

PARENTS



Working With, Not Around

Understanding the Needs of Families of Students in Postsecondary Education

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http://ucdavismagazine.ucdavis.edu/issues/fall02/feature_2.html

I know, sweetie, but I'm just calling to confirm that you got my text confirming that you got my email confirming that you got today's letter.



1) The Phonesaurus

Yes, I know University Tech Support is for students only ... but I think that picture of my Debbie as a little flower may have broken her facebook because suddenly I can't see her page anymore.



2) The Inquisitor

No, your son clearly failed Analysis of Western Civilization. I'm afraid we can't just, as you say, 'hug this one out.'



5) The Fixer



No m'am. No I can't just 'bop' over to the cafeteria to see if they're cutting your son's sandwiches into the right kind of triangles.



3) The Inspector

Oh, this isn't our daughter. This is a better roommate we found for our daughter.

ADMISSIONS



4) The Roominator

You'd think they would appreciate our help.



I'll just stay in the room. Who will know.



Blazek

An original Dave Blazek infotoon commissioned by Post University for blog.post.edu.

Understanding the History

Families are used to playing a strong role in directing services.

- Every youth presents a unique situation
- Families need to be vigilant and advocate during special education
- Mandated partner in special education
- Families feel the aftermath of problems
- Often falls back onto families to coordinate services once program is done

Understanding the Fears

Families want their children to be happy and safe.

- My youth is vulnerable
- My youth makes impulsive decisions
- Will they have friends?
- Will they be supervised?
- What is the process if something goes wrong?
- Who helps with school work?

Understanding Wants

- Parents want meaningful college experience
- Something meaningful and typical that happens between high school and a lifetime of services
- “If I or somebody else is paying for it, I want college to lead to my daughter building skills for a job. I want it to mean something.”

“Letting Go”

Parents have a strong investment in seeing their youth become independent, but may bristle at being told to “let go”.

- Trust us vs. provide parents with information
- Programs can't be One Size Fits All. May have to be tweaked based on health, safety and behavior
- Respect informal supports already in place (cell phones, e-mail, checking-in)

2 Perspectives: The Issues

- Understanding the college environment
- Sharing of information
- Is my youth ready for this?
- Can I trust these people?
- Legitimate concerns about safety
- Can't always get accurate info from youth
- Others?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gbg HajidC74&feature=youtu.be>

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The Benefits of Partnering with Families

Strategies for Engaging Families

Preparing Families



Provide enough information so that there is not a vacuum that parents fill in with their fears

Strategies: Preparing Families

- Parent Orientation
- “Day in the Life” experience
- Parent Handbook
- Connect parents with one another
- Family interview during admission process
- Reminder - more independence is the goal!
- FERPA discussion/waivers to sign

Utilize Parent Centers and Other Partners

- Hold information workshops
- Craft message in family friendly language
- Advocacy and parent training
- Parent Training and Information Center in every state (www.pacer.org)
- Also consider Down Syndrome Society, Autism Society, ARC, and Brain Injury Associations

Information Sharing

Be proactive, receptive and responsive, while emphasizing that you are there for the students and helping students have their own voice.



Strategies: Information Sharing

- Provide email address – and always respond!
- Regularly scheduled parent meetings
- Campus websites for grades, classes, events
- Post info on website, direct parents there
- General info updates via email, Facebook, Twitter
- Make sure that students are aware of the information being shared!

Building Trust

“Ask me what I think is important for you to know about my kid.”

Validate parents for how far their student has come, while highlighting the different role both students and parents play in college

Strategies: Ensuring Safety

- Assure students have tools to communicate, and know how to use them – i.e. cell phone
- Teach typical strategies for campus safety
- Inform parents of support strategies
- Make clear the process for dealing with issues that arise



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