



2nd Annual National Survey on Future College Parent Expectations
March 22, 2007

Purpose and Methodology

College Parents of America and Colleges of Distinction conducted the second in what is expected to be an annual survey of future college parent expectations. We believe the series is the first national survey of its type.

The main purpose of the survey is to:

- Gauge (and in future years track) the level of parental involvement before and during their children's college years;
- Determine the level and types of communication parents anticipate with their future college-age children; and,
- Identify some major parent concerns and the depth of these concerns as their children approach their college years.

We believe that the results have implications for colleges and universities as they determine whether and how to involve parents in a way that encourages them to feel that they are part of the college community.

The online survey was conducted during a one month period from mid-February to mid-March using the web-based tools provided by SurveyMonkey. An invitation to participate was sent out via e-mail to a subset of College Parents of America members and subscribers and a portion of the Colleges of Distinction database. The survey protected the anonymity of those participating in the survey, but did not allow more than one response from an individual IP address. More than 850 parents (856) provided responses to the survey, and the survey was closed on March 15, 2007 at Noon.

A companion survey measuring the experiences of current college parents was also completed recently, and this executive summary also provides some comparisons between the two surveys.

The College Parents of America and Colleges of Distinction databases include parents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia; respondents came from 49 of 50 states and D.C.

Overview of Results

1. Expected Communication Levels and Types Between Parents and Students

Many questions in the current college parent survey and this survey measuring future college parent expectations were nearly identical. The goal in each was to track frequency, methods and subjects of college parent-student communication – with one survey based on current behavior, and the other based on the expected frequency, methods and topics of communication for prospective college parents and their children.

Not surprisingly, the frequency of expected communications between future college parents and their college-bound children is very high, with 71% of parents expecting to communicate with their child two or three times per week, and 27% – or more than one in four parents – believing that communication will occur daily or more. This level of frequency is consistent with the actual communication experiences of current college parents who responded to the companion survey.

Of note, 30.4% of the mothers of future college students anticipate communicating with their child at least daily, compared to 14.2% for fathers.

Where inconsistencies begin to bare themselves between the two groups of responses, however, is in the area of anticipated methods of communication, as 68% of future college parents expect that they will “very frequently” or “frequently” utilize e-mail to stay in touch, as opposed to the actual behavior of college parents, with 50% of those respondents using e-mail with that level of frequency. Cell phones, however, are the expected – and current – lead method of communication for parents and students.

Some of the differences between the current and future college parent surveys are even more pronounced when looking at the responses by year of graduation from high school: 2007, 2008 and 2009. The younger the child, the more the parents anticipate using the Internet to stay in touch. Of those respondents whose child will graduate in 2007, 65% anticipate using e-mail either “very frequently” or “frequently” to communicate with their child in college. For the parents of those graduating in 2008, 74% anticipating using e-mail “very frequently” or “frequently.” For the parents of those graduating in the class of 2009 (albeit a smaller sample), the number is even higher: 83%.

2. Parental Concerns and Student Requests for Assistance

Future college parents believe that they will have much greater levels of concern than current college parents on almost every topic, from health and safety to finances, academics and even personal relationships. These soon-to-be college parents also believe, more so than current college parents, that they will be asked for advice or assistance early and often.

There are some interesting questions associated with this data. Will future college parents be even more involved and engaged with their children than the ‘helicopter parents’ of today, or will some of their concerns dissipate over time as a kind of ‘rite of passage’ and ‘letting go’ process as their children go to college, gain more independence and emerge as adults? Will these future college parents gain a greater comfort level as their children make the transition to college?

“Health and safety” tops the list of expected parent concerns, with 74% of future college parents believing that this topic will be of “extreme” or “great” concern. Only 43% of current college parents categorize “health and safety” concerns in that manner.

On the topic of “finances,” 66% of future college parents predict “extreme” or “great” concern versus 45% of current college parents. Other leading areas of “extreme” or “great concern” for future college parents:

Academics:	61% (vs. 37% for current college parents)
Career Planning:	55% (vs. 31% for current college parents)
Personal Relationships:	52% (vs. 28% for current college parents)
Community Involvement:	36% (vs. 14%).

What type of advice and assistance do future college parents anticipate their child will be requesting from them?

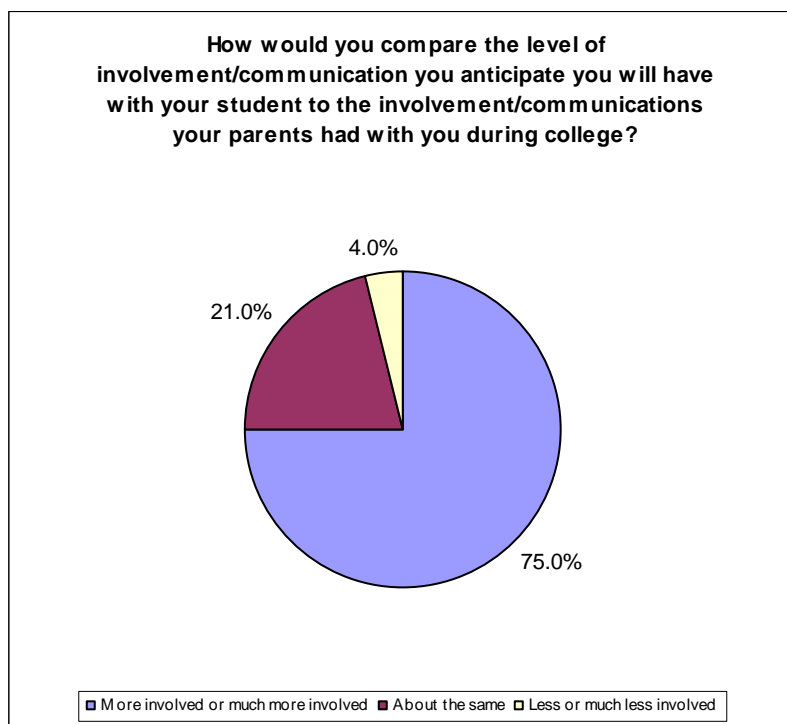
Prospective college parents expect to be asked for “very frequent” or “frequent” advice on the following topics:

Finances:	63% (compared to 33% for the actual advice requested in the companion current college parent survey)
Career Planning:	36% (compared to 16% for current college parents)
Health and Safety:	30% (compared to 14% for current college parents)
Academics:	27% (vs. 14% for current college parents)
Community Involvement:	15% (vs. 5% for current college parents)

3. Comparing Perceived Levels of Involvement Between Future College Parents and ‘Yesteryears’

When asked, “How would you compare the level of involvement/communication you anticipate you will have with your student to the involvement/communications your parents had with you during college?” 75% say they are “more” or “much more involved” in their child’s life at college than their own parents were with them. Only 4% say that they are “less” or “much less” involved.¹ These numbers are very close to those in the companion current college parent survey.

¹ Please note that the percentages for this question are different than appears in the full text of the results in SurveyMonkey because 12.5% of those responding indicated that the question was “not applicable” to them. These 106 responses were deleted from the calculation. The most likely reasons in our opinion that



4. Anticipated Interaction Levels and Preferences related to School Communications and Activities Involving Parents

In terms of how parents expect to interact with schools, a very high percentage – 94.5% -- of survey respondents plan to attend a parent orientation session (if offered by the school).

A “parent-oriented web site” would be popular with future college parents, with 76% saying that such a “parent-related information or service” would either be “extremely useful” or “very useful.” About 70% would find a dedicated parent relations office either “extremely useful” or “very useful.” An “electronic newsletter for parents” would be the most popular, with 77% of parents saying it would be “extremely useful” or “very useful.”

5. Demographic Information

The survey generated 860 responses from 49 of 50 states and the District of Columbia. Two-thirds of those completing the survey are the parents of high school seniors, and another 15% are the parents of 2008 high school graduates.

Of the parents who filled out the survey, 49% think their child will go to a public 4 year institution, compared to 41.6% who expect their child to go to a private 4 year school.

this group answered “not applicable” was that these parents either did not attend college themselves or their parents had passed away by the time of their college experience.

About 50% expect their child to go to college “in-state,” with about 28% thinking they will go to college outside of their state. Roughly 22% are not sure whether their child will attend school in-state or elsewhere.

Almost 80% of the respondents are mothers, and 18.4% are fathers.

Further Information

For a copy of the survey questions and detailed breakout of responses, please see:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=349377462725>

For more information related to the mission and activities of College Parents of America, please visit www.collegeparents.org or e-mail info@collegeparents.org.