

Creating Space | How to Change the Way Universities Engage Parents
 AHEPPP National Conference, November 2015

CHALLENGES

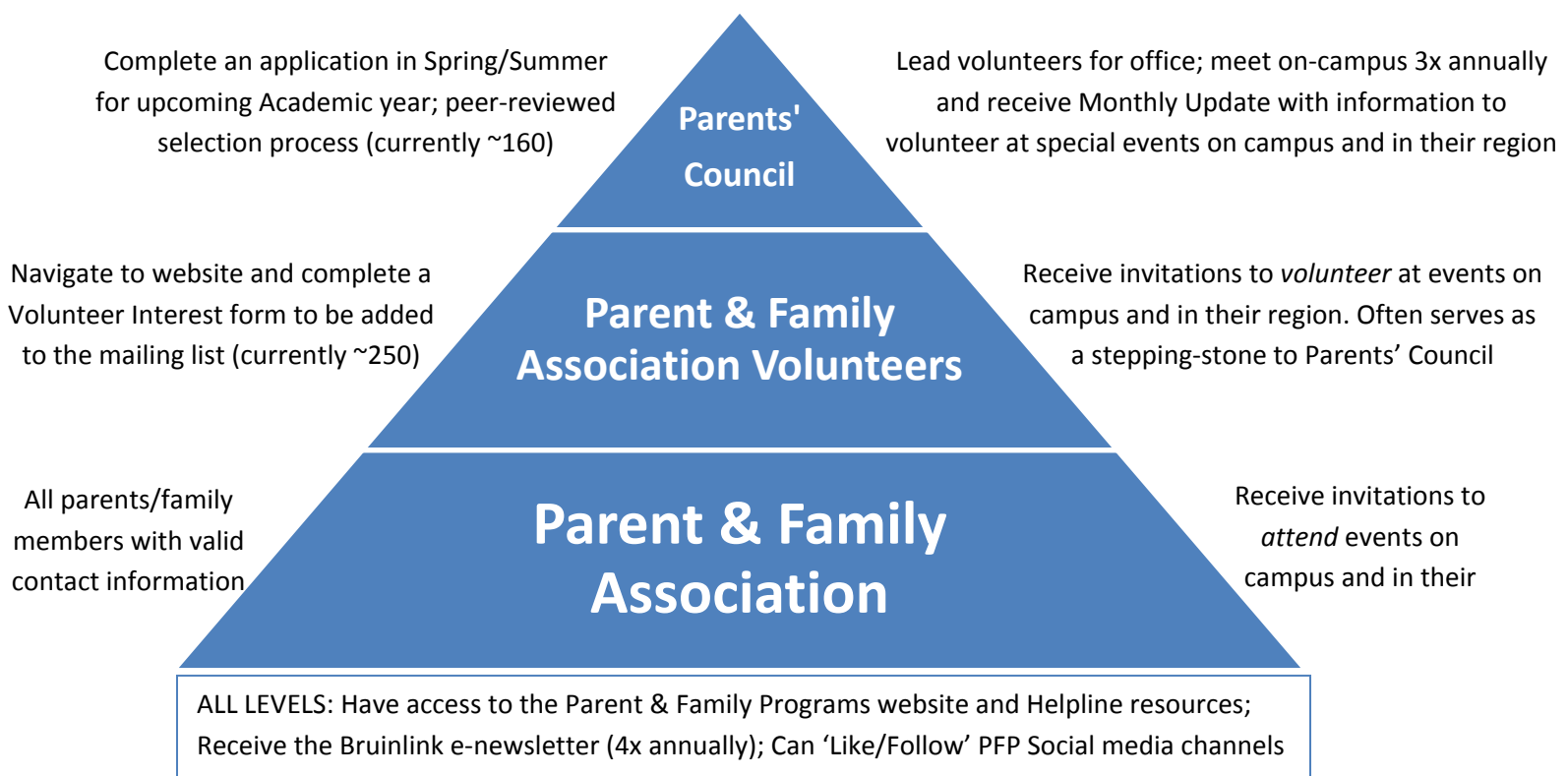
- *CURRENT PERCEPTIONS* of Parent/family Involvement by campus partners at institution.
- *MAINSTREAM MEDIA* portraying and perpetuating the “Helicopter Parent” or “Lawnmower Parent”.
- Students and families struggling to navigate the *BUREAUCRATIC LABYRINTH* of a university (i.e. 3-5 offices contribute to the financial component of attending college).
- *COLLABORATING WITH CAMPUS PARTNERS* to provide resources in an efficient manner and establishing *POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS* between the institution and parents/family members.

RESEARCH & TRENDS

- Study on college student adjustment: researchers found students who had higher levels of communication with their parents tended to have higher levels of self-worth and better adjustment to college. (Agliata, Renk, 2007)
- “New research shows that working through college isn't going to make a dent in student debt and could ruin your GPA.” (Grant)
- Current higher education trends (including cost of attendance and academic rigor) suggest...
 PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT HIGHER ED INSTITUTIONS WILL ONLY CONTINUE TO INCREASE IN COMING YEARS

How UCLA Parent & Family Programs has worked to change the narrative:

- INTERNAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN to increase presence of the Parent & Family Programs Office, its purpose and the benefits it can provide to campus partners.
- BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH OFFICES AND DEPARTMENTS across campus to both effectively and proactively communicate information to the general parent population, while also leverage parent volunteers to support events and initiatives by offices serving various student populations.
- CREATING VARIOUS LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR FAMILIES, from passive to highly active, to create structure and space for a positive relationship and interactions between families and the institution.



GUIDELINES FOR WORKING W/PARENTS VOLUNTEERS:

- **DON'T RECREATE THE WHEEL** | There are plenty of places to plug parents/families into campus without having to start from scratch. Start having conversations with campus partners and student organizations to see where help is needed! Additionally, if your office already has events in place to support families (i.e. send-off events for new families) build in a volunteer component, if not already in existence, and provide space for peer-to-peer interactions. Families can be a great resource to one another if provided information from the university.
- **MANAGE EXPECTATIONS** | Of **both** Campus partners and parent volunteers. Establish clear protocol (i.e. what volunteers can/not be expected to do) and communicate early and often about event needs and opportunities (i.e. arrival times and time commitment, day-of staff contact, what to wear, what will be done).
- **MAKE IT PURPOSEFUL** | Have conversations with campus partners about what their needs are, and be up-front and candid about what volunteers can and will do. Understanding that parent volunteers are volunteers and their time should be respected is key! Building a positive relationship comes from having positive interactions.
- **OWNERSHIP OF ASPECTS** | You are likely working with a small (*or non-existent!*) staff to meet the needs of your parent constituency. Utilize those 'tried-and-true' parents to be an extension of your office! Parent volunteers can assist you with phone-calling and recruitment of other volunteers. To best engage these families provide tools (i.e. call scripts, online or in-person trainings, etc.) and identify those key volunteers you can depend.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANY SIZE PROGRAM:

- **WHAT ARE THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF FAMILIES** | If you are a smaller or new program, focus first on the resource and communication component before looking to build engagement opportunities. Utilize assessment tools (i.e. an annual survey to identify what families want to know, strengths and weaknesses of the institution in student support, etc.) and master your external presence and resources (i.e. website, helpline, etc.).
- **INTERNAL VISIBILITY OF YOUR PROGRAM/OFFICE** | Do campus partners know you are a resource, or even exist? Consider an internal marketing campaign (i.e. postcard outlining office mission/purpose). Reach out to offices/departments for a meeting to introduce yourself and share what you do. Ultimately, once you have established your presence externally to the family constituency, your goal should be to break down silos, build a presence for your department, and influence collaboration within your institution to improve the way you resource families.
- **IDENTIFY TOOLS FOR VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT** | As your office expands to meet the needs and interest of family involvement there will be many iterations of the way you manage volunteerism. As a small or single-staff office it is important to find tools to fit the needs of your volunteer model/numbers that are efficient and effective. Consider what you need to do (i.e. sharing opportunities, providing confirmation and following up, etc.) and if there is one all-encompassing tool or if it requires multiple systems. UCLA has found OrgSync to be a great tool to interact with volunteers, but if your institution is not a subscriber and it is not in the budget, consider other options such as JotForm or VolunteerSpot.

ARTICLES & REFERENCES

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