



What They (Parents) Want to Know: Designing and Delivering Engaging Communications

AHEPPP 5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

BOULDER, CO NOVEMBER 16, 2016

Who We Are

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Session Objectives

- ▶ Review research related to college-parent communication
- ▶ Summarize a research approach used to understand college parent communication preferences
- ▶ Present potential information content and formatting for parent communications

Related research about college-parent communication

- ▶ Research about student-parent communications Kofer B. K. and Moore A. S. (2011) *The iConnected Parent: Staying Close to Your Kids in College (and Beyond) While Letting Them Grow Up*, New York, Atria Books.
- ▶ Research about the role of parents in student success Sax, L.J. & Wartman, K.L. (2010). Studying the impact of parental involvement and college student development: A review and agenda for research. In J.C. Smart (ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*. No. 25 (pp. 219-255). New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- ▶ Research about college-parent communication Price, J. (2008). Using purposeful messages to educate and reassure parents. In K. C. Carney-Hall (Ed.), *New Directions for Student Services: No. 122. Managing parent partnerships: Maximizing influence, minimizing interference, and focusing on student success* (pp. 29– 42). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Questions about communication between parents and institutions

- ▶ What role can parents have in their college students' success?
- ▶ What questions do parents have?
- ▶ How can institutions best provide information to parents?
- ▶ What can **you** do at **your** institution to optimize your communication with parents?

Research Project Methodology

▶ UCA

- ▶ Topic survey administered among 126 UCA parents
- ▶ Sample parent handbook developed and tested among UCA parents
- ▶ Parent handbook survey administered among 59 UCA parents

▶ Cal Poly

- ▶ Topic survey administered among 129 respondents from Cal Poly's parent Facebook page

Institutional Comparison

	UCA	Cal Poly
Enrollment	11,000	21,000
Pell Eligibility	44%	20%
Underrepresented minority enrollment	30%	19%
Avg. incoming ACT	24	30

University of Minnesota Parent Survey

University of Minnesota Parent Survey

As part of an ongoing assessment project, the University of Minnesota has surveyed the parents of its students since 1995. The surveys began as a way to gauge parent satisfaction with the University's communications and services for parents and to measure parents' feelings of connectedness to the University. Over time, the surveys have been expanded to assess how parents use the information they receive from the University, how they relate to their students during the college years, and what issues are of most concern to them. The surveys also gather demographic data on U of M parents.

<https://parent.umn.edu/about-us/research-reports>

UCA Topic Survey

PARENT INFORMATION SURVEY

Please rate on a scale from 0-5 how interested you would be in getting more information about the following topics by circling the number that best matches your interest level. A rating of 5 means you are very interested and a rating of 0 means you have no interest.

Academic transition from high school to college expectations

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Time management and study skills

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Campus and community involvement

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Career planning

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Personal relationships

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, dealing with stress, etc.)

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Safety issues

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Finances (e.g., financial aid, budgeting, etc.)

Very interested in topic	Somewhat interested in topic	Not interested in topic
5 4	3 2	1 0

Are there other topics you are interested in that we have not provided above?

UCA Topic Survey - Results

Topic	Average Rating* (5 = very interested)
Time management and study skills	4.44
Finances	4.30
Career Planning	4.27
Academic transition from High School	4.15
Safety Issues	4.05
Mental health issues	3.60
Campus and community involvement	3.59
Personal relationships	3.22

*126 respondents

Cal Poly Topic Survey

1. Please provide your student's class standing as of fall 2016

-- Please Select --

Please indicate how interested you would be in getting more information about each of the following topics.

2. Academic transition from high school to college expectations *

☐ Very interested ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ neither interested nor disinterested ☐ Somewhat disinterested ☐ Very disinterested

3. Time management and study skills *

☐ Very interested ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ neither interested nor disinterested ☐ Somewhat disinterested ☐ Very disinterested

4. Campus and community involvement *

☐ Very interested ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ neither interested nor disinterested ☐ Somewhat disinterested ☐ Very disinterested

Cal Poly Topic Survey - Results

Topic	Average Rating (5 = very interested)
Career Planning	4.72
Safety Issues	4.48
Campus and community involvement	4.47
Mental health issues	4.33
Time management and study skills	4.30
Finances	4.19
Academic transition from High School	3.91
Personal relationships	3.88

*129 respondents

Topic Survey Results - Comparison

Topic	Cal Poly Rating (Rank)	UCA Rating (Rank)
Career Planning	4.72 (1)	4.27 (3)
Safety Issues	4.48 (2)	4.05 (5)
Campus and community involvement	4.47 (3)	3.59 (7)
Mental health issues	4.33 (4)	3.60 (6)
Time management and study skills	4.30 (5)	4.44 (1)
Finances	4.19 (6)	4.30 (2)
Academic transition from High School	3.91 (7)	4.15 (4)
Personal relationships	3.88 (8)	3.22 (8)

Parents' Handbook: Contents

- ▶ Transition from High School to College
- ▶ Time Management and Study Skills
- ▶ Grades and Progress
- ▶ Building a Community and a Sense of Belonging
- ▶ Ensuring My Student's Health and Safety
- ▶ Selecting and Planning Your Degree
- ▶ Choosing and Planning for a Career
- ▶ How to Handle the Financial Challenges of College

UCA Parent Handbook Survey

UCA FAMILIES HANDBOOK SURVEY

Please rate on a scale from 0-5 how helpful each chapter of the UCA Families Handbook is. A rating of 5 means the chapter is very helpful and a rating of 0 means the chapter is not helpful at all.

Transition from High School to College

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

Time Management and Study Skills

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

Grades and Progress

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

Building a Community and a Sense of Belonging

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

Ensuring My Students Health and Safety

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

Selecting and Planning Your Degree

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

Choosing and Planning for a Career

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

How to Handle the Financial Challenges of College

Very helpful		Somewhat helpful		Not helpful	
5	4	3	2	1	0

Are there any other comments you would like to share with us regarding the handbook?

UCA Parent Ratings of Sample Handbook Chapters

Topic	Average Rating* (5 = very helpful, 0 = not helpful)
Selecting and Planning Your Degree	4.06
Time Management and Study Skills	3.96
Transition from High School to College	3.94
Grades and Progress	3.94
Choosing and Planning for a Career	3.94
How to Handle the Financial Challenges of College	3.88
Ensuring My Students Health and Safety	3.87
Building a Community and a Sense of Belonging	3.85

*52 respondents

What We Learned

- ▶ Parents' needs and interests vary across institutions.
- ▶ Parents' needs and interests vary across the stages of their student's development.

Questions and Answers

- ▶ What was the biggest takeaway with this research?
- ▶ What would we do differently if we were to replicate the study?

Thank you!

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