on how to respond to parents to other student affairs professionals at your institution? If yes, please describe.

- Do you provide professional development opportunities for other student affairs professionals at your institution on how to respond to parents?

20. Please describe other resources your institution provides for parents.

- What other programs and services does your institution provide for parents?

21. Has your institution added any new programs or services for parents in the last 5 years? If, yes please describe.

Thank you for participating in this interview. By participating in this study you will be contributing to the production of new knowledge about how parental involvement with their students has impacted our profession. I will share with you a copy of the summary of findings from my research. If you desire a complete report, please contact me.

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Protocol**

## **Interview Protocol**

**Project:** Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study.

**Time of Interview:**

**Date:**

**Interviewer:**

**Interviewee:**

### **Interview information to be shared with the interviewee:**

The purpose of this research is to describe how interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of Millennial students impact the functional role of senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education.

- The interview should take approximately 60 minutes.
- I will be recording this interview and hiring a professional transcriber to convert the interviews into transcripts. Once transcribed, the voice recordings will be erased. A copy of the transcription will be emailed to you for your review.
- You will then be asked to review the transcript for accuracy of the details of our conversation.
- After the transcript has been checked for accuracy, the digital recordings will be erased to protect the confidentiality of the subjects and pseudonyms will be assigned. The pseudonyms will be the only identifying information used from that point on.
- Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for three years after study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in research journals or presented at research meetings but the data will be reported using pseudonyms for each participant.
- Verify that the consent form has been signed and returned.

### **Interview Questions**

1. Starting with your first full-time professional position, how long have you worked in the student affairs profession?
2. What is your current position?
3. How long have you been in your current position?
4. What are your responsibilities?

5. Do you have frequent contact with parents?
6. Are you the primary contact for parents at your institution?
  - If no, ask: “Are you one of the primary contacts for parents at your institution?”
  - If no, end the interview.
7. Have you had personal/life experiences affect your interactions with parents?
  - If yes, ask: “What in particular has affected you?”
8. What do you see as the role(s) that parents play in the lives of their student?
  - How are parents involved in the lives of their student?
9. What do you believe to be the role that parents **should** have in the lives of today’s student?
  - How **should** parents be involved in the lives of their student?
10. Why do parents contact you?
  - What is the nature of the calls or contacts that you have with parents?
11. Describe the characteristics of positive interactions you have had with parents.
  - What made these interactions positive?
12. Describe the characteristics of negative interactions you have had with parents.
  - What made these interactions negative?
13. Do the expectations parents have of you differ from your assigned responsibilities? If yes, how?
  - Is there a disconnect between what your assigned duties are and what parents want from you?
14. When you respond to parents, do you incorporate student development theory in your explanation? If yes, tell me more.
15. Does your institution have policies and procedures in place to guide you in your interactions with parents? If yes, please explain.
  - If yes, please explain.
  - If no, describe any informal expectations that your institution has of you and your interactions with parents of undergraduate students.
16. Have your institution’s policies and procedures regarding interactions with parents changed in the last five years? If, yes how?
  - Describe changes in policies and procedures regarding interactions with parents.

17. In what ways do you think your institution's policies and procedures regarding interactions with parents will change in the next 5 years?
  - Describe the changes you can foresee in policies and procedures regarding interactions with parents in the next 5 years.
18. Please describe any programs and services your institution provides for parents.
19. Has your institution added any new programs or services for parents in the last 5 years? If, yes please describe.
20. What programs or services for parents do you think your institution will add in the next 5 years?
  - Describe what changes you can foresee in programs or services your institution provides for parents in the next 5 years.
21. What recommendations do you have to change your institutional policies, services, programs or activities as a result of current parental expectations?
  - What suggestions do you have to improve institutional policies, services, programs or activities as a result of current parental expectations?
22. Is there anything you would like to add that I haven't asked you about your experiences in interacting with parents of today's undergraduate students?

Thank you for participating in this interview. By participating in this study you will be contributing to the production of new knowledge about how parental involvement with their students has impacted our profession. I will share with you a copy of the summary of findings from my research. If you desire a complete report, please contact me.

## **Appendix E**

### **Email Request for Interview to Chief Student Affairs Administrator**



**From:** Tanya Winegard [winegard@creighton.edu]  
**Sent:** [date & time]  
**Subject:** Interview Request

Dear [insert name],

I am seeking your assistance to identify the appropriate individual at your institution to interview for my research study. I am a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and will be conducting research on student affairs administrators' interactions with parents of undergraduate students. The purpose of this research is to describe the essence of the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The central phenomenon that I desire to understand is: How do interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of Millennial students impact the functional role of senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education?

I am in the process of identifying senior-level administrators that have frequent contact with the parents of undergraduate students at master's level colleges and universities that are medium in size and highly residential according to the Carnegie Classification. I've defined senior-level student affairs administrators as student affairs professionals that are in positions that typically have oversight of multiple departments/areas. For the purposes of this study, the positions considered senior-level student affairs administrator includes assistant vice presidents/chancellors, associate vice presidents/chancellors, and deans of students.

I am asking if you would please identify and send me the contact information of the individual at your institution that I may contact in order to interview him/her as a part of my phenomenological study. The interview will be conducted by phone and should take approximately 60 minutes.

Please contact me if you have any questions at [winegard@creighton.edu](mailto:winegard@creighton.edu) or at 402.280.2775. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Tanya Winegard  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

## **Appendix F**

### **Email Request for Interview to Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrator**

**From:** Tanya Winegard [winegard@creighton.edu]  
**Sent:** [date & time]  
**Subject:** Interview Request

Dear [insert name],

I am writing to request your assistance in participating in my doctoral research project, entitled "Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-Age Undergraduate Students." The purpose of this research is to describe the essence of the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The central phenomenon that I desire to understand is: How do interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of Millennial students impact the functional role of senior-level student affairs administrators at highly residential, private, four-year institutions of higher education? Your participation is crucial in developing useful knowledge for scholarly activities and professional practice.

Your name and contact information was given to me by [name] because you have been identified as the senior-level student affairs administrator at your institution with the most contact with parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. I am asking you to participate in a phone interview that will be scheduled at your convenience and should last approximately 60 minutes.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. The responses you provide will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in the research findings.

Attached you will find the informed consent form for my dissertation research project. Please review the document. It outlines your rights as a research participant and provides information about the procedures for the study. If you agree with the consent form, you will need to sign it and fax it to me at 402.280.4706.

If you have questions or are in need of additional information, please call me at 402.280.2775 or contact me by e-mail at [winegard@creighton.edu](mailto:winegard@creighton.edu). Thank you in advance for your participation and assistance with this research.

Sincerely,

Tanya Winegard  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

## **Appendix G**

### **Informed Consent Form**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

### **Informed Consent Form**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-Age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study

Investigators: Tanya Winegard, Dr. Richard Hoover

#### **I. Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the essence of the interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of traditional-age undergraduate students. The central phenomenon the researcher desires to understand: How do interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and the parents of Millennial students impact the functional role of senior-level student affairs administrators?

#### **II. Procedures**

As a participant, you will be interviewed one time by Tanya Winegard for approximately 60 minutes by phone. Your interview will be scheduled in advance at a mutually agreed upon time.

You can withdraw from the study at any time during the interview, if you so desire, without any penalty.

The interview questions are attached to this document for your review.

You will need to print and sign one copy of this Informed Consent Form and return it to Tanya Winegard via fax at 402.280.4706 prior to your interview date.

#### **III. Risks**

There are no known risks involved in participation in this study.

#### **IV. Benefits**

Participation in this study may provide participants, the profession of student affairs, and society with insights concerning how the interactions between senior-level student services administrators and parents have changed programs, services, policies and activities at highly



residential, private, 4 year institutions of higher education.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

#### **V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The interview will be digitally recorded to ensure accurate data collection. The recordings will be stored on a password protected computer hard drive.

Tanya Winegard will hire a professional transcriber to convert the interviews to transcripts for this study. The digital recordings will be deleted once the transcriptions are verified.

The use of pseudonyms for participants and anyone to which they refer will protect individual identification. A list of the pseudonyms and identities will be stored as an electronic file on a different password protected hard drive then where the data are stored. Only Tanya Winegard will have access to this list and all data. The list and data will be destroyed once the transcriptions are verified.

#### **VI. Compensation**

You will not receive compensation for your participation in this study.

#### **VII. Freedom to Withdraw**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You are also free not to answer any question.

#### **VIII. Subject's Responsibilities**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

1. Review interview questions prior to interview date.
2. Participate for approximately 60 minutes in interview conducted by Tanya Winegard at a mutually agreed upon date and time.
3. May be requested to review the transcript of my interview for accuracy (approximately 30 minutes).

#### **IX. Subject's Permission**

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I agree to the digital recording of my interview with Tanya Winegard. I agree to the use of pseudonyms for me and anyone I might discuss during my interview. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information of Investigators:**

Tanya Winegard, Principal Investigator  
[winegard@creighton.edu](mailto:winegard@creighton.edu)  
402.280.2775

Dr. Richard Hoover, Secondary Investigator  
[rhoover2@unl.edu](mailto:rhoover2@unl.edu)  
402.472.3058

Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at 402.472.6965 for the following reasons:

- you wish to talk with someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant
- to voice concerns or complaints about the research
- to provide input regarding the research process
- in case the study staff could not be reached

## **Appendix H**

### **Confidentiality Agreement for Transcriptionists**





COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

### **Confidentiality Agreement for Transcriptionist**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will be providing the transcription services for Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study.

I acknowledge that all information associated with this study must be kept in confidence. I will not discuss the content of the digital recordings or transcripts with anyone other than the principal investigator, Tanya Winegard.

By signing this agreement I agree that my role in this study is strictly confidential, and that I will protect interview participants' identities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position

---

Tanya Winegard, Principal Investigator  
[winegard@creighton.edu](mailto:winegard@creighton.edu)  
402.280.2775

Dr. Richard Hoover, Secondary Investigator  
[rhoover2@unl.edu](mailto:rhoover2@unl.edu)  
402.472.3058

## **Appendix I**

### **Change in Protocol and Confidentiality Agreement for Consultant**



RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

**Message**

\* Indicates Required Fields

[Printer Friendly Version](#)**Sent By:** IRB NUgrant System**Sent On:** 12/05/2009 03:58 pm**Reference:** IRBChangeRequestForm - 1838**Subject:** Official Approval Letter for IRB project #10025**Message:** December 2, 2009

Tanya Winegard  
Department of Educational Administration  
17312 Redman Cir Omaha, NE 68116

Richard Hoover  
Department of Educational Administration  
119 TEAC UNL 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20090710025 EX

Project ID: 10025

Project Title: Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents  
of Traditional-Age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study

Dear Tanya:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed its review of the Request for Change in Protocol submitted to the IRB.

1. It has been approved to add Laura Shinkunas as a consultant.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This letter constitutes official notification of the approval of the protocol change. You are therefore authorized to implement this change accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,



Mario Scalora, Ph.D.  
Chair for the IRB



Close

Attachments:

No Data



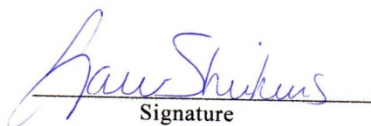
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

**Confidentiality Agreement  
for Consulting Services**

I, LAURA SHINKUNAS, will be providing the consulting services for Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study.

I acknowledge that all information associated with this study must be kept in confidence. I will not discuss the content of the written transcripts with anyone other than the principal investigator, Tanya Winegard.

By signing this agreement I agree that my role in this study is strictly confidential, and that I will protect all information that I obtain while serving as a consultant in the qualitative data coding process.

  
Signature

12/27/09  
Date

LAURA SHINKUNAS  
Printed Name

PROGRAM ASSOCIATE FOR RESEARCH  
Position

---

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## **Appendix J**

### **Codebook**

## Codebook

**Project:** Senior-Level Student Affairs Administrators Interactions with Parents of Traditional-age Undergraduate Students: A Qualitative Study.

**Q1. Length of time in Student Affairs Profession**

*Starting with your first full time professional position, how long have you worked in student affairs?*

**Q2. Current position**

*What is your current position?*

**Q3: Length of time in current position**

*How long have you been in your current position?*

**Q4: Your responsibilities**

*What are your responsibilities?*

**Q5: Do you have frequent contact with parents?**

*Do you have frequent contact with parents?*

- Look for definitions of frequent:
  - yes
    - “yes,” “certainly,” “constantly”
  - daily
    - “daily,” “two times a day,” “almost daily,”
  - Multiple times per week
    - “every other day,” “eight calls per week”
  - Episodic
    - “periodic,” “episodic,” “weekly,” “in spurts,” “isn’t necessarily an all the time”

**Q6: Are you the primary contact for parents at your institution?**

*Are you the primary contact for parents at your institution?*

- Compare to Q10 responses
- Look for “Yes”
- Look for “No”
  - “probably not,” “no,” “not sure,” “not sure”
- Look for Identified contact references, “advancement office,” “alumni relations,” “diffused responsibility”
- Look for public role references to “speaking,” “speech,” “speaker,” “orientation,” “orientations,” “address,” “public face”
- Look for conflict references
  - Problem

- “problem,” “problems,” “difficulty,” “difficulties,”
- Appeal
  - “appeal,” “appeals,” “appealing,”
- Complaint
  - “complaining,” “complain,” “complainer,” “complaint,”
- Look for personal concern role references to “welfare,” “safety”
- Look for information/assistance role reference to
  - Questions
    - “question,” “questions,” “answer,” “answers,” “don’t know”
  - Concerns
    - “concern,” “concerns,” “concerned”
  - Issues
    - “issue,” “issues,” “problem solving”
- Look for Parent Association references, “parent office,” “parent association,” “parent’s association,” “parent’s council,” “parents counsel”
- Look for referral role reference to “president,” “president’s office,” “referral,” “referrals,” “last stop,” “departments,” “directors,” “director”
- Look for expression of gratitude references to “thanks,” “thank you,” “appreciation”

**Q7: Life experiences**

*Have you had any personal or life experiences that you believe affect your interactions with parents?*

- Description of being a parent references to “my children,” “you’re a parent,” “two children,” “I am a parent,” “three children,” “three kids,” “my son,” “parent myself,” “son,” “had kids” “two stepsons”
- Description of administrators’ parents references to “my father,” “my mother,” “my parents”

**Q8: Parents’ roles in students’ lives**

*What do you see as the role(s) that parents play in the lives of their student?*

- Compare to Q9 responses
- Description of actively involved roles references to
  - Involved
    - “involved,” “overly involved,” “greater role,” “much more involved,” “very involved,” “more involved,” “hanging around,” “actively involved,” “manager,” “agent”
  - Problem Solver
    - “problem-solver,” “problem solver,” “fix it,” “intervene,” “make it go away”



- Advocate
  - “advocate,” “advocates,” “advocating,”
- Investor
  - “investor,” “invest in,” “more invested”
- Other descriptions of actively involved, “making decisions,” “care giver,” “ally,” “friend,” “helicopter parents,” “higher expectations,” “inhibit growth and development”
- Description of partnering roles references to
  - Partner
    - “partner,” “partners,” “partnering,” “concerned parents,” “concerned consumers”
  - Advisor
    - “advisor,” “advisors,” “counselors”
  - Guide
    - “preparing their child for adulthood,” “cheerleader,” “guiding,” “mentor”

**Q9: Roles parents should play in students’ lives**

*What do you believe to be the role that parents **should** have in the lives of today’s student?*

- Compare to Q8 responses
- Description of the involved roles references to “let go,” “letting go,” “letting them go,” “going to have to trust,” “high expectations,” “comforting,” “well versed,” “love,” “attention,” “direction,” “much further in the backseat,” “information seeking,” “evolving over time,” “develop”
- Description of partnering roles references to “support,” “supporting,” “supportive,” “encourage,” “encouraging,” “encouragement,” “mentor,” “mentors,” “partner,” “partners,” “partnering,” “coach,” “advisor,” “cheerleader,” “guide,” mentor,” “teacher,” “counsel,” “role model”

**Q10: Why do parents contact you?**

*Why do parents contact you?*

- Compare to Q6 responses
- Look for public role references to “speaking,” “speech,” “speaker,” “orientation,” “orientations”
- Look for conflict references to
  - Problem
    - “problem,” “problems,” “difficulty,” difficulties,” “roommate conflicts”
  - Appeal
    - “appeal,” “appeals,” “appealing,” “negotiate”
  - Concern

- “concern,” “concerns,” “concerned,” “issue,” “issues”
  - Complaint
    - “complaining,” “complain,” “complainer,” “complaint,” “comply,” “angry,” “don’t agree,” “vent,” “angry”
- Look for information/assistance role reference to
  - Inquiry
    - “question,” “question,” “answer,” “answers,” “not exactly sure,” “general questions,” “rough period,” “insights”
  - Parent Association
    - “parent office,” “parent association,” “parent’s association,” “parent’s council,” “parents counsel,”
- Look for seeking assistance references to “worried,” “intervene,” “worry,” “intervention,” “concern,” “concerns,” “concerning,” “help,” “concerned about safety,” “safe,” “assistance,” “financial assistance,” “information”
- Look for referral role reference to “president,” “president’s office,” “referral,” “referrals,” “go to the top,” “refer,” “I open the door”
- Look for expression of gratitude references to “thanks,” “thank you,” “appreciation,” “encouraging note,” “handled appropriately”

### **Q11: Positive interactions with parents**

*Describe a positive interaction that you have had with a parent.*

- Description of interactions, specifically
  - Partner
    - “partner,” “partnership,” “partnering,” “team”
  - Supporter
    - “support,” “supportive,” “to experience some of the struggle,” “providing support”
  - Communicating
    - “listen,” “listening,” “involved,” “productive dialogue,” “healthy discussion,” “part of the process,” “provide parents with information,” “involving them earlier,” “working towards a solution,” “listened,” “answer questions”
- Description of outcome of interactions, specifically “your approach really worked,” “good developmental approach,” “resolution,” “on board,” “ownership,” “game plan,” “understand,” “understanding,” “ahh ha moment,” “same page,” “similar goals”
- Look for expressions of gratitude, specifically “thank you,” “appreciated,” “beneficial,” “thanked,” “thanking,” “you saved my son,” “gratitude”
- Look for changes in student, specifically “grown,” “matured”

**Q12: Negative interactions with parents**

*Describe a negative interaction that you have had with a parent.*

- Description of interactions, specifically
  - Demanding
    - “demanding,” “demand,” “demands,” “demanded,” “very demanding,” “demanding”
  - Entitled
    - “entitled,” “entitlement”
  - Yelling
    - “yell,” “yelled,” “yelling,” “scream,” “screamed”
  - Threats
    - “threat,” “threats,” “threaten,” “berated”
  - Costs
    - “,” “pay,” “paying,” “payment,” “cost”
  - Consumer
    - “consumer mentality,”
  - Avoiding consequences
    - “avoid consequences,” “won’t let their child grow to adulthood,” “student can’t do any wrong,” “looking for short cuts,” “stay out of trouble”
  - Adversarial
    - “no getting through,” “power rush,” “talk louder,” “not really willing to engage in a conversation,” “not listening,” “accusations,” “ordering people,” “rejection,” “blaming,” “drop the ball,” “don’t get their way,” “attorney,” “attorney,” “immediate,” “not interested in listening,” “outrageous expectations,” “roommate conflict,” “angry,” “be perfect,” “a character flaw,” “convinced they’re right,” “bad guy,” “,” “don’t understand,” “want something done now,” “legal,” “quid-pro-quo relationship”
- Description of outcome of interactions, specifically “intimidated,” “threatened,” “slam the phone,” “disrespected,” “pulling their kids out of school,” “upset,” “blinders on”

**Q13: Parent expectations of you**

*Do the expectations parents have of you differ from your assigned responsibilities? If yes, how?*

- Description of expectations, specifically
  - Service provider
    - “service,” “services,”
  - Problem solver
    - “fix,” “fixing,” “fixed,” “solving problems,” “solve problems,” “solve...problems,” “problem solver,” “problem solve,”
  - Keeping student safe

- “safe,” safety,” “you’re here for them,”
- Inaccurate perceptions
  - “mean guy,” “isn’t even in my job description,” “in charge,” “more powerful,” “a dictator,” “snap my fingers,” “problem go away,” “tell them everything,” “unrealistic,” “magic wand”

**Q14: Use of Student Development Theory**

*When you respond to parents do you incorporate student development theory into your explanation?*

- Explanation of theory use, specifically “at times,” “at orientation,” “I don’t per-say,” “probably don’t quote research,” “we don’t have to get into theory,” “depends,” “I try too,” “I try to personalize it,” “not really,” “without intellectualizing it,” “more accessible,” “my supervisor used to,” “loosely, I’ll use the framework,” “I do but not identifying it as such,” “developmental perspective,” “I try but I don’t have much chance,” “I think I do,” “I wouldn’t quote the theories,” “common sense approach,” “sometimes,” “don’t think we actually quote theory,” “to a limited degree, I guess yes,” “Yep. But I coach it in a framework”

**Q15: Current institutional policies and procedures for parental interactions**

*Does your institution have policies and procedures in place to guide you in your interactions with parents? Please explain.*

- Answer to policies and procedures, specifically “no,” “24 hours,” “FERPA,” “code of student conduct,” “cheat-sheet on how to deal with difficult people,” “we don’t,” “the way we would want to be, uh, treated,” “expectations,” “I wouldn’t say—policies and procedures,” “nothing formal or necessarily in writing,” “student’s permission to talk with them,” “philosophy,” “not really,” “Make them happy so they stay enrolled,” “not specifically,” “the release of information,” “experiences,” “we intuitively know where we stand on,” “don’t believe there’s any written policy,” “purpose statement,” “campus code of conduct,” “HIPPA”

**Q16: Changes to institutional policies and procedures in the past five years**

*Have your institution’s policies and procedures regarding interactions with parents changed in the last five years? If, yes how?*

- Describe recent changes in policies and procedures, specifically “HIPPA,” “FERPA,” “approach of conversations,” “more sensitive,” “communication,” “no,” “doubt it,” “don’t think,” “more cautious,” “customer service mentality,” “nothing,” “more transparency”

**Q17: Future policies and procedures for interactions with parents**

*In what ways do you think your institution's policies and procedures regarding interactions with parents will change in the next 5 years?*

- Describe future changes in policies and procedures, specifically “don’t see us changing,” “federal legislation,” “none,” “privacy laws,” FERPA, “I think they will,” “adjusting to the changing student population,” “messages out to parents,” “messaging,” “education,” “more information,” “communicate directly,” “probably don’t,” “don’t see that changing,” “doubt it,” “hard to tell,” “to provide information,” “educate them,” “listen,” “statement of philosophy,” “articulate,” “I don’t,” “more intentional”

**Q18: Programs and services for parents**

*Please describe other programs and services your institution provides for parents.*

- Describe programs and services, specifically “news letter,” “newsletter,” “parent and family weekend,” “orientation,” “reception,” “receptions,” “communication,” “emergency notification system,” “parent day,” “connection day,” “alumni programs,” “parent handbook,” “emergency procedures,” “website,” “admissions,” “admission,” “first year experience,” “family weekend,” “parents association,” “e-news letter,” “parent’s council,” “parent’s weekend,” “homecoming weekend,” “a family day program,” “emails,” “parents weekend,” “parent’s committee,” “graduation,” “parents, uh, organization,” “parents council,” “open houses,” “parent office,” “websites,” “coffee with the president,” “orientations”

**Q19: Added programs and services for parents in the past 5 years**

*Has your institution added any new programs or services for parents in the last 5 years?*

- Describe recent programs and services, specifically “communication,” “more communicative,” “newsletters,” “parents committee,” “orientation,” “open house,” “reception,” “receptions,” “web site,” “website,” “email,” parents’ association,” “position in development”

**Q20: Future programs and services for parents**

*What programs or services for parents do you think your institution will add in the next 5 years?*

- Describe future programs and services, specifically “parents association,” “seminar,” “hire,” “convocation program,” “parent’s association,” “online,” “discount for parents who sign up for courses,” “parent services office,” “parent satisfaction survey,” “financial,” “bills,” “hotline,” “parents weekend,” “position,” “daily digest,” “invite them on campus,” “communication,” “more outreach,” “including parents”

**Q21: Recommendations for institutional change**

*What recommendations do you have to change your institutional policies, services, programs or activities as a result of current parental expectations?*

- Describe recommended changes, specifically “educate,” “keep parents close,” “tweaked,” “hire someone,” “website,” “communicate,” “times have changed,” “helping parents,” “information sharing,” “be sensitive,” “exploring advancement opportunities,” “communications,” “calendar,” “open to it,” “educational effort,” “to be engaged,” “we can’t even say no,” “separate/guardian weekend,” “conversations,” “philosophy,” “more time communicating the rules,” “changes over the four years of school,” “security,” “transparent”

**Q22: Additional insights**

*Is there anything you would like to add that I haven’t asked you about your experiences in interacting with parents of today’s undergraduate students?*

- Describe additional comments, specifically, “surprised,” “on your toes,” “communicate,” “educate,” “parent’s association,” “demographics,” “relationships,” “stereotypical,” “love their kids,” “invested,” “speaking to parents,” “the phone is going to keep ringing,” “alcohol,” “wouldn’t be here,” “important,” “critical”

## **Appendix K**

### **Research Questions and Themes**

*Themes related to research question one*—What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students?

**Theme 1: Role of parents in the lives of their students.**

Sub-theme 1: Administrators' perceived role of parents.

Sub-theme 2: Administrators' ideal role of parents.

**Theme 2: Reasons for parental contact with senior-level administrators.**

Sub-theme 3: Looking for information or assistance.

Sub-theme 4: To resolve their questions or concerns.

Sub-theme 5: To change an institutional action.

**Theme 3: Types of interactions that administrators have with parents.**

Sub-theme 6: Positive interactions.

Sub-theme 7: Negative interactions.

*Theme related to research question two*—What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies?

**Theme 4: Institutional response to parental involvement.**

*Theme related to research question three*—What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs and activities?

**Theme 5: Institutional services, programs, and activities for parents.**

*Theme related to research question four*—What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?

**Theme 6: Senior-level administrators' recommendations for their institutions.**

Sub-theme 8: Future institutional policies.

Sub-theme 9: Future institutional programs, services, and activities.

Sub-theme 10: Senior-level administrators' recommendations for institutional change.



## **Appendix L**

### **Research and Survey Question Matrix**

Research Question	Corresponding Survey Question
1. What language do student affairs professionals use to describe the trend of increased parental involvement in the lives of Millennial students?	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
2. What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional policies?	14, 15, 16
3. What effect has increased interactions between senior-level student affairs administrators and parents had on institutional services, programs and activities?	18, 19
4. What future changes to institutional policies, services, programs or activities are suggested by senior-level student affairs administrators as a result of current parental expectations?	17, 20, 21, 22

\*Note questions 1 – 7 provide background information on the interview participants. The data provided in these questions was reflected in the participant profiles.