Parents and College: A Recipe for Success or Disaster?

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Parents and College: A Bad Thing?

This conversation is not:

• An attack on parents
• An attack on colleges/universities
• Meant to be a generalization

It is:

• An opportunity to discuss a reoccurring pattern
• An opportunity to understand student/parent balance
• An opportunity to explore ideas to help create boundaries for parents, students, and education professionals
What’s the Problem?

Overly protective parents are leaving a lasting impact on their child…and not in a good way (Rettner, 2010).
Parents Too Involved?

Helicopter Parents are…

– always hovering,
– ultraprotective,
– unwilling to let go.

(Eubanks, 2006)
Parents Too Involved?

They do these things by...

- watching their child’s every move,
- checking their grades online hourly,
- advocating for them endlessly
- and keeping them busy from event to activity to play date

(Rettner, 2010)
Parents Too Involved?

Their intention is good. Parents want their kids to...

- Experience a different childhood for their kids than their own
- Create a safe/secure environment
- Succeed in all they do
- Experience the best things
- Have everything to empower them
- Feel important, unique, and special
How Did We Get To Today Then?

As Generation X had kids they said:

We know what good parenting looks like, we're just going to ratchet it up to a new level, and our kids are going to be even better (Rettner, 2010)
How Did We Get To Today Then?

Good intentions, but the result was:

– Over protection
– Innate desire to keep students from any ridicule.

Thus the age of...

– school uniforms,
– V-chips, fences,
– metal detectors

was ushered in at schools (Eubanks, 2006)
How Did We Get To Today Then?

• Parents negotiation to college admission gave birth to the term “helicopter parents” (Rettner, 2010).

• “Ratcheting it up” has caused “an expansion of childhood adolescence” (Rettner, 2010).

• Parents are the voice for the student. They rely on their team to solve rather than student solving.

• [Link to video](http://youtu.be/Tnhhl869wHg)
Effects on Students

- Neurotic students
- Poor coping skills
- Lack of self confidence
- Difficulty problem solving
- Anxious and stressed out
- Unable to make decisions
- Constant need for external positive stimuli

(Eubank 2006); (Joyce, 2014); (Odenweller, 2014); (Rettner, 2010)
FCPs

- **Family Communication Patterns (FCPs)**
  - Fundamental norms or beliefs that govern family members’ communication (Odenweller, 2014).

- **Conformity Patterns**
  - The degree to which a family stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs (Baxter and Pederson, 2013).
FCPs

• FCPs dictate participation.

• Helicopter FCPs are high conformist
  – Strained sense of communication
  – When can I speak?
  – Who can I speak to?
  – What is appropriate?

• These issues of communication are directed by the parent
Student Struggles

• Poor Communication Skills
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSNc8F9tqzY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSNc8F9tqzY)

• Parents Ruining College Students
Creating Boundaries

What to coach parents on:

1. Recognize and respect they will have a considerable amount of autonomy on campus and while this may be what they've dreamed of it will probably provoke some anxiety and confusion.

2. Your role is shifting to more of a coach or advisor; you have every right and responsibility to share your opinion and advice.

3. Any attempts to "make them" adhere to your rules will probably fail.

4. Stay connected and negotiate.
Creating Boundaries

What to coach parents on:

5. Shift responsibility in their direction where possible, encourage them to solve their own problems and reach out to resources on campus for help (RA, academic advisor, faculty, health services, counselors).

6. Have a discussion about your and their concerns or expectations about alcohol use, time management, budgeting, and academic outcomes.

7. Place more focus on discussion about the content of their courses and not so much on their grades.

8. The first few terms can be a major adjustment and they may not be able to get the grades they were accustomed to in high school.
Staying Connected

What to coach parents on:

1. Let them know you're still there for them; talk about how often you wish to talk by phone when they're gone (let them take the lead on this).

2. Send "care packages", notes of encouragement, convey important family news to help them stay connected to the home front.

3. Acquaint yourself with Instant Messaging if you haven't already, but reach out carefully; they can and will block you.

4. Plan a visit to campus (just dropping in is probably not advisable) and even if they say they "don't care" if you come to family weekend plan to come. It's a great opportunity for them to show off their new community.
1818 ACC Horror Stories

- Registration negotiation
- Tuition negotiation
- Grade negotiation
- Academic Integrity negotiation
- Transferability negotiation
References


Break
SLU Experience, SLU Solutions, and Group Discussion

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