



Survey of Current College Parent Experiences March 30, 2006

Purpose and Methodology

College Parents of America conducted the first in what is expected to be an annual survey of current college parent experiences among its members and subscribers. We believe it to be the first national survey of its type.

The main purpose of the survey was to:

- Gauge (and in future years track) the level of parental involvement during their children's college years;
- Determine the level and types of communication between parents and their college-age children; and,
- Identify some major parent concerns and the depth of these concerns during these 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 results also provide a national benchmark for individual colleges and universities making an assessment of their own performance from the perspective of parents on these issues.

The online survey was conducted using the web-based tools provided by SurveyMonkey. An invitation to participate was sent out on March 16, 2006 via e-mail to roughly 40,000 College Parents of America members and subscribers. The survey protected the anonymity of those participating in the survey, but did not allow more than one response from an individual IP address. A regular weekly column written by the President of College Parents of America and distributed via e-mail also provided links to the survey. More than 800 parents (839) provided responses to the survey, and the survey was closed on March 27, 2006.

Results of the survey were released on March 30, 2006 in Boston, Massachusetts at the annual conference of Administrators Promoting Parent Involvement (APPI).

Overview of Results

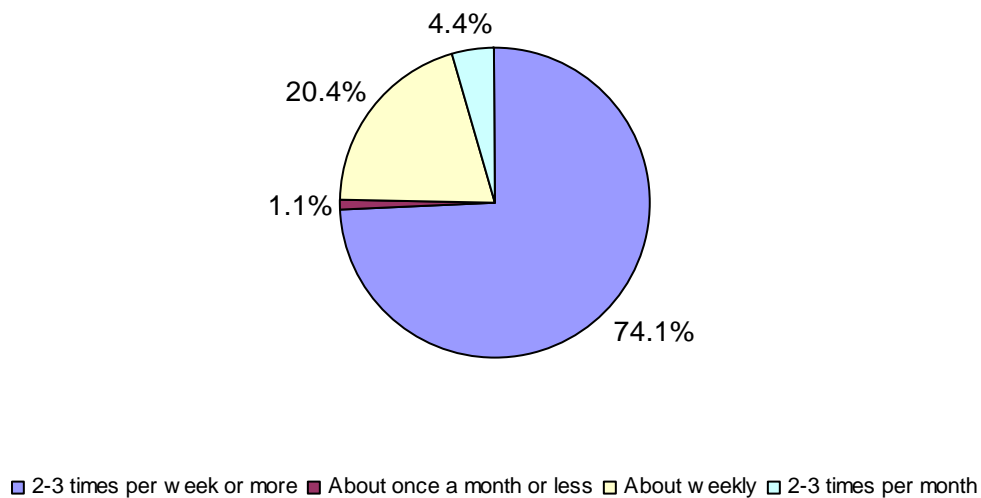
1. Communication Levels and Types Between Parents and Students

The overall level of communication between parents and their sons or daughters was very high. Almost 10% (9.4%) indicated that they communicated more than once a day in some way with their son or daughter while they are at college or university. One out of every three parents (34%) communicated with their child either daily or more than once a day.

Additionally, 74% of those parents responding communicated with their son or daughter at least two or three times a week.

Only 1% of those responding communicated with their child once a month or less.

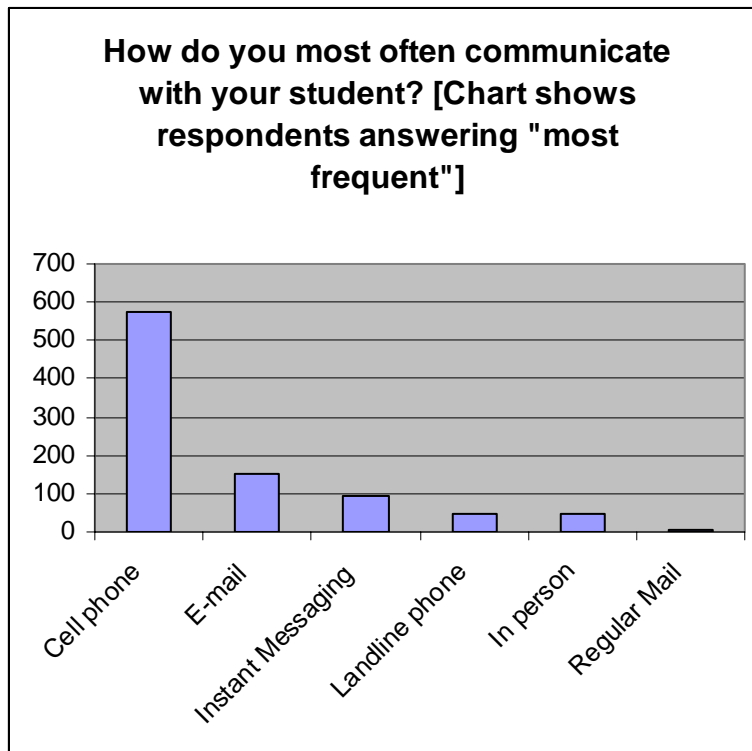
How often do you typically communicate with your son or daughter while they are at college?



What tools do parents use to communicate? Cell phone is clearly the mode of choice, with 90% of respondents saying that they use a mobile connection to frequently stay in touch, as opposed to the much lower figure of 26% who use a landline phone connection. In fact, more than one-half of all respondents, 52%, say that they either rarely or never use a regular landline phone.

E-mail is popular too, according to the survey, with 58% using it frequently. However, Instant Messaging (IM) is not as popular among parents as their children, with only 29% of parents claiming to use instant messaging frequently; a clear majority of 54% claims to use IM rarely or not at all.

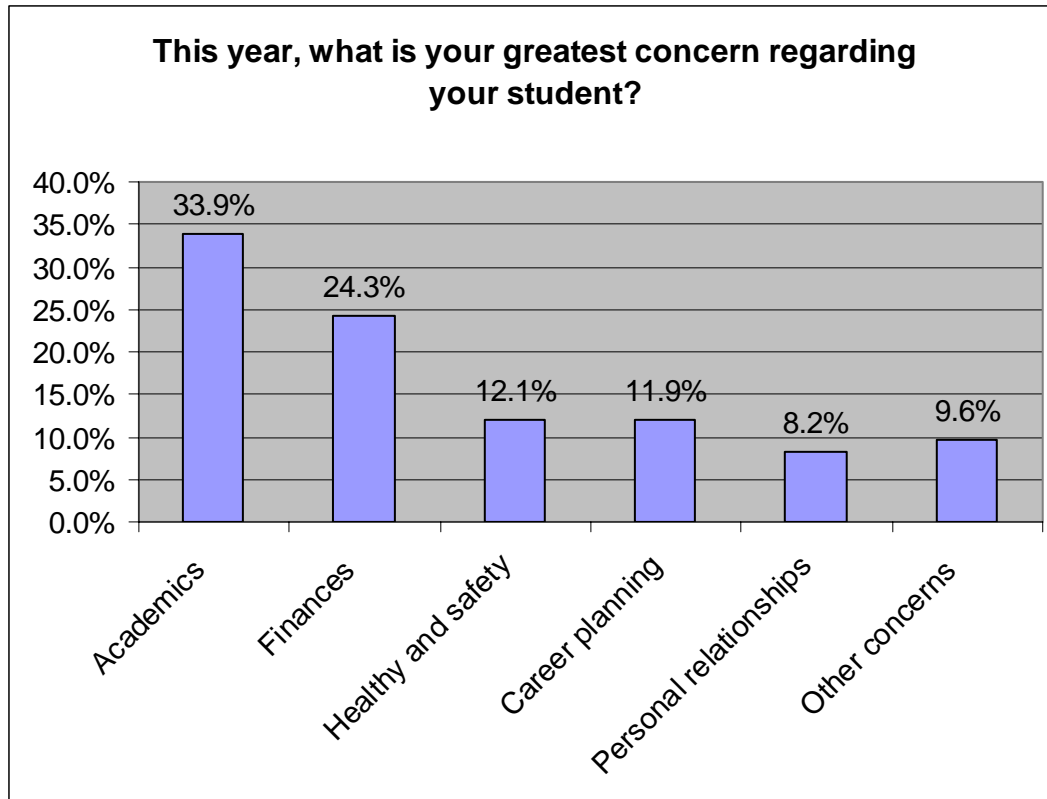
The U.S. Postal Service appears not to be busy in college towns anymore: only 7% of parents utilize regular mail frequently, and 69% either rarely or never utilize “snail” mail at all.



Not all communication is electronic, as parents like to visit in person, from the beginning and continuing throughout their child’s collegiate experience. Ninety (90) percent attended a parent orientation during their child’s freshman year, while 75% say that they visit campus at least once or twice a semester, with 17.5% visiting at least once a month or more.

2. Parental Concerns and Student Requests for Assistance

The College Parents of America survey also tried to get at the question of concerns among parents regarding their children, and “academics” topped the list, with 34% -- or more than one in three parents -- citing that topic as the area of greatest concern, followed by “finances” at 24% and “career planning” and “health and safety” both at 12%. Looking at some cross-tabulations by anticipated graduation year, these issues appear to vary in significance somewhat over time. For example, as one might expect, “career planning” appears to rise in significance as graduation approaches.



When asked, however, the pointed question of “this year, on which topic has your student most requested advice or assistance from you?” then the order shifts, with finances cited as the most-asked about topic at 35%, and academics at 19%. Health and safety concerns don’t seem to be brought up much by the students, as only 5% of parents mentioned that as the topic of most requested advice or assistance.

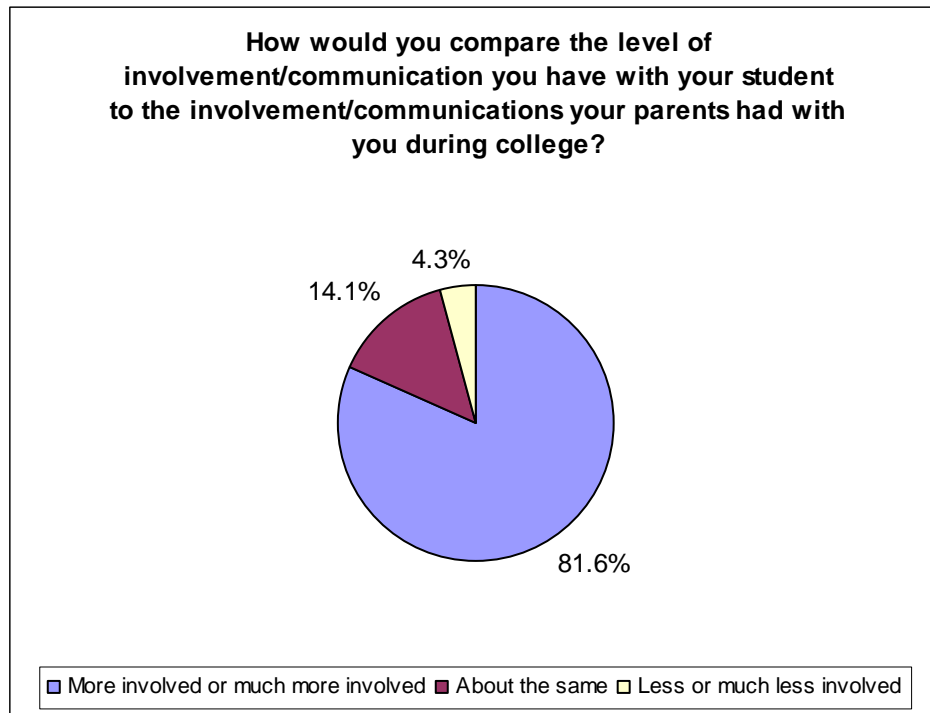
3. Comparing Perceived Levels of Involvement Between Today’s College Parents and ‘Yesteryears’

When asked, “How would you compare the level of involvement/communication you have with your student to the involvement/communications your parents had with you during college?” more than half (53%) of the parents responding indicated they were “much more involved.”

The numbers are even more dramatic when those answering “much more involved” and “more involved” are added together, totaling 82% of valid respondents.¹

¹ Please note that the percentages for this question are different than appears in the full text of the results in SurveyMonkey because 10% of those responding indicated that the question was “not applicable” to them. These 82 responses were deleted from the calculation. The most likely reasons in our opinion that 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.

Only about 4% of parents responding indicated that they were either “less involved” or “much less involved” than were their parents with them during their college years.



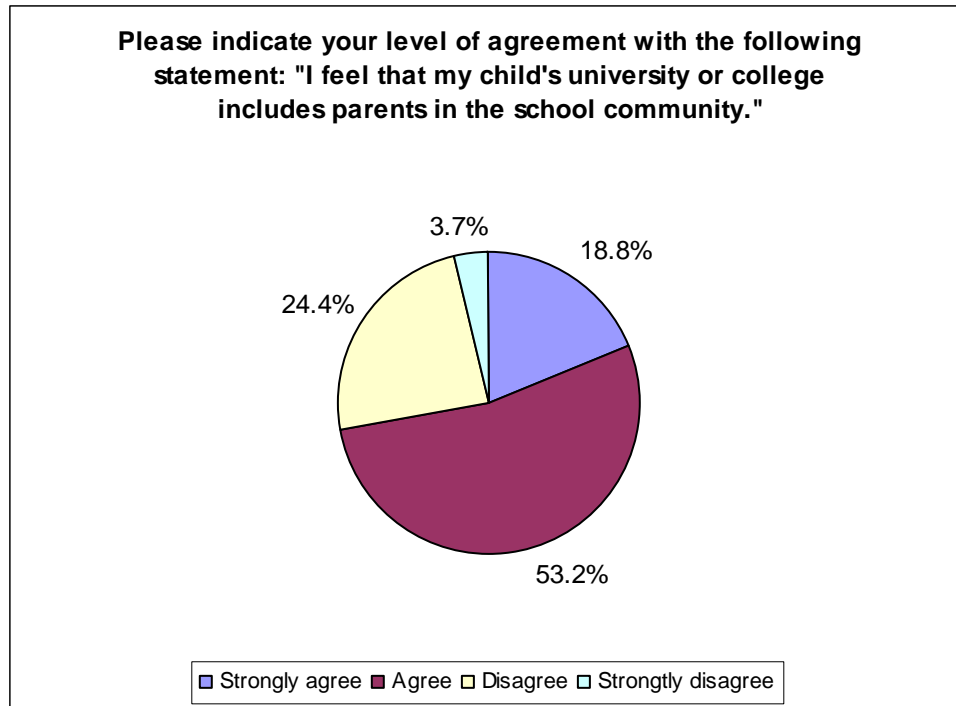
The responses to this question confirm a very significant broad trend related to heightened parental involvement during their child’s college years. Many of the more detailed data gleaned from this survey are consistent with this “megatrend.”

4. Interaction and Satisfaction Levels with School Communications and Activities Involving Parents

The overall level of parental satisfaction with the school’s communications for parents and guardians was good, but a not insignificant minority of parents – more than 1 in 4 -- expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the schools’ efforts.

Specifically, more than 74% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the schools communications with them. However, 26% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Somewhat tracking the level of satisfaction with communications figures above, almost 72% of current college parents either strongly agree or agree with the following statement: “I feel that my child’s college or university includes parents in the school community.” Again, however, more than a quarter (28%) either disagree or strongly disagree that their child’s university or college “includes parents in the school community.” Further research may be needed to understand fully why certain parents are either satisfied or dissatisfied with how they are included in the school community.



In terms of how parents interact with schools, a very high percentage -- more than 90% -- of survey respondents attended a parent orientation session (if offered by the school).

A “parent-oriented web site” appears to be the most common “parent-related information or service” that colleges and universities provide, with 61% of parents identifying this tool as something that the school has made available. Almost half (47%) of the parents responding indicated that their child’s school provides an electronic newsletter geared to parents. About 1 in 3 (34%) indicated that their child’s school has a dedicated Parent Relations Office.

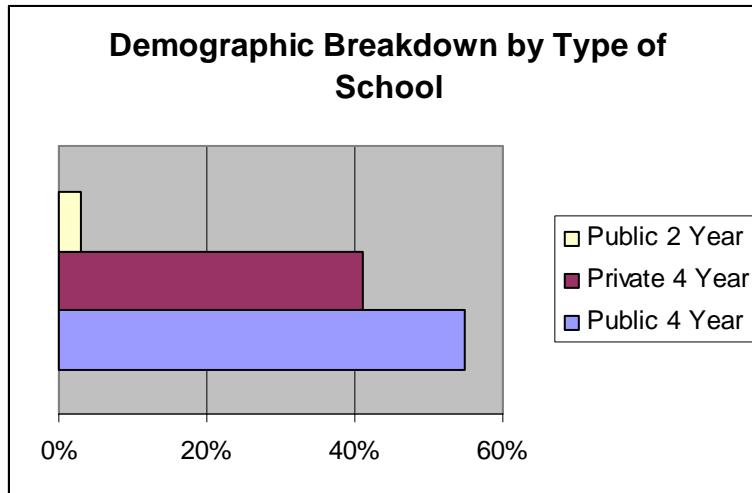
Close to half (47%) of parents indicated that even if their school had a Parent Relations Office, that they had had no contact with it.²

5. Demographic Information and Cross-Tabulations

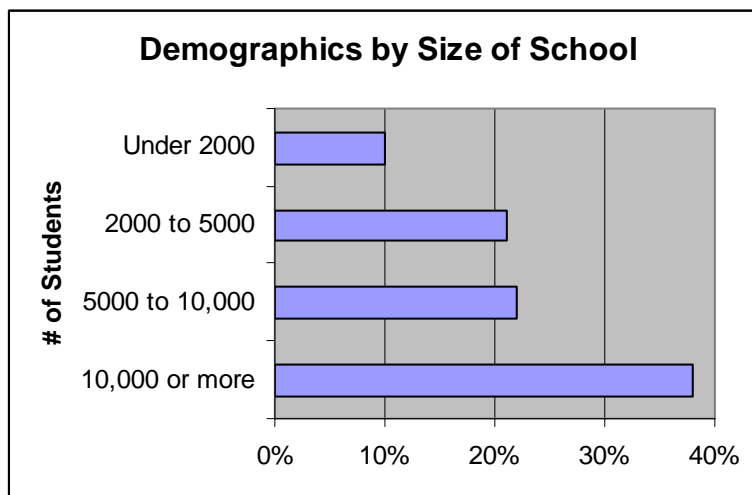
The College Parents of America Survey on Parent Experiences generated responses from 49 out of 50 states and the District of Columbia. The vast majority are parents of freshmen or sophomores. Given this weighting, this survey will help to serve as benchmark data that can be tracked over the next couple of years and beyond.

² On the question related to contact with the Parent Relations Office, 154 respondents indicated that this question was “not applicable.” Our assumption is that a Parent Relations Office did not exist for these respondents at their child’s college or university. We have therefore eliminated these respondents from the calculation.

In terms of the types of colleges and universities the children of those responding attend, 55% attend public 4-year institutions; 41% attend private 4-year institutions, with only 3% attending public 2-year schools.



As far as the size of schools reflected in the survey results, 38% of the children of those responding attend schools with over 10,000 students, 22% at schools between 5,000 and 10,000, 21% attend schools between 2000 and 5000 in size, and only 10% attend schools smaller than 2000 students. The remainder of parents didn't know the size of their child's school.



Further Information

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

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=189438261639>

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.

Results Summary

1. Untitled Page

1. How often do you typically communicate with your son or daughter while they are at college or university?

	Response Percent	Response Total
More than once a day	9.4%	79
Daily	24.6%	206
Two or three times a week	40.1%	336
About weekly	20.4%	171
Two or three times a month	4.4%	37
About once a month	1%	8
Less than once a month	0.1%	1
Total Respondents		838
(skipped this question)		3

2. How do you most often communicate with your student? Choose one answer on each row.





	Most Frequent	Frequently	Less Frequently	Rarely	Don't Use this Method	Response Total
In person	7% (45)	13% (83)	34% (224)	31% (202)	16% (106)	660
Cell Phone	70% (574)	20% (165)	7% (56)	2% (14)	2% (15)	824
E-mail	20% (153)	38% (286)	28% (212)	11% (84)	3% (20)	755
Regular "landline" phone	7% (47)	19% (125)	23% (147)	22% (141)	30% (193)	653
Regular Mail	1% (4)	6% (40)	25% (163)	41% (267)	28% (183)	657
Instant messaging	14% (96)	15% (103)	17% (119)	15% (101)	39% (273)	692
Total Respondents						837
(skipped this question)						2

3. What parent-related information or services does your student's college or university provide? Please check all that apply.





	Response Percent	Response Total
Parent-oriented web site	60.9%	442
Electronic newsletter for parents	47%	341
Parent e-mail listserv	22.2%	161
Parent Relations Office	34.4%	250
Other (please specify)	21.6%	157

Total Respondents 726
(skipped this question) 113






4. If your student's school has a Parent Relations Office, have you had any contact with it?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Yes 	17.8%	145
No 	38.3%	312
Don't Know 	24.9%	203
Not applicable 	18.9%	154
Total Respondents		814
(skipped this question)		27



5. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the school's communications for parents and guardians.


	Response Percent	Response Total
Very satisfied 	21.9%	180
Satisfied 	52.5%	432
Dissatisfied 	21.6%	178
Very dissatisfied 	4%	33
Total Respondents		823
(skipped this question)		18

6. How often do you visit campus?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Rarely or not at all 	24.5%	205
Once or twice a semester 	57.9%	484
About once a month 	10.6%	89
More than once a month 	5.1%	43
More than once a week 	1.8%	15
Total Respondents		836
(skipped this question)		5

7. Did you attend parent orientation when your student first enrolled in College or University?





	Response Percent	Response Total
Yes 	89.4%	744
No 	7.6%	63

No parent orientation was offered 








3% 25

Total Respondents 832
(skipped this question) 9








8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I feel that my child's university or college includes parents in the school community."


	Response Percent	Response Total
Strongly agree 	18.8%	157
Agree 	53.2%	445
Disagree 	24.4%	204
Strongly disagree 	3.7%	31
Total Respondents	837	
(skipped this question)	4	

9. This year, what is your greatest concern regarding your student?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Academics 	33.9%	283
Campus or community involvement opportunities 	2.6%	22
Career planning 	11.9%	99
Finances 	24.3%	203
Health and safety 	12.1%	101
Personal relationships 	8.2%	68
Other (please specify) 	7%	58
Total Respondents	834	
(skipped this question)	7	

10. This year, on which topic has your student most requested advice or assistance from you?






	Response Percent	Response Total
Academics 	19.1%	160
Campus or community involvement opportunities 	4.8%	40
Career planning 	14.2%	119
Finances 	34.7%	291
Health and safety 	5%	42
Personal relationships 	9.4%	79
None of the above 	8.7%	73

Other (please specify) 




4.1% 34

Total Respondents 838
(skipped this question) 3






11. How would you compare the level of involvement/communication you have with your student to the involvement/communications your parents had with you during college?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Much more involved 	47.4%	396
More involved 	26.1%	218
About the same 	12.7%	106
Less involved 	3%	25
Much less involved	0.8%	7
Not applicable 	10%	84
Total Respondents	836	
(skipped this question)	5	

12. What type of college or university does your student attend?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Public 4 year institution 	54.5%	456
Private 4 year institution 	41.3%	345
Public 2 year institution 	3%	25
Private 2 year institution	0.1%	1
Don't Know	0.1%	1
Other (please specify)	1%	8
Total Respondents	836	
(skipped this question)	5	

13. What is the size of the student population at the college or university your child attends?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Under 2000 	9.6%	80
2000 to 5000 	21.4%	178
5000 to 10,000 	21.3%	177
Over 10,000 	37.7%	313
Don't Know 	10%	83
Total Respondents	831	
(skipped this question)	10	

14. What is your student's anticipated college graduation year?

	Response Percent	Response Total
2006	2.5%	21
2007	6.2%	52
2008	39.7%	331
2009	44.1%	368
2010 or later	7.4%	62
Total Respondents		834
(skipped this question)		7

15. Please indicate what your relationship is to the student.

	Response Percent	Response Total
Mother	87%	727
Father	11.7%	98
Grandmother	0.4%	3
Grandfather	0.1%	1
Guardian	0.4%	3
Other (please specify)	0.5%	4
Total Respondents		836
(skipped this question)		5

16. In which state do you live? Please select from the pull down menu. If you live outside of the U.S., select "other."

	Response Percent	Response Total
Alabama	0.8%	7
Alaska	0.1%	1
Arizona	0.6%	5
Arkansas	0.8%	7
California	8.8%	74
Colorado	1.3%	11
Connecticut	2.9%	24
Delaware	0.1%	1
Florida	5%	42
Georgia	2.9%	24
Hawaii	0.2%	2

Idaho		0.2%	2
Illinois	■	4.5%	38
Indiana	■	1.4%	12
Iowa		0.5%	4
Kansas		0.6%	5
Kentucky		0.5%	4
Louisiana		0.5%	4
Maine		0.4%	3
Maryland	■	3.6%	30
Massachusetts	■	4.2%	35
Michigan	■	4.9%	41
Minnesota	■	2.4%	20
Mississippi		0.5%	4
Missouri	■	1.5%	13
Montana		0.1%	1
Nebraska		0.1%	1
Nevada		0.2%	2
New Hampshire		1%	8
New Jersey	■	5.8%	49
New Mexico		0.6%	5
New York	■	9.2%	77
North Carolina	■	3.2%	27
North Dakota		0%	0
Ohio	■	5%	42
Oklahoma		0.2%	2
Oregon		0.8%	7
Pennsylvania	■	5.7%	48
Rhode Island		0.2%	2
South Carolina		1%	8
South Dakota		0.6%	5
Tennessee	■	1.5%	13
Texas	■	6.6%	55
Utah		0.1%	1
Vermont		0.1%	1
Virginia	■	3.2%	27

Washington	1.4%	12
West Virginia	0.2%	2
Wisconsin	2.1%	18
Wyoming	0.1%	1
Other (please specify)	1.4%	12
Total Respondents	839	
(skipped this question)	2	

17. In which state is your student's college or university? If he/she attends outside of the U.S., please mark "other."

	Response Percent	Response Total
Alabama	1.1%	9
Alaska	0%	0
Arizona	1.4%	12
Arkansas	0.6%	5
California	6.8%	57
Colorado	0.8%	7
Connecticut	1%	8
Delaware	0.7%	6
District of Columbia	8.1%	68
Florida	4.7%	39
Georgia	2.6%	22
Hawaii	0%	0
Idaho	0.4%	3
Illinois	3.1%	26
Indiana	2.6%	22
Iowa	0.7%	6
Kansas	0.8%	7
Kentucky	1%	8
Louisiana	0.5%	4
Maine	0.2%	2
Maryland	1.8%	15
Massachusetts	4.7%	39
Michigan	4.8%	40
Minnesota	1.9%	16
Mississippi	0.6%	5

Missouri	1.7%	14
Montana	0%	0
Nebraska	0.2%	2
Nevada	0.1%	1
New Hampshire	0.1%	1
New Jersey	1.7%	14
New Mexico	0.5%	4
New York	7.4%	62
North Carolina	4.4%	37
North Dakota	0.2%	2
Ohio	5.3%	44
Oklahoma	0.4%	3
Oregon	1.4%	12
Pennsylvania	8.1%	68
Rhode Island	0.8%	7
South Carolina	1.7%	14
South Dakota	0.2%	2
Tennessee	1.7%	14
Texas	5.4%	45
Utah	0.2%	2
Vermont	0%	0
Virginia	3%	25
Washington	0.8%	7
West Virginia	0.4%	3
Wisconsin	3.1%	26
Wyoming	0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.4%	3
	Total Respondents	838
	(skipped this question)	3