

Quality-Based Collegiate Parent Service Offices:
A Multiple Case Study

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A Dissertation Submitted to

The Faculty of
The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

May 18, 2014

Dissertation directed by

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An Examination of Quality-Based
Collegiate Parent Service Offices

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother (a.k.a. Mama), Marguerite S. Davidow (1918-2007), who aspired to see me in “a gown with velvet patches” and a “funny looking beret with a gold tassel.” Her complete package of intelligence, humor, and sophistication never ceased to amaze me. If I am lucky enough to be half the woman that she was, I will consider myself extremely lucky.

Toby: I'm worried about finishing this dissertation.

Mama: There's no need to worry right now. Only worry when you need to.

Toby: How will I know when to start worrying?

Mama: I'll tell you.

I also wish to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Elaine and Dennis Davidow. Even with 41 years of marriage under their belt, they continue to exemplify what it means to love unconditionally. I never would have been able to start this dissertation, let alone finish, without their continual encouragement and support. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for everything—I love you!

Acknowledgments

Very special thanks goes to my committee of amazing individuals: Bob Chernak, my chair, for his unwavering faith in me (which was certainly tested through the years). He never let me give up or give in and I'm deeply indebted; Susan Swayze, who believed in my topic and always ensured that I produced the best possible methodology. My dissertation is a much better product because of her; and Dick Mullendore who started the whole notion of the "cell phone being the world's longest umbilical cord" from parents to students. It's been so much fun learning from the best in the parent services field. And external readers: Andy Sonn whose pep talks truly motivated me to become a better doctoral student. The "symbol of Gettysburg" worked like a charm! Joe Greenberg, who was the very first professor that I met at GW and who was always there for me since that first day. Sincere appreciation also goes to Janet Heddeshimer, who has been not only a professor, but also a mentor to me over the years, as well as to Mike Walker who first introduced me to CAS Standards long before embarking on the doctoral program and whose kind words always encouraged me to do my best. Much indebtedness also goes to the two sites that took part in my research. Although I was a complete stranger to them at first, they truly opened their doors to me in order to make this study possible.

Additionally, the NASPA Parent and Family Knowledge Community folks have been incredibly helpful. I'm also extremely grateful for all the support from GW's administration, specifically from Carol Kochhar-Bryant, Nancy Gilmore, and Alicia Bellezza-Watts. Special recognition and appreciation also goes to Sharon McDade and Lynn Gangone. Sharon encouraged me to apply and return to GW to pursue this degree.

And Lynn encouraged me to look at a tangible way to study the helicopter parent phenomenon.

So much gratitude is extended to the following groups of people...

...To my loving family, including Mom and Dad, Aunt Ray and Uncle Teddy, Aunt Carol and Uncle Larry, Aunt Jackie and Uncle Jimmy, Aunt Harriet, my cousins and their families (David, Traci, Sam, Jay, Jeff, Fran, Ron, Beth, and Meagan), and Aunt Susan and family. Their support and confidence in me has been second to none. In spite of this long journey, they believed in my ability to accomplish this task, which has been so motivational. I've lost count how many times they were told to pencil commencement weekend on their calendars only to be ultimately told, "It's not going to happen this year." And it amazes me that each year, my family dutifully kept writing in commencement dates with the high hopes this will be "the one." I love them all!

...To some of the best doctors who have mentored me in the dissertation process and in life— Willie Banks, Glen Chilstrom, Ginger Cole, Gail Cole-Avent, Ray Francis, Brian Hamluk, Tabitha Harper, Grace Henry, Anitha John, Karl Petrie, Rebecca Sawyer, and Lorraine Sloma-Williams—I humbly join the ranks among them. Their unconditional friendship and/or continual insight inspire me to be a better person.

...To my "forever friends" and their families: Frances Zarate Camargo, Kerin Cutler, David Das, Katilyn Doran, Melania Falik, Michelle Kwok, Kevin Milner, Wendy Serota, Jen Novak Wilson, and (soon-to-be Dr.) Molly Wolf. Collectively these friends have known me for an average of 26 years. They have set the friendship bar extremely high. Even when I have made the dissertation a priority over them, they have always been forgiving. An extra special acknowledgement goes to Julia, Danielle, Matthew, David,

Matthew, Kaitlyn, Alexa, and Gabriel. I've missed so many of their milestones during this academic journey. I am now looking forward to being there for so many more.

...To some of my biggest cheerleaders and fabulous friends – the City Hall “Abyss” crew, Chrissy Batterson, Kim Dam, Adam Getz, Lindsay Haslebacher, Nikki Hedren, Ramon Hill, (soon-to-be Dr.) Salvatore Labaro, Diane Lebson, Diane Miller, Judy O'Dell, Michael Perlmutter, Alden Wells, and the 2006 – 2015 GW Presidential Administrative Fellows and PAF Leadership Team (with extra special shout-outs to Corey Barenbrugge, Adam Bethke, Gina Fernandes, Sandra Perez Hawthorne and Brian Hawthorne, Kelley Stokes, and Tim Savoy). I'm deeply appreciative of the kind words and major cheerleading they have exhibited on my behalf. This process would have been ten times harder without them in my corner!

...To all my Rice Hall 4th floor work colleagues, including Peter Konwerski, Robert Snyder, Mark Levine, and Andy Sonn, who have been especially super supportive during this entire dissertation process.

There are so many more people I wish I could personally thank here in this space – I have been so incredibly grateful for each positive thought that friends have expressed over the years in regards to this process. The kind words helped to keep my eyes on the prize, and I will remain forever appreciative!

This is not a celebration of me, but it is a celebration of us. It takes a village.

Abstract of the Dissertation

An Examination of Quality-Based Collegiate Parent Service Offices

This study investigated the ways in which parent service office professionals at two universities offered quality-based services to their stakeholders. The study's population included parent service office professionals and administrators from two universities.

In the last 10 years, parental engagement has steadily increased on college campuses. Due to this phenomenon, parent service offices have opened to satisfy both administrator and parental needs (Life Course Associates, 2007; NASPA Parent and Family Knowledge Community, 2010; Savage & Petree, 2009). Although helping to provide resources to parents, the hasty opening of these offices has brought challenges. One such challenge is the growing consumerism mindset of engaged parents. Similar to corporate trends, higher education administrators have been observing a correlation between constituents' perceptions of higher education costs and perceived lower quality education and/or services (Sims & Sims, 1995). Howe and Strauss (2007) stated that to satisfy the parents of the Millennial generation, "a college has to provide quality services outside the classroom at a cost those parents will perceive as competitive" (p. 183).

This study used an exploratory, multiple case study methodology to gain an understanding of two universities' quality-based parent service offices. The higher education institutions were selected for this study based on their use of the Council for the Advancement in Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards for Parent and Family Programs as well as from high recommendations from leading parent service

practitioners and researchers. During site visits at two large, nonprofit public research institutions, the researcher conducted interviews with 23 campus administrators selected based on their frequency of contact with parents. In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected documents pertaining to parents and made observations to triangulate data.

Five principal findings emerged: (a) articulating goals/values leads to quality student development and student learning outcomes; (b) offering a diverse range of programming options helps parents to support development; (c) achieving buy-in from constituents yields parent-inspired innovations and promotes a sense of institutional reliability among parents; (d) creating and maintaining relationships promotes university advocacy among parents; (e) developing inter-departmental relations ensures parent service office visibility.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The key to the quality of American higher education is that it is *not* one system. It is a marketplace of more than 6,000 autonomous institutions regulated primarily by competition . . . and by consumer choice. . . . There is, in addition, an independent system of accreditation. —Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) (2006)

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the dissertation study. In the next sections, the context of the problem gives the rationale of the study. Next, the problem statement, research questions, and conceptual framework provide the context for the study's research plan. Finally, the methodology, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, and key definitions offer a better foundation for the direction of this dissertation.

The Context of the Problem

College parental engagement has steadily increased with the enrollment of the Millennial generation (Howe & Strauss, 2007)—those born from 1982 to 2004 (LifeCourse Associates, n.d.). Consequently, parent service offices have grown exponentially on U.S. college and university campuses, doubling in size since 2000 (LifeCourse Associates & Crux Research, 2007; Mullendore, Banahan, & Ramsey, 2005; Savage, 2005, 2007; Savage & Petree, 2009). In his 2000 article, Brownstein called the notion of parent service offices “science fiction” (p. A72). A decade later, more than 1,050 parent service offices operated on college campuses in the United States (NASPA Parent & Family Knowledge Community Conference Meeting, 2010). On the other hand, only nine of 261 respondents to a national survey on parent programs indicated that their parent service office began in 1970 (Savage & Petree, 2009). Through the demand from

collegiate parents in the 1990s, college and university administrators began opening parent service offices in a relatively expedited manner. The hasty openings, combined with limited predecessors, a small network of parent service office professional colleagues, and more university accountability, brought challenges for those involved with the day-to-day upkeep of the offices.

To assess the rationale behind the rapid expansion of parent service offices, it is important to put today's undergraduate parent population in context. In the 1990s, parents spent more time with their children than did parents in the previous three decades (Howe, Strauss, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, & LifeCourse Associates, 2003). Because of the high level of parental engagement, many periodicals began labeling parents as "helicopter parents." Helicopter parents are defined as parents who continually "hover" over their children as they watch protectively for any emergency. In times of emergency, parents "swoop down" to come to their children's rescue. When the emergency has been rectified, the parents then go back to a hovering state until the next emergency arises (Fay, 1981). As a result, children and their parents created tight bonds (Howe et al., 2003). These parents invented the "baby on board" signs and became soccer moms and dads known for yelling out plays or profanity at the coach, the team, or their child, regardless of the sport (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Parents' work schedules often revolved around their children's activity schedule. During the period, tragic events, such as the massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, the terrorist acts in New York City and Washington, DC, in 2001, the deadliest shooting on a college campus in US history at Virginia Tech in 2007, and the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012, caused parents to become extra vigilant with

their children at all times. Due to this enmeshed bonding from birth to high school, parents and their students often find it challenging to break ties once the college years begin.

Technology has played a part in this deep connection between parents and their children. Mullendore (2005), an expert on helicopter parents, indicated that the cell phone is the “world’s longest umbilical cord” (as cited in Shellenbarger, 2005, p. D1) connecting parents and their students. Prior to the Millennial generation, parents dropped off their students at college, knowing that they may not see or talk to them for weeks or months (Lum, 2006). However, personal cell phones have replaced the long line to a universal dormitory payphone. Unlimited minutes on cell phones or smartphones enables college students to incorporate parents in their daily life in college. Studies show that parents and college students are speaking on a regular basis using a cell phone (Lee, Meszaros, & Colvin, 2009; Sorokou & Weissbrod, 2005), communicating at least 13.4 times a week (Hofer & Moore, 2010; Lourgou, 2010). Communication is more instantaneous than ever before, as students and parents become versed in emails, text messaging, and social media outlets (Education Advisory Board, 2010).

Collegiate parent involvement can begin with parents attending admission tours, sometimes in lieu of their student (Cole, 2010; Jacobson, 2003; Lange & Stone, 2001; Moll, 1985; Sanoff, 2006). Once the student enrolls, parents may call administrators, with or without the student’s permission, to request something for the student (Holder, 2005; Nemko, 2005) or to assist with the student’s decision of major (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Parents may also call university offices seeking information or resources and advocating

on behalf of their student (Cole, 2010; DeBroff, 2007). In extreme examples, parents may go to classes and job interviews with the student (Damast, 2007; Weiss, 2006).

Many higher education divisions have shifted resources to accommodate the needs of parents seeking information from the university. In an effort to keep up with the quality movement, many administrators see the value of keeping parents happy by providing learning opportunities and sharing resources to help both the parent and the student.

Problem Statement

Higher education administrators have been observing a correlation between constituents' perceptions of higher education costs and their perceptions of lower-quality education and/or services (Sims & Sims, 1995). Driving forces behind a "quality" institution of learning, such as competition, nationally published college rankings, costs, accountability, and a service orientation, were motivating factors for college administrators to ensure that the needs of their constituents are met (Seymour, 1992; Sims & Sims, 1995). Many college administrators see one another as competitors, while seeing parents as consumers and, ultimately, as constituents. Howe and Strauss (2007) stated that to satisfy the parents of the Millennial generation, "a college has to provide quality services outside the classroom at a cost those parents will perceive as competitive" (p. 183).

Based on the demand to ensure quality on college campuses as well as to meet expectations of parents, the purpose of this exploratory, multiple case study was to investigate how professionals in the parent service offices of two research universities implemented quality-based services for their stakeholders. The higher education

institutions were selected for this study based on their use of the Council for the Advancement in Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards for Parent and Family Programs as well as from high recommendations from leading parent service practitioners and researchers.

Although several previous studies have identified the growing trend of parent service offices on college campuses (Savage, 2005, 2007; Savage & Petree, 2009), no empirical research has offered an in-depth examination of what should make a collegiate parent service office successful. Because generally the parent service offices offer novel services and open quickly, the staff receives little guidance on managing the office properly. The next two sections outline a more comprehensive view of each of these problems.

Problem of Practice

Colleges recognize that parents have input during the selection process and often throughout the students' college career. In many cases, when the student enrolls at a university, so does the parent. Usually, a parent is only a phone call away if a student needs to talk or faces resistance at college. In more extreme examples, administrators have found parents sitting in for students when a student could not make class and have seen parents showing up for job interviews in place of the student (Damast, 2007; Weiss, 2006). Parents have also become more informed regarding their student's judicial matters (Burd, 2000; Carnevale, 1999; Merriman, 2008; Reisberg, 1998, 2001). Instances such as these create issues for the university because time, money, and personnel are needed to deal not only with student affairs but also with parent affairs. In response, many colleges have opened a parent service office to provide resources for parents in navigating the

university, to act as ombudsmen between the administrators and parents, and to encourage fundraising.

Prior to the 1980s, few parent service offices existed on university campuses because there was no need to work with parents. Consequently, this service has received little empirical research or media attention. Because these offices are relatively new, many offices do not have a strong mission statement, vision statement, or goals. Thus, each administrator that opens an office has to create policies for day-to-day operations. The only available opportunities to learn about parent service offices exist through conference workshops (such as those from the newly founded Association for Higher Education Parent/Family Program Professionals), networking with collegiate parent organizations, reading a handful of doctoral dissertations, or collaborating with other university parent service offices.

Problem of Research

The current study addresses the gap in empirical research on parent service offices. While journal articles, books, and dissertations exist on undergraduate parental involvement and engagement (Cohen, 1985; Daniel, Evans, & Scott, 2001; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Keppler, Mullendore, & Carey, 2005), most empirical research does not specifically address the parent service office boom (Weiss, 1989). On the other hand, nonempirical literature, such as self-help books, magazine articles, newspaper articles, college associations referencing collegiate parental involvement, and conference presentations have steadily increased since 1990. Of the extant empirical research, a survey conducted every other year concluded that parent involvement has continued to increase on university campuses (Savage, 2005, 2007; Savage & Petree, 2009). Of other

available studies, one dissertation looked at parent and administrator perceptions of improving policy (Watson, 2007), a second addressed parent programs (Troha, 2005), while a third dissertation addressed parental perceptions of their involvement (Carney, 2004). In a 2009 study, Savage and Petree suggested a need to examine assessment in the parent services field. Their findings indicated that few comprehensive surveys addressed the utilization, satisfaction levels, or outcomes of the services of parent services offices.

Therefore, a study to inform and add to the empirical literature is essential. Researchers predict that parents will continue to advocate for their students and seek information on college campuses for several decades, causing a paradigm shift in college administration (Howe et al., 2003). With the ongoing trend indicating parents as consumers of their students' education (Lange & Stone, 2001; Nemko, 2005; Sanoff, 2006), parents assume a more active stance in higher education. To identify, meet, shape, and control parent inquiries has necessitated the rapid growth of parent service offices.

While college parent service offices proliferate, empirical assessment of these offices is virtually nonexistent (Savage & Petree, 2009). Although a minimal amount of research exists on college parent programs, there have been no studies specifically focusing on the ways in which administrators implement quality-based services in their parent service offices. Through the examination of two collegiate parent service offices' quality-based services, this study can add to the empirical research by examining the use of standards in the programs and the perceptions of other university administrators regarding the parent service office.

The use of standards of various college offices is a widely accepted practice. The Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) is one of the more

popular assessment tools for collegiate offices. Created in 1979, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) developed standards and guidelines for collegiate offices to consistently abide by. Although CAS standards and guidelines were originally created in 1979, CAS developed standards and guidelines specifically for use by parent service offices in 2010.

While some literature refers to Millennial parents (Howe & Strauss, 2000), collegiate parents (Scott & Daniel, 2001), helicopter parents, and parent programs (Weiss, 1989), little empirical research exists on why postsecondary institutions implement parent services (Troha, 2005). Savage and Petree (2009) concluded that colleges implementing new parent programs should look at mission and vision statements from other institutions to provide direction. Additionally, they concluded that summer send-off/welcome events required a more in-depth look because they were typically under the purview of parent service offices.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions drove this study:

1. Using Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards and guidelines, how are university parent service offices collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes?
2. How do university administrators perceive the parent service office role on their campus?
3. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines?

- 3a. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on mission?
- 3b. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on leadership?
- 3c. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on campus and external relations?
- 3d. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on programming?

Conceptual Framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that researchers utilize “bins” (p. 18) of information that draw from theory, experience, and the general objectives of the study. Researchers form their conceptual framework from these constructs. The three major concepts that guided the present study were quality in higher education, use of standards in higher education, and parental involvement on university campuses. Specifically, this study examined the functions of parent service offices, such as mission statements, programming, leadership, and external and campus relations, against the CAS standards for student learning and development outcomes to evaluate the ways in which the functions could lead to quality services for university parent relations.

Quality in Higher Education

As collegiate parent engagement rose on university campuses, a quality movement grew simultaneously. Stemming from the post-World War II business and military concept of total quality management, quality combined people skills, like

teamwork and problem solving, with technical skills, like statistics and consumer research (Freed, Klugman, & Fife, 1997; Seymour, 1992). Following quality improvement efforts in the corporate and military sectors, colleges and universities began addressing quality in higher education in the 1990s (Freed et al., 1997; Seymour, 1992; Sherr & Teeter, 1991; Sims & Sims, 1995). A tangent of total quality management, quality efforts in higher education focus on ensuring that the needs of customers or stakeholders are continually satisfied. Several collegiate administrators have viewed the parents as customers and themselves in a customer service role (Savage, 2005).

Standards and Guidelines of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

CAS was created in 1979, offering standards for higher education administrators that informed practice in a consistent manner. The CAS preamble states:

The CAS philosophy is grounded in beliefs about excellence in higher education, collaboration between teacher and learner, ethics in educational practice, student development as a major goal of higher education, and student responsibility for learning. Taken together, these beliefs about practice shape the vision for all CAS endeavors. (CAS, 2009, p. 18)

CAS standards are concerned with conditions that affect student learning and development. CAS was used as the source of standards for this study because of its longstanding reputation of promoting quality standards for higher education administrators and because in April 2010 it released standards for parent and family relations. Universities should use the standards and guidelines when assessing and expanding programs, creating goals, and offering training and development for staff (Arminio, 2009). Although the number of universities implementing the standards is

unknown, the two institutions selected for this study have employed the standards since their inception.

Parental Involvement

For over 10 years, universities have observed an increase in parental involvement on campus. The label widely associated with this phenomenon is *helicopter parent*. Fay (1981) coined the term to exemplify one of three child-raising strategies, primarily for use in primary school. According to Fay (1981), a helicopter parent is one who “hovers over children and rescues them from the hostile world in which they live” (n.p.). Parents of traditional college students are primarily from the Baby Boomer generation and Generation X. As students of more Generation X parents enter college, helicopter parenting could turn into *stealth fighter parenting*, a more aggressive form of protection of children, with higher demands on university officials (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

In the 1990s, parents spent more time with their children than did parents in the previous three decades (Howe, Strauss, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, & LifeCourse Associates, 2003). As a result, children and their parents created tight bonds (Howe et al., 2003). These parents invented the “baby on board” signs and became soccer moms and dads known for yelling out plays or profanity at the coach, the team, or their child, regardless of the sport (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Parents’ work schedules often revolved around their children’s activity schedule. During the period, tragic events, such as the massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, the terrorist acts in New York City and Washington, DC, in 2001, the deadliest shooting on a college campus in US history at Virginia Tech in 2007, and the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012, caused parents to become extra

vigilant with their children at all times. Due to this enmeshed bonding from birth to high school, parents and their students often find it challenging to break ties once the college years begin.

Technology has played a part in this deep connection between parents and their children. Mullendore (2005), an expert on helicopter parents, indicated that the cell phone is the “world’s longest umbilical cord” (as cited in Shellenbarger, 2005, p. D1) connecting parents and their students. Prior to the Millennial generation, parents dropped off their students at college, knowing that they may not see or talk to them for weeks or months (Lum, 2006). However, personal cell phones have replaced the long line to a universal dormitory payphone. Unlimited minutes on cell phones or smartphones enables college students to incorporate parents in their daily life in college. Studies show that parents and college students are speaking on a regular basis using a cell phone (Lee, Meszaros, & Colvin, 2009; Sorokou & Weissbrod, 2005), communicating at least 13.4 times a week (Hofer & Moore, 2010; Lourgou, 2010). Communication is more instantaneous than ever before, as students and parents become versed in emails, text messaging, and social media outlets (Education Advisory Board, 2010).

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on behalf of their student (Cole, 2010; DeBroff, 2007). In extreme examples, parents may go to classes and job interviews with the student (Damast, 2007; Weiss, 2006).

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this exploratory, multiple case study was to investigate the way in which professionals in parent service offices at two research universities implemented quality-based services for their stakeholders. Purposeful sampling was employed to select the two study sites to provide an information-rich study (Patton, 1990). Researchers have identified this sampling method as a valid way to narrow the number of participants, while capturing important details (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). The two participating universities offered an exemplary model of a campus parent service office, due to their adherence to CAS standards and from peer review; thus, insight could be gained from the parent service offices' adherence to quality standards and other administrators' perceptions of the parent service office.

During visits to the two sites, data were gathered through multiple sources at both the individual and program levels, including documents, observations, and interviews. The researcher observed parents at various university events as well as the campus climate for the extent of welcoming of parents to the property. The researcher kept a journal of notes garnered from these observations. While on campus, the researcher interviewed 11 to 12 administrators for an average of 30 minutes each to obtain their perspectives on parents of undergraduate students and collected documents that might be of interest to parents.

From these data sources, the researcher provided an overview of each site and then coded the data, determined themes, and analyzed data for pattern recognition by using applied thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). This analysis involved “a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible” (p. 15). The researcher determined the degree to which the themes corresponded to the CAS standards and guidelines.

Significance of the Study

As parental involvement on college campuses has steadily increased, colleges have opened parent service offices to accommodate the needs of their constituents. This exploratory, multiple case study contributes to understanding how parent service office professionals at two research universities implement quality-based services for their stakeholders. The study provides insight to professionals working with parents either on a part-time or full-time basis, those who are justifying the existence of a parent service office on a college campus, or those interested in meeting the needs of their constituents. Furthermore, this study contributes to the empirical research knowledge base of parent services offices on college and university campuses.

Delimitations

The researcher embarked on this research study to contribute to the large gap about parent service offices in empirical research. The researcher chose to narrow down the scope of the study to studying university administration offices. The researcher could have chosen to do studies on interactions between the university and parents or between

the university, parents, and students. Parents of college students were not sought for this study due to perceived inaccessibility to a group of parents during a specialized time that the researcher could speak to them.

Due to both limited access and limited time, the researcher looked at one independent parent service office and one dual-reporting parent office within two large universities. Two year universities were not considered for this study. Additionally, to be included in this study, the parent service offices had to implement the CAS standards for parent and family relations. The schools in this study were selected through purposeful sampling based on their continual use of CAS standards and recommendations of peers in the field. Once identified, the researcher approached parent service directors to assess study feasibility and sought their assistance for securing other university administrators. Due to a qualitative study, the findings may not be generalizable to all collegiate parent service offices.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations minimized the scope of this study. First, the study reviewed administrators' perceptions and opinions about working with parents and the corresponding campus parent service office. These perceptions may not be replicable in other settings. Therefore, the study may have limited transferability.

Another limitation was the narrow focus on sites and participants. Because this study involved two public research universities, its findings may not apply to other institutions, including private, for-profit, and 2-year community colleges, as well as universities in other regions of the country. Additionally, job positions can vary from institution to institution, and not every institution will have the same positions as the staff

interviewed for this study. Therefore, a study interviewing another population of staff members might be useful in furthering research.

Finally, another limitation was that the CAS standards were new in 2010. Thus, schools may not have had the infrastructure to implement them or may have refused the opportunity to implement them. Therefore, it was challenging to find schools actively and consistently using quality measures to measure their output.

Definitions of Key Terms

Baby Boomer generation. This generation, born between 1943 and 1960, fluctuated between peace time and war time and included persons that preferred to be an individual rather than part of a team (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Generation X. This generation, born between 1961 and 1981, spent their childhood and adolescent years being grown-ups. It was an era of coming home after school to an empty house. Most had one-parent families and would rather volunteer than vote (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Helicopter parents. Helicopter parents

hover over and rescue their children whenever trouble arises. They're forever running lunches and permission slips and homework assignments to school; they're always pulling their children out of jams; not a day goes by when they're not protecting little junior from something—usually from a learning experience the child needs or deserves. (Cline & Fay, 1990, pp. 23-24)

Millennial generation. Also referred to as the Internet generation (Tapscott, 1997, as cited in Terry, Dukes, Valdez, & Wilson, 2005), Nexters, and Generation Y, this generation was born on or after 1982 (Terry et al., 2005). This has been the most watched-over generation by their parents. Themes such as safety, team building, and

standards are part of this generation's vocabulary. This is also a generation of giving back through means such as community service and voting (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Parent service offices. These offices on college campuses specialize in providing resources or information specifically to parents.

Quality in higher education. Because pinpointing one definition of quality is difficult (Freed et al., 1997; Seymour, 1992), the operative definition for this study is a fluid "concept of a state of being, an orientation, and a philosophy focused on action" (Freed et al., 1997, p. 24).

Standards. Standards provide "a mechanism against which professionals can judge the quality of their work, giving the professional a means of self-regulation. . . . They also inform professionals when initiating new programs, enhancing existing programs, and accepting new responsibilities" (Hirt, 2009, p. 187).

Student Success. Student success is commonly used at many college and universities. But its meaning varies among each institution. Popular definitions of "student success" include: (a) student retention (persistence); (b) educational attainment; (c) academic achievement; (d) Student advancement; (e) Holistic development (Cuseo, 2007).

Total quality management (TQM). Originating in both military and business sectors, the inception of TQM was through customers inspecting products to ensure they met their personal standards. TQM has a customer focus and a commitment to process improvement (Sims & Sims, 1995).

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this exploratory, multiple case study was to investigate how parent service office professionals at two research universities implemented quality-based services for their constituents. This chapter provides a context for the study organized by three major sections: quality principles in higher education, parental involvement on college campuses, and parent service offices.

Quality in Higher Education

Since the early 1990s, the quality of higher education programs and services has been the focus of many colleges and universities across the United States (American Association for Higher Education, 1994, p. 87). Based on the business and military concept of total quality management (TQM), customers or stakeholders define quality (Deming, 1986). Driving forces behind customer definitions of quality, such as competition, costs, accountability, and service orientation, have provided motivating factors for colleges to ensure that the needs of their constituents are met (Seymour, 1992; Sims & Sims, 1995).

The question of constituency has been an ongoing debate at many colleges nationwide. When TQM was first implemented, faculty saw flaws in the system and worried about losing the academic focus of the institution (Coate, 1991). The debate continued over whether students and parents were *customers* of higher education institutions (Chaffee, 1998; Eagle & Brennan, 2007; Redding, 2005). Some indicated that college should be a place to receive a formal education, and anything above and beyond that might infringe on academic freedom (Hawkins & Frohoff, 2010). One vice president

of academic affairs wrote in an article about college branding: “Students are not customers; neither are their parents. We do not have customers. We must keep repeating this” (Hollwitz, 2004, as cited in Hawkins & Frohoff, 2010). However, advocates for students and parents as paying customers insisted that they invested a good deal of money in a college or university education and, therefore, deserved the title of customer. Many college administrators of programs and services tend to think of their constituents as customers.

Quality Principles

Quality philosophy follows one rule: “An organization’s first priority is tending to the needs of the customer and how they can be served better” (Seymour, 1992, p. 13; see also Sherr & Teeter, 1991). In other words, quality is about customer service and paying attention to the customer’s needs. In order to attain this level of service, certain principles should be in place to assess the organization properly. “Taken together, the quality principles are a personal philosophy and an organizational culture that uses scientific measurement of outcomes, systematic management techniques, and collaboration to achieve an institution’s mission” (Freed et al., 1997, p. iv).

To achieve the mission of the organization, principles of quality

- Are vision, mission, and outcomes driven
- Are system dependent
- Require leadership that creates a quality culture
- Display systematic individual development
- Employ decisions based on fact
- Delegate decision making

- Ensure collaboration
- Plan for change
- Require supportive leaders

While much of the quality movement research was published in the 1990s, evidence of practicality exemplifies that the trend continues. Below are examples of the ways in which college campuses have taken a more customer focus on their respective campuses.

- Clark Atlanta University earned a 2007 Presidential Letter and created a customer service-oriented environment, partnering with national representatives to assist in bringing service excellence to the university.
- The chancellor of the University System of Georgia, which oversees Georgia's 35 public colleges and universities, asked tens of thousands of faculty and staff members to incorporate a customer service model by offering better services to its client base, which included over 283,000 students.
- Western Illinois University offered both a student- and parent-centered focus on customer service. The division of student services' mission statement focused on quality support services.

Schuh and Upcraft (2001) maintained that a comprehensive assessment model should include evaluation of programs, facilities, and services against national standards. Arminio (2009) indicated that "using standards creates benchmarks against which an organization can measure the quality of its programs and services" (p. 188). In terms of education, Howe and Strauss (2007) indicated that parents of today's college students have ensured that standards were transparent and measurable during their child's

schooling in K-12 and are used to holding schools accountable for following through on promises in conjunction with their students' education. Howe and Strauss (2007) also stated that in order to satisfy the parents of the Millennial generation, "a college has to provide quality services outside the classroom at a cost those parents will perceive as competitive" (p. 183).

Standards

While the concept of quality is ever changing, standards provide the foundation for ensuring that programs and services are meeting certain criteria. Generally, standards have universal application and offer a sense of public trust towards professions (Arminio, 2009). Using standards has influenced the way corporations conduct business for quite some time. In higher education, professional standards allow administrators to judge their programs and services against criteria accepted by a consensus of groups and people (Arminio, 2009).

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) developed general standards for higher education with 14 parts: (a) mission, (b) program, (c) leadership, (d) human services, (e) ethics, (f) legal responsibilities, (g) equity and access, (h) diversity, (i) organization and management, (j) campus and external relations, (k) financial resources, (l) technology, (m) facilities and equipment, and (n) assessment and evaluation (CAS, 2009). At its core, CAS is rooted in the values of excellence, collaboration, ethics, student development, and student learning (CAS, 2009). Standards for the student affairs field are more recent, and professionals continue to become more familiar with them and learn how to apply them to everyday issues (Arminio, 2009). However, there are many uses for standards in higher education, specifically in student

affairs (Arminio, 2009; Bryan & Mullendore, 1993; Bryan, Miller, & Winston, 1991; Mable, 1991). Mullendore and Abraham (1993) concluded that national standards were beneficial in comparing, assessing, and improving student orientation programs (as cited in Schuh & Upcraft, 2001). CAS continually revises their standards and introduces standards and guidelines for specific offices. In 2010, CAS developed standards and guidelines specifically for “parent and family programs” at colleges and universities (see Appendix E).

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement on campus has contributed to the growing number of parent service offices in colleges nationwide. While journal articles, books, and dissertations exist on undergraduate parental involvement and engagement (Cohen, 1985; Daniel, Evans, & Scott, 2001; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Keppler, Mullendore, & Carey, 2005), most empirical research does not specifically address the parent service office boom (Weiss, 1989). On the other hand, nonempirical literature, such as self-help books, magazine articles, newspaper articles, college associations referencing collegiate parental involvement, and conference presentations have steadily increased since 1990. This section reviews the literature on collegiate parental involvement by first presenting an overview of the characteristics of Millennial families and influences on the parent-student connection. The section then provides a brief historical overview of parental involvement.

Parenting for the Millennial Generation

Some describe Millennials, the generational name of those born since 1982 (Howe & Strauss, 2000), as “sociable, optimistic, talented, well-educated, collaborative, open-minded, influential, and achievement-oriented” (Raines, 2002). Others have called them “special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, pp. 59-60; Terry et al., 2005, p. 11).

Parents of the Millennials have doted on and spent more time with their children than has any previous generation (Howe et al., 2003). The 1980s were dubbed “the era of the wanted child” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 31; Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 27). This group of parents added “baby on board” signs to their cars and ransacked stores for Cabbage Patch Kid dolls (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Unlike previous years of latchkey kids, when parents worked excessively, forcing school-aged children to come home to an empty house, the early 1980s began with a child-centered focus.

Parents of Millennials were active in their children’s education from kindergarten through high school. They also became the soccer moms/dads known for overinvolvement, regardless of the sport. This high level of parent-to-child interaction created the pejorative nickname of ‘helicopter parent’ used in the media and on college campuses (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Fay (1981) originally referenced the term ‘helicopter parent’ to illustrate one of three child-raising strategies, defining a helicopter parent as one who “hovers over children and rescues them from the hostile world in which they live.” Nine years later, Cline and Fay (1990) expanded on the original definition, citing observations they made in elementary schools:

[Helicopter parents] hover over and rescue their children whenever trouble arises. They’re forever running lunches and permission slips and homework assignments

to school; they're always pulling their children out of jams; not a day goes by when they're not protecting little junior from something—usually from a learning experience the child needs or deserves. (pp. 23-24)

The parents Cline and Fay referred to in 1990 are currently parents of college students. These parents are from the Baby Boomer generation and Generation X. Howe and Strauss (2007) commented that “whereas Boomer helicopter parents generally assume that the rewards of higher education are vast but impossible to measure, Gen-X stealth fighter parents will be more likely to assume that anything immeasurable is untrustworthy” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 175).

The Parent-Student Connection During College

As the Millennial generation cycles through college, college administrators have noticed more parental input on behalf of the children (Johnson, 2004; Merriman, 2006). Technology, consumerism, and ensuring their child's well-being are reasons parents offer for staying so involved (Merriman, 2006; Terry et al., 2005). Parental overprotection may also stem from a heightened awareness of safety after major catastrophic events (Merriman, 2006), such as the massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, the tragic events that unfolded on September 11, 2001, the deadliest shooting on a college campus in US history at Virginia Tech in 2007, and the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012. Millennials appear to consult their parents before making any decisions (Terry et al., 2005).

With the proliferation of the cell phone, administrators can frequently hear students talking to their parents and grandparents. Students continually share news with their parents, who are just as interested in learning what is new with the student. With the addition of text messaging (LifeCourse Associates & Crux Research, 2007), students can

easily reach their parents when they perceive a need for intervention on campus (Carney-Hall, 2008).

Modern college parents stay in touch with their children more than those in previous generations (Coburn, 2006; College Parents of America, 2007; Daniel et al., 2001; Howe et al., 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Tyre, 2002; Taub, 2008). College Parents of America, a parent advocacy group, surveyed 839 parents of undergraduate students and found that 74% spoke with their children two or three times a week, while one third did so at least once a day. At least 90% of parents used cell phones to communicate, and 58% used e-mail (College Parents of America, 2006). One year later, LifeCourse Associates and Crux Research (2007) conducted research among 1000 parents of prospective college students, current college students, or recent college graduates. The Baby Boomer population ($N = 500$) and Generation X population ($N = 500$) showed increasing trends in communication. College students reported communicating with their Baby Boomer parents 7.0 to 8.2 times per week, using a variety of communication media, and with their Generation X parents 10.2 to 11.8 times per week. Communication is instantaneous. Mullendore (2005) dubbed the cell phone connection between parent and student as the world's longest umbilical cord (as cited in Shellenbarger, 2005).

In the same study (LifeCourse Associates & Crux Research, 2007), the Baby Boomer and Generation X parents tied at 80% as being extremely or very likely to intervene on behalf of their child if there was an alcohol or substance abuse issue. Although there is no significant difference between the two generations of parents, the statistic showed that a large population of parents would take action on behalf of their

student when it related to drugs and alcohol. The parents of prospective college students noted it was important to see college records, including financial aid, grades, attendance records, and disciplinary records.

. University administrators have noted the surge of parental involvement in issues such as housing and roommate problems as well as health concerns and academic disappointments (Booher, 2007). This noted trend of parental involvement exemplifies that the parent continues being the problem solver in the relationship—looking out for the welfare of the child.

History of Parental Involvement on Campus

Over the last century, parental involvement on college campuses has evolved. Parents went from being virtually invisible on college campuses in the early 1900s to being a major focal point on college campuses today. While a parent support group started in the 1920s at Texas A&M—with the objective of contributing “in every way to the comfort and welfare of the boys and to cooperate with the faculty of the college in maintaining a high standard of moral conduct and intellectual attainment” (Federation of Texas A&M University Mothers’ Clubs, n.d.)—before the 1960s, most college and universities adopted an *in loco parentis* philosophy. This meant that the institution operated in place of the parent by taking responsibility for protecting students once they left home (White, 2005). After the 1960s, the pendulum of the court system swung in favor of viewing students as adults and making colleges and universities less responsible for their students. In 1974, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act demonstrated just how independent college-aged students were by preventing unauthorized checks into college or university student records.

Parents in the 1980s were called by different terms, such as the *forgotten parent*, the *overlooked parent*, and the *misused parent* (Weiss, 1989). However, since that time, as parents, university administration, and court systems have scrutinized accountability measures, the ideology has reverted to *in loco parentis*, which might be a result of helicopter parent pressure (White, 2005).

In the 1990s, college parents and student affairs began to intermix after a college student's intervention affected student affairs nationwide. Jeanne Clery, a 19-year-old Lehigh University freshman, was raped and murdered in her campus residence hall in 1986. The Clery Act was enacted in 1990, requiring educational institutions to publish and distribute an annual campus security report to current and prospective students, parents, and employees. Also, in 1990, Wake Forest University developed a new orientation program for parents (Dodge, 1990). The design of this set of workshops was to ease parents' fears of sending their child to college. As noted by the title of Dodge's article, "More Parents Seek an Active Role in Their Children's Education," this marked the beginning rumblings of parents wanting to be a part of their child's collegiate experience.

Beginning in 1999, parents paid less tuition as students began to take more fiduciary responsibility on their tuition (Reisberg, 1999; SallieMae, 2013), parents shared disappointment when their child moved away from home (Rothman, 1999), and parents became more vocal in the college selection process (Sanoff, 1999). By the turn of the century, parents were not only more vocal, but also taking action when it came to their child's education. In fact, they enrolled in classes to learn about challenges that their children might face in college (Carr, 2000) and became pushy in the college selection

process (Toor, 2000). In 2000, Turrentine, Schnure, Ostroth, and Ward-Roof published the first article about what parents wanted from the college experience, and Howe and Strauss (2000) issued their first book on the Millennial generation, which offered insight into their upbringing by doting parents.

From the viewpoint of the colleges, in the mid 19th century, parents were seen as constituents for fundraising purposes, with the college offering teas and dances to solicit wealthy parents (Savage, personal communication, 2007). Dundy indicated that, as early as the 1970s, colleges implemented parent programs (cited in Lum, 2006). Beginning in the 1980s, colleges considered parents as constituents in many different college offices, including student admissions, and in student life committees (Weiss, 1989). The period also initiated student development, parents' weekend, and parents' orientation.

From 2000 to 2006, colleges began focusing more on parents, especially their role in the college selection process as well as their inquisitiveness about their children's education. In 2006, the *Chronicle of Education* reported its first uses of the term 'helicopter parent' (Anderson, 2006; Rainey, 2006), even though the term had been around for 16 years. In 2007, the National Survey on Student Engagement was released and demonstrated that helicopter parents helped students as opposed to hindering their development (Hoover & Supiano, 2008; Milstone, 2007).

According to Savage (personal communication, May 1, 2007), private colleges had parent programs longer than public colleges did; public college programs started in the mid to late 1990s. Both students and their parents evaluate colleges with a consumer mindset. At private institutions, there is a growing sense of entitlement, with both parents and students wanting the best deal from a lofty investment.

Parent Service Offices

Because parents have come under intense scrutiny by college administrators, there is a trend of opening parent service offices to accommodate their needs. Thirty years ago, only a handful of colleges had parent service offices (Savage, 2007), but the number of those offices has increased exponentially as administrators have shifted resources so that staff can work directly with parents. Over 70% of the nation's 4-year colleges and universities have a position known as parent coordinator (Lum, 2006). Colleges employ a number of different names for parent service offices: parent programming, parent service office, parent service office, and family relations, just to name a few.

A university can choose to promote parent services in three different ways (Cohen, 1985):

- *Services to the institution.* These organizations focus on what the parent can do for the university. Typically, universities look to parents to help with recruiting new students, fundraising, and mentoring current students/alumni. One office usually supervises a parent organization such as a moms club. When the service includes fundraising, the development office usually oversees the efforts.
- *Services to the parent.* These organizations focus on what the university can do for the parent. Modern parents want to be in communication with the college. The organizations typically provide newsletters, updated websites about university services, and parent programming such as a parents' weekend. Typically, the oversight group is a compilation of various university offices. For example, an associate dean of students could juggle freshmen orientation and disperse information to parents.

- *Liaison*. Many universities opt for one office to champion services to the institution and provide services to parents. These offices do not have a visible, public connection to any other offices and usually have independent names such as the Office of Parent Services. Typically, they serve as a liaison between parents and other university departments, such as the Office of Student Services and the Advancement Office.

Stand-alone parent service offices have opened rapidly over the last decade, but limited attention has been given to the quality of service these offices actually provide. Because many consider parents as consumers on college campuses (Chaffee, 1998), it is important to analyze the standards applicable to parent service offices. This study examined the way in which model parent service offices utilized CAS Standards for Parent and Family Programs and evaluated the perceptions of various administrators of those parent service offices.

While the methodology for the study is described in detail over the course of the next chapter, a brief overview of methodology follows here.

This study took a social constructivist approach for its epistemological framework. According to Creswell (2009), social constructivists “hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 8). The social constructivist approach attempts to make sense of the participants’ perceptions. In terms of practice, the open-ended questions that the researcher asked are broad and general so participants have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the researcher’s understanding.

Creswell (1998) defines multiple case study as “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). A bounded system means that the case study is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or physical boundaries. Merriam (1998) adds that, “The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 40). For this study, two universities have been chosen because of their exemplary model parent office. The study followed Patton’s (2002) procedure for a layered, case study analysis. Data was collected from diverse sources at the individual and program levels and included documents, observations, and interviews.

Chapter 3 will provide a more in-depth understanding of the study’s methodology through a process account of the rationale behind choosing the research method, selection criteria, data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and trustworthiness components.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory, multiple case study was to investigate the way in which professionals in parent service offices at two research universities implemented quality-based services for their stakeholders. Although a minimal amount of research exists on college parent programs, there have been no studies specifically focusing on the ways in which administrators implement quality-based services in their parent service offices. Through the examination of two collegiate parent service offices' quality-based services, this study adds to the empirical research by examining the use of standards in the programs and the perceptions of other university administrators regarding the parent service office. Three research questions drove this study:

1. Using Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards and guidelines, how are university parent service offices collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes?
2. How do university administrators perceive the parent service office role on their campus?
3. How well aligned are university parent service offices with the CAS standards and guidelines?
 - 3a. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on mission?
 - 3b. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on leadership?

3c. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on campus and external relations?

3d. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on programming?

Two of the research questions refer to the CAS standards and guidelines. The

CAS Preamble states:

The CAS philosophy is grounded in beliefs about excellence in higher education, collaboration between teacher and learner, ethics in educational practice, student development as a major goal of higher education, and student responsibility for learning. Taken together, these beliefs about practice shape the vision for all CAS endeavors. (CAS, 2009, p. 18)

CAS's philosophy combines the goals of collaboration, student development, and student learning outcomes. This combination of goals and outcomes serves as the foundation for CAS's standards and guidelines.

This chapter outlines the methodology used to answer the research questions. The chapter also describes the procedures used for site and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with the researcher's procedures for trustworthiness, reduction of researcher bias, and human subjects and ethics considerations.

Social Constructivist Epistemology

This study took a social constructivist approach for its epistemological framework. According to Creswell (2009), social constructivists "hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p. 8).

Assumptions based on this worldview include constructed meanings that an individual

forms when looking at the world. Also, according to Creswell, “the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). The social constructivist approach attempts to make sense of the participants’ perceptions. Through this approach, the researcher generates or develops an inductive pattern of meaning through others’ perception of the world. In terms of practice, the open-ended questions that the researcher asks are broad and general so participants have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the researcher’s understanding.

The social constructivist approach is appropriate for this study because the perceptions of different individuals within university offices form a reality based on the use of particular standards. The standards create a uniform set of expectations used by multiple parent service offices. The researcher is aware that the historical and social backgrounds of participants may influence their answers.

Qualitative Research Design

This study employed a qualitative methodology. Patton (1990) explained that the difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that quantitative research is numerically focused so that people’s responses are fit into a select number of predetermined responses, while qualitative research is much more fluid. Because this study was predicated on gaining insight into the quality practices of parent service offices and administrators’ perceptions of those offices, qualitative research was warranted so that people would be able to tell their story without any predetermination of findings (Creswell, 2007). Creswell also stated that qualitative research “begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”

(p. 37). This study assumed that parent service office professionals exhibit quality service in their day-to-day interactions with their stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to know how parent service office professionals adhere to quality standards and how other administrators perceive the parent service office.

A multiple case study has been deemed most appropriate for this research. Creswell (1998) defines multiple case study as “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). A bounded system means that the case study is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or physical boundaries. Merriam (1998) adds that, “The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 40). For this study, two universities have been chosen because of their exemplary model parent office.

Because perceptions of administrators are important to the study, the research design focused on qualitative interviews. Merriam (1998) deemed interviewing a necessity when researchers are unable to observe or interpret a phenomenon by themselves. Patton (1990) indicated,

We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. (p. 278)

McCracken (1988) stated that long interviews can take the researcher “into the lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (p. 9). Merriam (1998) added that

“interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (p. 72).

Site Selection

Two universities were selected for this study after meeting three criteria:

1. Being listed in the Carnegie Classification for the Advancement of Teaching as an accredited high-research, 4-year institution that voluntarily elected to be included in the Carnegie Classification’s optional Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships identification. The university could be located in an urban, suburban, or rural area; could have a single campus or multiple campuses; and could be either public or private.
2. Being identified by peers in the field as having a model parent service office.
3. Following the Parent and Family Programs’ CAS standards and guidelines

The schools chosen for the study were selected through purposeful sampling based on their use of CAS standards and guidelines, as well as recommendations of peers in the field. The researcher conducted informal research at several national conferences by asking parent directors about campuses with model parent service offices. The researcher also asked experts in the field about innovative parent service offices. From those recommendations, the researcher narrowed down the group of eligible sites based on their practice of using the CAS standards and guidelines. The Parent and Family Programs’ CAS standards began in April 2010, and at the outset of the study, only a select number of parent program offices followed them.

Institution A

Institution A is in the southeastern region of the United States. It is a large, public, nonprofit institution with over 17,500 on-campus students enrolled. It is a 4-year institution offering comprehensive doctoral studies, but no medical or veterinary degrees. Women constitute 66% of the undergraduate population, while men constitute 34% of the population. A minority number (9%) of students indicated that they were from out-of-state. The parent service office of Institution A has dual responsibilities for new students and families of all students. One professional oversees the office and reports to the student affairs division. The number of families the office corresponds with is unknown.

Institution B

Institution B is in the Midwestern section of the United States. It is a large, public, nonprofit institution with over 42,000 enrolled students, a little more than half of whom are undergraduates. The university is a 4-year research institution offering comprehensive doctoral studies along with medical and veterinary degrees. It is primarily a residential campus. Women constitute 51% of the population, and men, 49%. Most students indicated they were in-state (59%). Two full-time staff and student interns that reported to the university relations division oversaw the parent service office of Institution B. The office had over 20,000 parents on its mailing list.

Participant Selection

Sampling Strategy

In order to provide an information-rich study (Patton, 1990), the researcher employed purposeful sampling. Since the purpose of the study was to explore quality-

based services of two parent service offices, the researcher intentionally selected participants and sites that were considered the best in the field. Researchers have identified this sampling method as a valid way to narrow down the number of participants while capturing important details (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 1998).

Because there are several variants of purposeful sampling, the researcher utilized typical sampling as the means to choose individual participants. Individuals were chosen based on their perceived daily interactions with parents of undergraduate students as well as their influence to change policy within their university department. Because the participants' titles and job functions are replicable at other nationwide universities, they are not considered unique or out of the ordinary. Typical sampling strategies are appropriate when the individuals or events are usual (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). The researcher ensured that all participants of the interviews conducted at both sites held similar titles or job responsibilities.

The goal was to have 10 university administrators from each university participate in the study, for a total of 20 interviews. To ensure that 10 administrators would agree to participate, up to 12 staff members at each school were purposely selected. Ultimately, 11 administrators from Institution A and 12 from Institution B were interviewed. Creswell (2005, 2007) recommended interviewing 20 to 30 individuals for grounded theory research to achieve a well-saturated outcome. By the same principle, this study employed Creswell's recommendations in anticipation that the data collected would reach a point where no new data would inform the research.

Recruitment Strategy

To secure respondents for the interviews, the researcher began by sending a letter of invitation to the director of the parent program at each university. Once the parent program director confirmed participation in the study, the researcher found a mutually convenient time to communicate by telephone or by email to discuss the study and plan a recruitment strategy. The researcher identified the parent program director as a *gatekeeper* in each school. Each gatekeeper provided the researcher with specific contact information for each office. Creswell (2005) stated that a gatekeeper could assist in providing entrance to a site, locating participants for the study, and identifying places to study.

The researcher consulted organizational charts at each university, identifying divisions or departments likely to have a high amount of interaction with parents of college students and seeking the top decision maker from the division or department to interview. It was anticipated that this person would not only understand the prominent reasons that parents interacted with the office but would also have responsibility for making decisions on the ways to work with parents. The researcher did not purposefully select divisions and departments based on continual interaction with the parent service office on campus. This approach of selecting cross-discipline administrators contributed to the validity of the research by incorporating a multitude of perspectives beyond those of the parent service office. It also added to the validity of the study by incorporating triangulation.

Based on the researcher's parameters, the two parent program directors identified potential university administrators for the interview. Both parent program directors

volunteered to contact a few people on the researcher's behalf to schedule interviews. They then supplied names, phone numbers, and email addresses for the researcher to contact the others directly.

Data Collection

When evaluating different sites, a researcher should observe settings, talk to people, and read documents (Patton, 1990). For this study, interviews were the main source of data, supplemented by the other two sources.

Interviews

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) indicated that qualitative research brings an “interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world” (p. 3). Using a qualitative approach instead of a quantitative approach can garner a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through rich data extrapolated from interviews (McCracken, 1988). Patton (1990) explained that the purpose of interviews is to discover another person's perspective, especially when the interviewer is unable to observe everything. Unlike many other data collection methods, researchers can verify transcripts of interviews with internal validity processes, such as member checks and peer review.

Because of the number of perspectives needed for this study, interviews were one of the main sources of data collection. Merriam (1998) verified that “interviewing can be used to collect data from a large number of people representing a broad range of ideas” (p. 72). Although interviews can be conducted in groups or individually (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990), the current study exclusively used individual interviews to allow for more

in-depth, one-on-one conversation. For this study, interviewees captured the perspectives of both parent professionals and their colleagues at each university.

Each interview warranted a semistructured, face-to-face session to capture both nonverbal and verbal messages. Each interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Merriam (1998) stated that, on the continuum of a structured interview scale, qualitative research usually has less structure because answers involve the respondent's perceptions. According to Creswell (2005), semistructured interviews are "interviews in which the researcher asks some questions that are closed ended and some that are open ended" (p. 598). With a semistructured interview format, participants have the opportunity to respond freely and to "define the world in unique ways" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). When using the semistructured format, the researcher does not calculate the order of the interview questions or the exact wording prior to the start of the interview (Merriam, 1998).

Data were derived from 23 interviews, 11 from Institution A and 12 from Institution B. According to McCracken (1988), when interviewing, "it is more important to work longer, and with greater care, with a few people than more superficially with many of them" (p. 17). Conducting several in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to understand the administrators' perceptions of the on-campus parent service office.

Interview protocol. An interview protocol is a tool that narrows down the central question and subquestions in a research study (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2005, 2009) indicated that an interview protocol should have an icebreaker, four or five questions, and probes for the questions. The first part includes the *icebreaker* or *grand tour* questions (Creswell, 2005; McCracken, 1988) that are relatively easy for the interviewee to answer

and intended to relax the interviewee before addressing the core questions. The next four or five questions directly relate to the study. The questions are typically open ended to allow the researcher to learn from the participant's perspective (Creswell, 2005). In addition to the main questions, Creswell (2005) and McCracken (1988) encouraged the use of probes to encourage clarification and elaboration on interviewee ideas.

For the current study, the interview questions were related to four of the 14 parts of the CAS standards—mission, program, leadership, and campus and external relations—to ascertain how the parent service office met the criteria in each of these areas. The remaining 10 parts of the CAS standards were considered for this study and can be considered for future research. CAS has promoted standards in student affairs for over 30 years. CAS's "Parent and Family Programs CAS Standards and Guidelines," published in 2010 (see Appendix E), exist to help parent professionals meet certain criteria, which will ultimately ensure that their office exhibits the highest quality of programs and services. The interview protocol for parent service office directors and their staff is located in Appendix A, and that for other university administrators and their staff is located in Appendix B. The following crosswalk tables depict the relationship between the research questions and their respective interview questions (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2)

Table 3.1
Crosswalk Table of Parent Service Office Staff

	Parent Office Directors and/or Parent Office Staff Interview Protocol		RESEARCH QUESTIONS	
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS		Using the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards and guidelines,	How do university administrators perceive the parent service office role on	How are university parent service offices adhering to CAS Standards guidelines?
MIS	CAS Standard guideline: Mission Statement			
	Does your office have a mission statement in place? If so, how often do you refer to the mission statement when working with parents? How do the services and programs that you offer reflect the mission statement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent office website • Interview Question • Documentation (assessment, handouts) 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent office website • Interview Question • Documentation (assessment, handouts)
1				
	Does your office have student learning outcome goals? Describe the relationship, if any, between your parent programs and services and student learning outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent office website • Interview question • Observation (orientation) 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Parent office website
2a				
	Does your office have student development outcome goals? Describe the relationship, if any, between your parent programs and services and student development outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent office website • Interview question 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Parent office website
2b				
	How do you know when you have achieved the goals and objectives that are outlined in your office's mission statement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	n/a	n/a
3				
	How do you fulfill your mission statement for the purposes of building collaboration between your office and your stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question
4				
LDR	CAS Standard guideline: Leadership			
	Describe your professional role on campus. How do you think parents perceive your role? How do you think administrators outside of your office perceive your role?	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Observation (orientation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Observation (general)
1				
	How often do you advocate to other administrators to support the students' parents and families?	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question
2a				
	How often do you advocate to other administrators to support your office's programs and services?	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question
2b				
	What are some of the needs of parents and families in providing for their student's development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Documentation (assessment, webchats) 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Documentation (assessment, webchats) • Observation (orientation)
3a				
	What are some of the needs of parents and families in providing for their student's learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Documentation (assessment, webchats) 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Documentation (assessment, webchats) • Observation (orientation)
3b				
	To what extent do you formulate your goals and objectives to support those needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question
3c				
	Describe the various methods that your office communicates with parents and families (electronic, print, text, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Observation • Documentation (webchats, newsletters) 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Observation • Documentation (webchats, newsletters)
4a				
	How many times a year do you communicate with parents and families using each of these methods?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Website 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Website
4b				
EXT	CAS Standard guideline: External Relations			
	Which on-campus departments do you have partnerships?	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question
1a				
	What are some initiatives that you co-sponsored?	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Website? 	n/a
1b				
	What are some of the benefits for your office by working with other departments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	n/a	n/a
2a				
	What are some of the challenges that you face when working with other departments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	n/a	n/a
2b				
	In the event of an emergency, describe your office's role in communicating with parents and media	n/a	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Documentation (handouts)
3				
PROG	CAS Standard guideline: Programming			
	Describe one or two of your more outstanding programs that you coordinate for parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question • Documentation (assessment, website) 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question
1a				
	What is the reason for running the programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview question 	n/a	n/a
1b				

Table 3.2

Crosswalk Table of College Administrators

		RESEARCH QUESTIONS	
College Administrators (non-parent office staff) Interview Protocol	Using the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards and guidelines, how are university parent service offices collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes?	How do university administrators perceive the parent service office role on their campus?	How are university parent service offices adhering to CAS Standards guidelines?
<i>Parent and family interactions</i>			
1a. How often does your office collaborate with the university parent office?	•Interview question	•Interview question	n/a
1b. If so, please elaborate on the specific projects that your office has collaborated on.	n/a	•Interview question	n/a
2. How do you personally collaborate with the university parent office?	•Interview question	•Interview question	n/a
3a. How would you perceive the role of the parent office on campus?	•Interview question	•Interview question	n/a
3b. What do you think the parent office does on a daily basis?	•Interview question	•Interview question	n/a
4. How often do you refer parents to the parent office on campus?	n/a	•Interview question	n/a
<i>Perceptions of the parent professionals compliance to CAS standards?</i>			
1. What types of programs and services do you think your university parent office offers to parents and families?	•Interview question	•Interview question	•Interview question
2a. In what ways do you think your university parent office contributes to student learning?	•Interview question	•Interview question	•Interview question
2b. In what ways do you think your university parent office contributes to student development?	•Interview question	•Interview question	•Interview question

Pilot test. Researchers recommend pilot testing to refine the interview questions and to affirm the researcher’s plan for data collection (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). The researcher conducted a pilot test using the interview protocol document with a director of a parent program office from a university not affiliated with the study. The pilot university had an established parent service office on campus and was in close proximity to the researcher.

The researcher found confusion and redundancy with certain questions. The director did not identify with questions related to mission. The researcher had to change wording from assuming the participant was familiar with the mission statement to asking if the interviewee was familiar with the mission statement. The program director also needed definition of student learning outcomes, a confusing term because the director did not usually think in those terms. For final use, the researcher asked participants if they

had student learning outcomes in their office, instead of assuming that the participants knew the outcomes for students. Some of the other questions ended up being unnecessary because their content had already been covered in the answers to earlier questions.

Interview logistics. The interviews were conducted in the summer, immediately after the academic year finished at both schools. The summer was chosen for convenience of participants, as most administrators had freer schedules. Participants who were willing to meet with the researcher were scheduled for a 1-hour in-depth interview, based on a mutually convenient time. All interviews, with the exception of one phone interview, were conducted in either the participant's office or in close proximity to the participant's office.

Each interview began with the researcher providing the participant with an informed consent form. The participant was encouraged to read and keep the form at the onset of the interview. The researcher then provided an overview of the study and asked the participant if he or she had any questions before beginning the formal interview. The researcher began each interview by asking the participant to explain his or her role at the university. Questions continued to be asked from the interview protocol (Appendix A and B). Interviews lasted 18 to 72 minutes.

The researcher recorded each interview using two digital recording devices. Upon returning home from each site visit, the researcher had the transcripts transcribed by a professional service. Each recording was labeled with an unidentifiable three-letter code and a number. The transcriptions were saved on the researcher's computer and a hard copy was printed. Verification of accuracy was performed on the transcripts to ensure the dialogue was accurately recorded.

Observation

Observations represent a frequently used form of data collection wherein the researcher assumes different roles in the process. According to Creswell (2005), “Observation continues to be a well accepted form of qualitative data collection” (p. 211). The researcher was aware of possible subjectivity in observational situations due to her comfort at the site and rapport with participants. One of the purposes in observing the physical site was to triangulate data. For the purposes of this study, observations aided understanding of the extent to which the parent service office adhered to the CAS standards for the purpose of collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes.

The researcher spent 4 days at each site. In both cases, the researcher took a significant amount of time prior to any meetings to walk around the campus to observe parent receptivity within the campus community. This was done by observing the amount of items that were marketed to parents in the bookstore, observing parent and staff interaction on the prospective student tours, and observing parent and staff interaction during orientation. Evidence of parent receptivity would demonstrate an indirect link between the parent service office collaborating with other departments to welcome parents. The researcher conducted the following observations at each site:

- Parent orientation programs. The researcher looked at the activities in place for parents during the first-year orientation program through either the parent service office or the orientation office. The researcher also determined which campus offices had sessions for parents that adhered to the programming standard. During one site visit, the researcher arrived at the same time as the school’s first-year

orientation. The researcher attended a joint parent and first-year student opening session, as well as a parent-only informational session at one university's orientation.

- Parent seminars in conjunction with administrators. The researcher reviewed special classes designed specifically for parents and noted which administrators assisted in developing the classes. This related to CAS standards for campus and external relations and programming.
- Bookstore parent section, merchandise, banners. The researcher inspected the ways in which the bookstore catered to parents through clothing and other merchandise.
- Parent events (freshmen orientation, homecoming, parent weekend, graduation). The researcher examined the different types of events available for parents to attend and the types of activities at these events. The researcher also had the opportunity to participate in prospective student tours at both sites and observed interactions between parents and the university ambassador.
- Overall receptivity. The researcher looked for welcoming influences that a parent would appreciate. Examples such as a university mobile app for use on a smart phone and a visitor center or desk were noted.

Patton (1990) noted that “observations provide a check on what is reported in interviews” (p. 245). To document observations on site, the researcher developed an observational protocol (See Appendix C). According to Creswell (2005),

An observational protocol is a form designed by the researcher before data collection that is used for taking field notes during an observation. This information is both a description of activities in the setting and a reflection about themes and personal insights noted during the observation period. (p. 223)

Documents

According to Creswell (2005),

A valuable source of information in qualitative research can be documents. Documents consist of public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants in a study and they can include newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals, and letters. (p. 219)

The researcher utilized documents because the text of those documents was in the language of the participants who gave thoughtful attention to their writing. For the purposes of this study, documents aided understanding of the extent to which the parent service office adhered to the CAS standards for the purposes of collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes. Some of the documents reviewed were mission statements, the parent service office websites, parent handbooks/calendars, student newspapers, orientation materials, webchats, office assessments, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations, crime statistics, newsletters, financial literacy documents, academic calendars/scheduling information, event calendars, on-campus contact information, transportation schedules, and programming brochures. Review of these documents was recorded through a document summary form (Creswell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Appendix D), which noted setting, document overview, and relation to the study (Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis

Creswell (2005) defined data analysis as a process wherein “researchers analyze the data, represent it in tables, figures, and pictures, and explain it to come up with answers to research questions and statements asked in the research” (p. 588). There are a

variety of ways to conduct data analysis (Creswell, 1998, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Merriam (1998) noted three preferred methods. These included (a) the constant comparative method, where data are compared on a continual basis to formulate a theory; (b) the content analysis method, which seeks developments through a variety of media to capture relevant characteristics from the meaning; and (c) analytical inductions, which continually refine the hypothesis to achieve a perfect fit with the data. Guest et al. (2012) offered similar approaches to qualitative analysis: exploratory versus confirmatory. The exploratory approach is content driven, where the researcher looks for ideas by deriving “key words, trends, themes, or ideas” prior to analysis (p. 7). The confirmatory approach is hypothesis driven and is guided by predetermined codes and categories. Guest et al. developed a technique for the exploratory approach called “applied thematic analysis.” They defined this as “textual data generated from in-depth interviews and focus groups—which are often transcribed verbatim from audio recordings—and, to a lesser degree, participant observation notes.”

The researcher followed Patton’s (2002) procedure for a layered, case study analysis. Patton (2002) indicates that the researcher should “always collect data on the lowest level unit of analysis possible” (448). For this reason, the researcher collected data from diverse sources at both the individual and program levels. Documents, observations, and interviews were collected and used for the analysis. The researcher attempted to observe parents at various university events and observed the campus climate for its degree of welcoming parents to its property. This was done through signage, bookstore merchandise, office space, etc. The researcher interviewed various administrators to obtain their perspectives on parents of undergraduate students. The researcher prepared

the data for analysis by transcribing the interviews, document review, and observation review. Patton (2002) recommends constructing a case record, for which the data is condensed and is presentable to audience members. This was achieved by summarizing all the interview protocols (see Appendix A & B). A case study narrative from these notes was compiled which told a story about each case. The data was coded, turned into themes, and analyzed for “pattern recognition” by using content analysis (Boyatzis, 1998 as quoted in Patton, 2002, p. 452). The researcher looked at the emerging themes and compared them to the CAS Standards and Guidelines. The degree to which the themes and the CAS Standards and Guidelines correspond would indicate the degree to which the parent office followed the CAS Standards and Guidelines.

Data Management

Following the interviews, the researcher began the transcription process and imported the data into a qualitative analytic software package, Atlas.ti 7. By using a software package, the researcher had a more organized means to assess themes and code the data (Creswell, 1998). The notes were then “dissected meaningfully” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56) while keeping the relations between the parts intact. The researcher coded topics from the information compiled and analyzed for themes based on the codes.

The observational field note forms were imported into Atlas.ti and analyzed by using either a “key event” or “various setting” framework (Patton, 1990, p. 377). The results supported the themes that emerged from the interviews and documents.

While the document summary forms were inputted into Atlas.ti, the documents were not, either because they had information that identified the research sites or their

size was too wide for a scanner. The notes were then “dissected meaningfully” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56), using the same codes as the transcripts and observations. The researcher used documents that were applicable across both sites, including parent handbooks, parent service office mission statements, and orientation information. Any other documents that revealed surprising information were also included.

Coding

Coffey and Atkinson (2006) defined coding as “condensing the bulk of our data sets into analyzable units by creating categories with and from our data” (p. 26). The researcher coded for content by reading the text and noting meaning of the text. Next, the researcher grouped similar ideas together, primarily through the use of linking repetitive content together, in order to develop a theme. Ryan and Bernard (2003) identified repetitive content as the most common way to identify a theme, through popularity of content in one or more transcripts. The amount of repetitious text needed to qualify a theme is subjective to the researcher.

A codebook was established that housed all the codes. Codes began as broad as possible and were subsequently narrowed down to encompass two different ideas or separated to reduce overlap of meaning. The researcher also avoided the “lumper-splitter” (Weller & Romney, 1998) phenomenon, where too many or too few codes are generated within a set of data.

The researcher analyzed the information for “pattern recognition” (Boyatzis, 1998, as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 452) with thematic analysis, and compared it to the CAS standards and guidelines. The degree to which the themes and the CAS standards and guidelines corresponded indicated the degree to which the parent service office

followed the CAS standards and guidelines. The patterns also revealed the ways in which parent service offices were collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes, as well as administrators' perceptions of the parent service office.

Trustworthiness

Being trustworthy in data collection means that the researcher has accounted for the validity and reliability of the qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). In addition to providing thorough descriptions of the study findings, this study utilized three measures to demonstrate trustworthiness: triangulation, peer review, and reduction of researcher bias.

Triangulation

Using multiple methodologies strengthens the study design by specifically addressing internal validity and reliability issues (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). The researcher utilized data triangulation, conceptualized as using many sources of data (Denzin, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 1990). For this study, the data sources included observation, documents, and interviews. Triangulation was further demonstrated by conducting research at more than one university and interviewing different departmental administrators at each university.

Peer Debriefing

The peer debriefer, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is a noninvolved professional peer with whom the researcher can have discussions at periodic intervals. The purpose of peer debriefing is threefold: to ask difficult questions that the researcher

might avoid, to discuss the sequence of methodological steps, and to be a good listener for the researcher. Throughout the implementation of the study, the researcher arranged for such debriefings and recorded the conversations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The peer debriefer was consulted prior to the site visits to discuss procedures while at each site. She also provided advice about contextualizing the analysis of the study.

Finally, the peer debriefer served as the researcher's intercoder analyst. She received three transcripts and the codebook and coded the first seven pages of the transcripts using either the codes from the codebook or new, original codes. Upon completion, the analyst and researcher talked about the findings. The analyst indicated that her choices for sections were narrower than that of the researcher, but she could easily understand the overarching code choices that the researcher selected. The analyst suggested four additional codes.

Researcher Bias

To address reliability issues, the researcher should address known biases up front and be aware of preconceived notions based on her history and prior experiences before embarking on site visits. Scheurich (1994) remarked that one's historical position, one's class (which may or may not include changes over the course of a lifetime), one's race, one's gender, one's religion, and so on interact with and influence, limit, and constrain production of knowledge (as cited in Mehra, 2002). The researcher aimed for impartiality when visiting each university campus and when communicating with participants. The researcher was not an intimate participant or disruptive when gathering information. For this study, the researcher remained respectful of the campus and the entire campus community. As reflected in the transcripts, the researcher said very little during the

course of the interviews. The researcher spoke to communicate understanding and to prompt the participant for the next question. The researcher also employed reflexivity procedures to increase trustworthiness, maintaining personal notes to record the occurrence of personal bias during each site visit. In an effort to address known biases and make readers aware of them, a subjectivity statement is provided below.

Subjectivity Statement

Although part of Generation X, the researcher has parents who self-identify as helicopter parents. Helicopter parents are parents, particularly those with children in the Millennial generation, who watch over their children very closely and who are swift to take action in the event of anticipated danger or emergency. The parents of the researcher, for example, always came quickly if they perceived danger or threat to the researcher.

The researcher has observed the individuals in the parent service office at her university for many years. She understands their personalities and the way they deal with different types of situations. The researcher is aware that subjective bias can occur by observing individuals at other universities with different personalities. The synergy between their staff and other departments can be different from the interplay of interactions the researcher normally observes.

The researcher has been interested in the subject of helicopter parents for many years, as she observed them in her career of higher education administration in student affairs. By conducting this research, the researcher had the opportunity to better understand two stakeholders of universities: collegiate parents and administrator perceptions of the parent and parent offices.

Finally, the two university sites were selected based on recommendations of professionals working in the field of university parent relations. The researcher met those directors of the parent service offices at national conferences, which could lead to subjective bias.

Human Participants and Ethics Precautions

To ensure ethical considerations, the study underwent a formal review process through the institutional review board at The George Washington University before data collection. Participants received an overview of the study to inform them about the study and any potential risks. Participants read a Research Consent Form (See Appendix F) and verbally consented to the study, prior to the start of the interview. Participants had the opportunity to opt out of the study or of any specific question if they felt uncomfortable.

In order to protect confidentiality, all identifying data collected for this study related to participating institutions and/or individuals were removed by either creating aliases or deleting it. In addition, all documents, observation notes, and interview transcripts were stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computer. A year after approval of the dissertation, all documents with identifying information will be shredded.

In summary, Chapter 3 discussed the methodology techniques that were used for the dissertation study. In the next chapter, analysis from each of the site visit trips will be presented. At each site visit, the researcher collected documents, made observations, and conducted interviews. These data points will be reflected in the next chapter, when answering each research question. The site visits will be discussed independently of one another.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

Based on the demand for ensuring quality on college campuses as well as meeting expectations of parents, the purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which professionals in parent service offices at two research universities implemented quality-based services for their stakeholders. The data for this study were collected primarily through qualitative interviews to gain insight from university administrators about the parent service office. The semistructured interviews allowed for in-depth understanding about one specific office on a university campus. Other modes of data collection included observations of the campus and collections of pertinent documents. Together, these three forms of data provided a holistic view of how university parent service offices are collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes through the application of standards from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS), as well as administrators' perceptions of the role of the parent service office.

This chapter presents results for Site A and Site B separately, with sections reviewing the activities at the site and then addressing each of the research questions:

1. Using CAS standards and guidelines, how are university parent service offices collaborating with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes?
2. How do university administrators perceive the parent service office role on their campus?

3. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines?
 - 3a. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on mission?
 - 3b. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on leadership?
 - 3c. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on campus and external relations?
 - 3d. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on programming?

Site A: Process Overview

Institution A is located in the southeastern region of the United States. This public nonprofit institution has over 17,500 students; it offers comprehensive doctoral studies, but no medical or veterinary degrees. Women constitute 66% of the undergraduate population, and only 9% of students are from out of state. The parent component of Institution A has existed for 3 years and has dual responsibilities for new students and families of all students. One professional oversees the office and reports to the student affairs division. The number of families with which the office corresponds is unknown.

Prior to visiting Site A, the interviewer contacted a key member of the site staff, Participant A, the assistant director for new student and family programs, who also serves as the parent service office director. He was instrumental in identifying other individuals relevant to this study. He contacted five administrators, while the researcher contacted seven. Of the 12 administrators contacted, 11 consented to be interviewed (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Interview Participants from Site A

Participant code	Title	Division	Gender
A	Assistant Director, New Students and Family Programs	Student Affairs	Male
B	Chancellor	Office of the Chancellor	Female
C	Vice Chancellor	Student Affairs	Female
D	Director	Undergraduate Admissions	Female
E	Chief of Staff	Office of the Chancellor	Female
F	Director of Housing and Residence Life	Student Affairs	Male
G	University Counsel	Office of the Chancellor	Male
H	Dean of Students	Student Affairs	Male
I	University Registrar	Office of the Provost	Female
J	Director	College of Arts & Sciences Advising Center	Female
K	Assistant Athletic Director	Athletics	Male

The site visit to Institution A occurred over the course of a workweek, with an introductory non-research interview on Monday evening and the formal interviews concluding Friday morning. The researcher participated in a campus tour for prospective students and had ample opportunity for observation of the physical campus, the administrative staff, students, and (primarily on the campus tour) several parents. The schedule appears in Table 4.4. A detailed narrative of Site A immediately follows Table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Activities During the Visit to Site A

Day	Time	Activity	Comments
Monday	Evening	Hour-long informal interview with a colleague familiar with the university	Receive tips for parking and walking around campus; learn information about the school, including its history and student demographic information
Tuesday	Morning	Interview of Participant C	
	Morning, early afternoon	Observations	Observe the campus, bookstore, student information desk, food court
	Afternoon	Prospective student tour led by admission office, with 30-minute video and hour-long campus tour	Observe interactions between parents and prospective college students, as well as between parents and the college ambassador leading the tour; become further acclimated to the campus; make on-campus observations
Wednesday	Morning	Interview of Participants A, E, G	
	Midday	Lunch	Observe food court, coffee shop
	Afternoon	Interview of Participant D	
	Late afternoon	Observation of area around the university	
Thursday	Morning	Interview of Participants K and F	
	Midday	Lunch in food court with observations	
	Afternoon	Interview of Participant H	
Friday	Morning	Interview of Participants I and J	

Site A: Site Visit

Prior to conducting Site Visit A, the interviewer contacted a key member of the site staff, Participant A, the assistant director for new student and family programs, who also serves as the parent office director. Participant A was instrumental in providing contact information for the researcher, based on the key titles relevant to this study. The researcher gave Participant A the titles of people that she sought to interview in order to answer the research questions for this study. The parent office director contacted five

administrators, while the researcher contacted seven. Out of the 12 administrators contacted, 11 consented to be interviewed. This recruitment process took approximately 20 days.

Another task that the researcher completed prior to leaving for the site visit was signing up for a prospective student tour. Because parents are known to take campus tours, the researcher believed that she could freely observe interactions between parents and their prospective college student as well as between parents and the college ambassador leading the tour. Furthermore, the researcher believed the tour would be a good way to acclimate herself to the campus prior to the start of interviews. A tour would also provide an opportunity to make on-campus observations. The tours are led by the university's admissions office, which provides an overview of the campus. To sign up for the tour, the researcher visited Institution A's website for prospective graduate students and signed up for a tour time that aligned with when the researcher would be on campus. The earliest time that was available was the afternoon of the first day of administrator interviews.

A final step in the preparation work was to contact an individual who was familiar with the campus but who did not meet the criteria to be interviewed formally for the study. The researcher sought such a connection in order to better understand the campus culture and seek additional background information on the administrators she was planning to interview. However, this informal interview was not counted as part of the official interviews since the interviewee's position at Institution A was more student focused rather than administrator or parent focused. The researcher remembered a conversation she had had with a work colleague several months prior. He mentioned that

he had a friend who worked at this particular university. The researcher followed up with the colleague to secure contact information and proceeded to meet with this person.

The researcher arrived to the college town on a Monday evening. The researcher informally met with Informal Interviewee A at a local restaurant. The meeting lasted for approximately 1 hour. Informal Interviewee A gave the researcher tips for parking and walking around campus and historical information about the school, including its history, student demographic information, and parent demographic information. Informal Interviewee A confirmed that she did not interact with parents and could not comment about them. Upon conclusion of the meeting, the researcher returned to the hotel to reflect on what was discussed. The researcher looked at maps to determine the best place to park on campus and buildings that she wanted to observe. During this reflection period, the researcher also reviewed the interview protocol to ensure that she was very familiar with the questions prior to asking them. She also checked the electronic equipment to record the interviews to ensure they were both functioning properly.

On the next day, Tuesday, the researcher left the hotel at 8:30 AM to travel to the campus by car. The drive took approximately 20 minutes. The researcher parked in a parking facility that was very close to the building of the first interview. From the outside, the researcher observed a two-story brick building with very thin, symmetrical windows. Inside, the researcher was surprised to see the open lobby format, where abundant seating was available in the interior of the lobby, with offices around the perimeter. The researcher guessed it was a building from the 1970s. The interior had dark brown hues, where the floor tiles were dark brown and most walls were red brick. Prominent signs adorned the tops of offices so that the university community knew the

exact location of each office. The researcher observed that the building contained offices for student affairs, the cashier, undergraduate studies, human resources, and the registrar. In the middle of the atrium was a concierge desk that offered information about the campus and a place for a staff member to sit. However, the desk was not staffed at the time of the researcher's arrival. The researcher quickly found the student affairs office but noted that she was 30 minutes early for the appointment. She decided to sit in one of the benches to review notes and observe surroundings for a few minutes before entering the office. The researcher noted that although very few people were entering and leaving the offices, the building was noisy from the acoustics in the room. Laughter and conversation flowed from various offices in the building.

Approximately 10 minutes before the scheduled interview time, the researcher entered the office area of Participant C. The researcher was immediately greeted by a receptionist, who confirmed the appointment. The researcher looked at the small waiting area to the left of the desk and noticed a few chairs and a few pictures of large flowers on the wall. The receptionist said that Participant C was just finishing up a phone call and to have a seat, pointing in the direction of the few chairs. The receptionist asked if the researcher wanted anything to drink, but the researcher declined. After the researcher sat down, the researcher noticed a small table of campus periodicals, including a yearbook and an alumni magazine. As the researcher took the alumni magazine to skim through it, she overheard the receptionist carrying on a conversation about a staff meeting. The researcher looked back through the book, noting different accomplishments of alumni. The researcher waited a few more minutes before she heard Participant C's greeting and

apology for keeping the researcher waiting. Participant C took the researcher to her office.

Participant C's office was rather large and filled with pictures and the school's mementos. The researcher noted windows on one side of the room, next to the desk that Participant C sat at using her computer. Next to the door, there were cases of bookshelves. Even with the outside light and a few lamps in the office, the office still seemed dark. The researcher and Participant C sat across from each other at a table with four chairs.

Upon conclusion of the interview, the researcher went to the middle of the atrium of the building and sat on one of the benches to both reflect on the interview and ascertain next steps for the day. She thought that the interview went faster than expected. Given the semistructured format, she wondered about additional questions to ask to expand the interview time, including questions about the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), since probing for information would potentially inform both Research Questions 1 and 2. While the researcher was sitting there, she noticed that the atrium had more people walking around, and the concierge desk in the middle of the floor was now staffed. However, she did not observe any visitors use the concierge desk. It only appeared that staff would greet each other.

Because she had 3½ hours before the admissions tour, the researcher decided to use the time to walk around campus to make observations. As she walked to the student union, she noticed the landscaped, green lawn. Different white cement pathways led to the student union, and about five students were walking around, all with backpacks. Two of them walked in groups of two and one was by herself.

When the interviewer arrived at the front of the student union, she observed the particulars about the building. It looked like it had been built fairly recently, probably in the last 10 years. The building was constructed with both brick and cement and had very large windows in the front. It was two stories high. The path leading up to the building was compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), with no steps to climb and several automatic glass doors allowing easy access for a wheelchair. The researcher observed a vinyl banner hanging at the top of the building congratulating the seniors of the school.

The researcher entered the building through the glass doors. She walked down a long hallway and noticed a food court on the right, which was not yet open for business. To the left of the food court were a number of periodical bins. The researcher looked for a current edition of the student newspaper or for any periodical that a university parent would find useful, but was not able to locate anything. Instead, she found some leftover inserts from past publications and an abstract art publication. The researcher continued down the hallway and observed the entrance to the bookstore. The researcher opted to continue walking through the hallway and toured three levels of the building. She passed by a coffee shop with tables on the outside as well as a student information desk near a staircase. The student information desk, which was staffed by two students, offered information about student organizations and other general information about the university.

The researcher went back to the bookstore to look around. She was surprised to find a two-level bookstore. The first level consisted of clothing and other collegiate merchandise. The researcher went in search of specific merchandise with the words of

“parent,” “mom,” or “dad.” She quickly found mugs that had the college name and “mom” and “dad” as well as “grandma.” There were also “mom” and “dad” license plate holders and “mom” and “dad” decals. No clothing was available for moms, but there were t-shirts and sweatshirts for dads—probably because of the proximity of Father’s Day. The upper floor of the bookstore contained essentials for classroom use, including books, notebooks, and writing instruments.

The researcher then walked to the food court to get some lunch and to observe students. There were only about 10 to 15 students in the facility. At first glance, the researcher noted several nationalities among the students. Although the researcher was not intent on eavesdropping on any conversation, she did detect jovial conversations, as she continuously heard loud, boisterous laughter from around the room. She also observed some students sitting at tables using computers, with earbuds in their ears.

When it was time to leave the area, the researcher gathered her belongings and headed upstairs to begin the prospective student tour. She followed the signs to the designated room for the tour and was greeted by an admissions representative who found the researcher’s name and checked her off on the list.

The researcher took a seat towards the back of the room. She observed seven families. During the introductory session, the researcher found that six families were from in state and one family was from out of state. Each group had at least two people in its party; the researcher was the only solo student attending the session. The session began with a 30-minute video that provided history and statistics about the school. After the video ended, groups were designated as “freshmen” and “graduate students and transfer students.” The researcher had signed up for the graduate student session prior to

visiting Site A and opted for that tour. The tour was led by two rising undergraduate seniors who introduced themselves immediately. The two students were very pleasant, and the researcher observed that they made good ambassadors for the university.

There were three prospective students on the tour. Immediately after the tour went outside of the building, the tour guides stopped to point out information about the student union. The researcher observed one parent taking notes and asking many questions that did not pertain to the student union, while the accompanying student was more interested in her smartphone than the tour. It was evident to the researcher that the parent was much more interested in the school and/or tour than the student was. Several parents asked questions during the course of the tour on topics such as housing, transportation, and laptop rentals. The tour took approximately an hour. The group walked around the campus and inside some buildings. The tour directors ensured that the building tours were in line with the prospective students' interests. Three quarters of the way through the tour, one student left to meet with a professor. The parent of the student stayed and continued to make observations on the tour. The tour concluded where it had started. As the researcher had no further meetings that day, she returned to the hotel to begin the transcription process and to reflect on everything she had seen, including the documents that she collected from the tour.

The following day, Wednesday, the researcher left the hotel at 7:45 AM for the 20-minute drive to campus. Now familiar with the campus, the researcher knew the exact parking lot to park in, how to get to the student center, and the location of the next interview. Since the researcher arrived at the parent and orientation office 20 minutes early for her 8:30 AM interview, she decided to sit on one of the benches away from the

parent office to make observations and reflect on the interview questions. The hallway that the researcher was in was very long and had many large windows, allowing a lot of sunlight through. Since the office was in the student center, the researcher was a bit surprised that there were not more students around. However, the researcher quickly realized that it was still early in the morning and the school was on a summer session schedule, drastically reducing the number of students on campus. The hallway was lined with four straight-lined benches and two chairs. Directly across from the interviewer were offices, through which laughter was permeating. The black and beige carpet had bold swirling designs.

The researcher was excited about this interview, as it was the first time she was speaking with a parent office staff member. Participant A also served as the gatekeeper for referrals of staff interviews. After their many email exchanges, the researcher was looking forward to meeting him in person.

The researcher walked down the hall to Participant A's office. As soon as she walked in, the researcher noticed the student greeter was on the telephone. The desk had a built-in half wall separating the staff from the office visitors. The researcher noticed the area behind the student was a bit cramped but very spirited with university propaganda. The researcher reminded herself that this was also an orientation office for first-year students. The researcher met with Participant A extremely quickly after she arrived. After shaking hands, Participant A gestured towards one of the two seats in front of his desk. The office was large, although smaller than that of Participant C. There were personal awards hanging on the wall, as well as college orientation paraphernalia on a bookcase.

The researcher noted that the furniture in the room looked fairly new. A line of windows provided natural light to the office.

The researcher left the interview in high spirits, as Participant C provided a great deal of detail about Site A's parent office. In fact, the researcher was pleased that the meeting went a little over its allotted time. The researcher walked back to the building where she had met with Participant C in order to meet with Participant E. As the researcher was a little early for the appointment, she took a seat at one of the benches again in the atrium and reviewed her notes in preparation for her next interview. After she reviewed the notes for 10 minutes, she took the elevator up to Participant E's office. As the researcher pushed the button to the elevator, she was amused that the building did not look like it had more than two levels and she wondered how they had built the building.

The researcher announced herself to the receptionist. The reception area was dark but very elegant, with dark leather furniture. The receptionist called Participant E's office and encouraged the researcher to take a seat, as Participant E was running a little bit behind schedule. The interviewer sat for 5 to 10 minutes when Participant E came out, shook hands with the researcher, and led her back to her office. They sat at a round table with a few chairs around it.

Upon conclusion of the interview, the researcher thanked Participant E and the receptionist for their time and help. The researcher had a little bit of time before her next interview, so she went back to the atrium to sit on the bench, since her next interview was in the same building.

When the time came to go to Participant G's office, the researcher felt more prepared finding his office. When she arrived, she was a little confused about where she

should go as there was no receptionist at the front desk. The researcher heard voices down a hall and she felt a little uncomfortable walking through offices to find the location of the voices. As she was walking, a woman noticed the researcher and asked if she could help. The researcher indicated that she had a meeting with Participant G. Apparently the woman was talking to Participant G and informed him of the researcher's presence. The woman finished her conversation with Participant G and instructed the researcher to go in. The researcher sat in one of the two seats in front of the desk of Participant G.

Because the interview was relatively short and there was time before her next interview, the researcher went back to the student center to get some lunch. She sat in the same place that she had sat the previous day and noticed that there were more people in the student center and more eatery options open, probably because it was a little later in the day. The same type of diverse students seemed to be in the student center. The researcher noticed that there were students playing ball and Frisbee outside as well.

After enjoying lunch, the researcher decided to change locations. She went to the coffee shop area in the same building to people watch until her interview. Many people were going in and out of the coffee shop. There was one enthusiastic administrator who was engaging with his colleagues as well as students. The researcher wondered if the person was affiliated with the student affairs office and potentially someone she may meet in the next few days.

With 30 minutes left, the researcher left the coffee shop and the student center to walk over to meet with Participant D. Participant D was in another part of campus and in another building that the researcher had not been in before. When the researcher arrived

at the building, she immediately reflected how stately it looked. It felt like she was entering someone's majestic house. When she walked in, she saw a big desk staffed by two students. One of the students was the tour director from the previous day's tour. Although he didn't appear to remember the researcher, the researcher thanked him again for an informative tour. The researcher indicated that she was there for an appointment with Participant D. The student called Participant D and informed her that the researcher had arrived. Participant D needed a few more minutes and the student instructed the researcher to take a seat. She walked into an elegantly appointed room with hardwood floors, an Asian rug, and light-colored furniture. The researcher opted to sit in a winged chair. The researcher noticed some impressive-looking publications on the tables in front and to the left of her. She picked one up and started to skim through it. Participant D then arrived and led the researcher upstairs to her office. They sat at a table and the interview was conducted.

Having conducted four interviews for the day, the researcher returned to her hotel to reflect on the day and begin the transcription process. Because the researcher was more comfortable with her surroundings, she observed some of the area that the university was situated in as she was driving home. She noticed that many trees lined the streets around the school. She also noticed that with the exception of one side of the school, the school was in a highly residential area of the city. The random side had storefronts and appeared to be an industrial area of the city. A few miles past the storefronts, the researcher passed by the regional sports arena used for sporting events and some university events.

The next day, Thursday, the researcher felt more comfortable with the route and the parking area. She left at 8:00 AM for her 9:00 AM appointment with Participant K.

Participant K's office was in a building that the researcher was not familiar with. En route to Participant K, she had to stop to ask for directions from a few people. Both people empathized with the researcher, indicating that the building was indeed a maze. When the researcher arrived at Participant K's office, she marveled at how modern the building looked. There was a lot of open space. She was on a second floor of an atrium. Although she walked on the perimeter, she could easily look down to see the first floor. When the researcher walked into Participant K's office, she was greeted by a student. She indicated that she had an appointment with Participant K. The student said that he was finishing up a meeting but informed the researcher that she could knock on his door. Before the researcher was able to move, another student indicated that he did not think that Participant K had arrived as of yet. He went to knock on the door and there was no answer. The students informed the researcher to have a seat to wait for Participant K. The researcher waited for about 15 minutes before Participant K walked into the office. Participant K led the researcher to a conference room with a big mahogany board table, where Participant K and the researcher sat facing caddy-corner to each other.

When the meeting finished with Participant K, the researcher thanked the students on the way out and walked to another part of the campus. She remembered that she passed by Participant F's office when she met with Informal Interviewee A. She went to the building but the door was locked. The researcher peered inside the windowed door to see if she could see anything, but she could only see an empty hallway. There was a picnic table nearby. She decided to sit down to review the map, building location, and time of interview. She verified that everything was correct. The researcher called Informal Interviewee A to see if she had any ideas. Informal Interviewee A did not pick

up the phone. Finally the researcher asked two students who were nearby about the locked door. They informed the researcher that Participant F's office was two buildings down. She walked down to the correct building and was in front of a nice-sized building with a door that students were already going in and out of.

The researcher entered the door and saw a large room with an Asian rug and a large desk in the center that was staffed by a student. The researcher informed the student that she had an appointment with Participant F. The student called Participant F, who indicated that he would be right out. The student informed the researcher to take a seat to the right of where the researcher was standing. As soon as the researcher sat down, Participant F came out to greet the researcher. Participant F gestured the researcher to follow him back to his office.

Participant F's office was relatively small but cozy. The walls had dark paneling. There was a large-air conditioning unit in the window. The researcher chose to sit on one side of the room in a chair, while Participant F sat on the other side of the room.

Upon completion of the interview, the researcher walked back to the student center. After getting some lunch, the researcher went upstairs for the final interview of the day with Participant H. The office reception area was about the same size as Participant C's waiting area. The walls were white and the chairs had a light beige cover. The receptionist informed the researcher that Participant H was on his way back from another meeting and to have a seat. The researcher waited about 1 to 2 minutes. During that time, she noticed several large posters intended for students hanging on the wall. Before the researcher had an opportunity to fully comprehend the posters' messages, Participant H walked in the door and encouraged the researcher to come into his office.

Participant H's office was fairly large. It too was dark, as it was lit by a single lamp. But the researcher noted that the office seemed very friendly and inviting.

As the researcher left the office, she reflected that Participant H provided a wealth of information and that he had a passion for his job. She then thought about how friendly all the participants of her interviews had been at Site A. All of them were extremely welcoming and gave the researcher a lot of time.

On the final day of interviews, the researcher woke up early to work on transcripts from the previous day and prepared to check out of the hotel. She left the hotel at 8:15 AM in preparation for her 9:00 AM interview. The interview was at the building where she had met with Participants C, E, and G. The researcher felt very comfortable with time and where to park in relation to the building. Participant I's office was perpendicular to Participant C's office. When the researcher arrived for the interview, she noticed a few staff members talking to each other. She stood there for about a minute when one of them asked if she could help. The researcher informed the staff member about the meeting with Participant I. It turned out that one of the people engaged in conversation was Participant I. As the researcher looked around the office, she noticed that the outer office stretched farther back and was wider than she would have thought. There were a lot of cubicles within the outer office, but the ambiance was light and airy.

Participant I looked for an empty conference room and instructed the researcher to follow her. She indicated that the conference room might be needed for another purpose, and the researcher indicated a willingness to move if need be. The conference room had a large, dark board table with large black swivel chairs. The furniture appeared to be new.

When the interview concluded, the interviewer walked across the campus for her final interview. She observed how green the campus was between the grass and the trees. The university landscape was well manicured. The researcher observed that the campus had a collegiate feel to it, with cement pathways that were lined by several academic buildings, one next to the other.

When the researcher arrived at the building where Participant J's office was, she saw a sign indicating that the office was in the process of moving to another location on campus. The feel of the office reminded the researcher of being in someone's home. The researcher walked through a screen door. Inside there was a large room and several smaller offices. There were brochures about advising sitting on a table. The researcher announced that she was there to meet with Participant J. Participant J and the researcher connected about 10 minutes later.

Upon finishing the interview with Participant J, the researcher walked back to the car. She reflected on the wealth of information provided to her by all the interviewees. She also reflected on the generosity of the administrators in providing their time and insight to her study. She was glad that she had done a site visit at this particular school and was hoping that the next site would be equally fulfilling.

Site A: Findings for Research Question 1, Collaboration for Quality Student Development and Student Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this research question was to better understand the ways in which university parent service offices collaborated with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes. The CAS standards guided the data analysis for this question. The CAS preamble states, "The CAS

philosophy is grounded in beliefs about excellence in higher education, collaboration between teacher and learner, ethics in educational practice, student development as a major goal of higher education, and student responsibility for learning. Taken together, these beliefs about practice shape the vision for all CAS endeavors” (CAS, 2009, p. 18). CAS’s philosophy combines the goals of collaboration, student development, and student learning outcomes. Therefore, the researcher investigated how university parent service offices collaborated with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and learning outcomes, using the CAS standards and guidelines. Two themes emerged as ways the university parent service offices collaborated with parents: (a) connecting parents and families to campus through systematic communication efforts and (b) cultivating parent and family ambassadors.

Theme 1: Connecting Parents and Families to Campus Through Systematic Communication Efforts

CAS indicates that “institutions are responsible for creating learning environments that provide a choice of educational opportunities and challenge students to learn and develop while providing support to nurture their development” (CAS, 2009, p. 9). A student’s development can be supported in several ways. At the Site A parent service office, it was done through ongoing communication with parents so that parents could understand their student’s collegiate experience, as well as the resources available to support their student. Once parents gain perspective and understand resources, they are better equipped to help their student succeed. Participant A spoke about the importance of supporting student development through the means of communicating “student success”:

We all want the students to grow and develop, we all want the students to be successful, we all want the students to graduate, we all want the students to get a good job and, you know, be the best people they can be. . . . So making sure that we understand that as a campus community as well as parents understanding that we have that similar goal too.

Communication was a key factor between parents and students. Participant A summarized how often parents and students talk to one another:

Parents are backbones and students talk to the parents on average of once a day, whether that's via text message, via phone, or via Facebook. There's some sort of communication between a parent and students once a day, for about 45% of our students, which is a huge number. It's an enormous number. So we—I think we need to be communicating effectively with those parents and making sure they're communicating effectively with us.

Participant A noted that it was easier to communicate with more involved parents than less involved ones, especially from the start of the student's time at the school. He observed:

There's a lot of people that . . . don't want parent and family members communicating with students nowadays; they see helicopter parents or bulldozer parents. I would much rather see a parent that is overtly involved than not involved at all. I think that's an important thing. We have a lot of parents that will drop their students off on the first day or the move-in day and won't even help them move boxes into rooms. It's like: Here you go; go. . . . There's reasons for that; part of that's because of work schedules, . . . but we must be able to communicate with those parents. So they communicate with their students; that's the important key. So I'd rather have an overinvolved parent than a noninvolved parent any day.

Participant A ascertained that collaboration usually occurred with involved parents. In order to gauge on-campus parental involvement patterns, a phone log was used to keep records of parental interaction with the office. He continued by stating,

So more parent involvement, more phone calls. We log our phone calls in our office, so we now—not necessarily who called but we know why they called. So if we see a pattern we can address that pattern, and I would like to see more phone calls.

Although on-campus parental engagement with the university could occur at any time, interaction typically began during freshman orientation. Freshman orientation at Site A occurred in the summer, with sessions for both first-year students and their parents. After a student was accepted into Site A, orientation was usually the first formal opportunity for school and parent interaction. Participant A observed,

Orientation is the first introduction parents have at campus at many places, so it's the first time they can really interact with us. So it's kind of a natural fit. If you think about it's, if we've built our relationship first, . . . we just maintain the relationship. Most of our parent and family members that are contacting us are first-year parent family members. I feel like part of that's because students have more hurdles and concerns the first year than any other year.

Because the parent service office also jointly sponsored first-year orientation, the parent service office director talked about both initiatives fluently. He spoke in depth about how the school presented student development theory to both first-year students and parents:

Student development—well, of course, we're always focusing on Maslow. If you look at our schedule, orientations are all Maslow. Where you're going to eat, where you're going to sleep, where you're going to drink, where you're going to have your fun. So the first thing when you walk in, we do a welcome and then we do taking care of business, which talks about food, talks about [obtaining a student ID] card, talks about getting your books. And then we build on that and next session's housing, so where you're going to live. So taking care of those basic needs before we move up to the academic needs. So definitely say there's a Maslow format to what we do at orientation. There is a big focus on the early part of [Arthur] Chickering's [Seven Vectors Theory]. So the first four vectors. But there's a focus on those first four factors in the first-year experience and the first-year experience program. We do like to include that information, stuff on the first four factors, stuff on the basics early in the school year for a parent/family member. So when we go into our e-newsletter, will include housing information, early in this semester include more dining information.

Although administrators spoke to parents and first-year students about student development fundamentals, parents were also asked about goals for their students.

Participant A reflected on past orientations when this question was asked and correlated how student development theory plays into parents' wants and needs for the students:

I think that they are looking at us every year at orientation: What's your goal for parent/family members? And parent/family members from the audience shouted up to the stage: They're all looking for jobs. They want jobs; they want their students to have jobs. They want their students to grow and develop and be successful. They want their students to graduate; that's always their number one answer. And it all has to go back with them getting jobs. So basically, they don't want their students at home after they graduate. It's basically what I conclude, but you know I think they're all looking for—if you're looking at Chickering, they're all looking for the last two vectors, really, to be achieved. And they're looking to us, as the university, to help them get to that point. So we're laying the foundation for that and we're encouraging relationship building between students and parent/family members. We're encouraging parents to have conversations about how the dynamic within the family is going to change, because it's a huge shift.

In the previous quote, Participant A indicated that he encouraged relationship building between parents and students. He reflected on this thought further as he stressed to parents at orientation to “help us, help you” when it comes to the students' well-being. He stated:

So we have the same goal in mind. And that's how I explained it at orientation: We have the same goal; help us reach that goal. Let us know what's happening in your student's life. Let us know how we can help you. You know your student best. You can tell when you call, when you call them when they sound down. You can tell and we can help.

To ensure that collaboration continued past orientation, the parent service office ensured that there were easy communication methods in place. One new method for parents and the parent service office to stay in touch past orientation was through texting.

Participant A indicated:

I think we need to be communicating effectively with those parents and making sure that they're communicating effectively with us. I'd like to see us expand our role in many ways. Advocacy is number one—making sure that we have as many ways for them to touch us as possible. So we've just added a texting number where they can text us questions and we'll give them an answer back in 24 hours.

Participant A also indicated that another mainstream way of communicating with parents after orientation was through the parent service office website:

We're currently redoing our website. We have to redo our website by August 1 to be in conjunction with the new [school] standards. We recently reworked our newsletter. . . . We added a campus calendar so parent/family members can see what's happening on campus.

Participants C, F, and H all cited the parent service office newsletter as a communication method that kept parents informed about current events and activities around the university. The newsletter helped parents foster student development as parents understood their role in the student's collegiate experience. Participant H explained:

It's things going on in campus, any kind of explanation if we had an emergency. . . . There's always a tip: tips to helping your son or daughter who is about to graduate find a job; what's your role as a parent in helping them do that; or tips on helping students transition. Because we can do it here, but also parents play a major role in that too.

Although text messaging, the website, and the newsletter were cited as examples of communication methods between the parent service office and parents to promote student development, Participant A noted that communication with parents was not always easy. One particular communication challenge that Participant A noted was a result of the socioeconomic level of parents. He surmised:

I think our parent/family members—we try to give them as much information as we can. I think that there's . . . just not enough information out there to give them. And every office saying "seek it out on the website" is not necessarily right, especially [for] socioeconomically poor parents. There's not access to Internet at home; they have to go to the library. We have to come up with ways for us to communicate more effectively with them.

Parents confirmed that they received and read a high amount of communication from both the parent service office and the parent association, based on a 2011 needs assessment survey (Parent and Family Needs Assessment, 2011, p. 5).

With all these methods of communication, a parent was given tools and resources by the university to effectively communicate with their student at Site A. This could result in students developing critical thinking skills. Participant H advocated for parental communication with their student:

Establish expectations with your son or daughter that, while I don't want you to call me every day, checking with you once a week, it's okay to say, "I'm paying a part of your tuition, so I like to be informed of your grade" or something like that. The student development is helping that student to develop critical thinking skills, like when they call, don't look to always try to give them an answer. . . . Don't look at it as "you're making bad choices," [but] "How can you turn it around?" Make it positive and say: "What did you learn from that, and did you think about what might be some of your consequences in terms of academic and stuff like that?" And so, even that gets into all about student development in terms of ethical decision making.

Because parents were paying tuition, many felt that they had a right to see their student's grades. When parents called university offices, they were often met with resistance by administrators and faculty who cited the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as the reason they could not talk about specific grades. FERPA (also called the Buckley Amendment) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student personal information at any U.S. school when the student is over the age of 18. Many parents are unaware of the law. By informing parents about the law, the parent service office and the parents were able to work together for the success of the student. Participant A reflected on where FERPA information was posted around the university:

So the dean of students office, right, [had a] section on [FERPA in the] parent family guide, so they [parents] have it written in front of them when they come

home. . . . For orientation we explained it, and our parent family welcome orientation [explained it] in great depth. We have a section on our website that explains it. But the biggest piece is when I'm on the phone with someone and the parents [are] calling and saying, "I really want to know what my student's grade is in this class." Yeah, I can look it up; I can't tell them, but I can look it up. . . . Not being able to tell them this is difficult, and it's a difficult concept for them to grasp is "I'm paying all this money. Why can I not know?"

So usually what I do is explain the federal law. Once they hear federal law, they're usually, "Oh, whoa, this isn't the state law." Once they hear federal law and then we talk about the situation that they are bringing up and what a normal route would be, if that was the case. So we don't confirm that it's the case but we'll say, "Okay, if your student is making a C or D in this class and you want to get them help, I will talk to Undergraduate Student Excellence; we'll submit an anonymous report." They'll email them and bring them in for a meeting. At the meeting, they'll talk about student success, they'll talk to them, get them signed up for [a] tutor if they need that. They'll get them all situated as best they can, and usually that appeases them.

Participant D agreed that one of Participant A's main communication roles was around FERPA. By clarifying parental perspective on the federal law, the parent service office indirectly helped parents and students work together to ensure student success.

Participant D observed about the parent service office director:

I would imagine that he advises and at some point in time about FERPA and about the things that are in place that might seem like unreasonable obstacles but those that are imposed on us as an institution. And here's how you can deal with it and if you really want access to all of the student's information, that's a discussion between the two of you and there's a way to formalize it. And so I think it helps the institution seem less rigid. So in short, I think it fosters good communication about some things that are probably on parents' minds.

Although Participant A indicated that the office focused on student development, there was less emphasis on collaborating with parents for student learning outcomes.

Participant A stated:

So as for connecting the parent/family programs, we do not have specific student learning outcomes because we have not figured out how we measure that . . . but we do in our first-year experience side. There is a student learning goal. Then so

not calling it a learning outcome—there’s a big debate on whether there’s an outcome or goal.

Although formal learning outcomes had not been identified by the parent service office, the office knew that newsletter information was communicated to students by their parents. This transaction ensured that the student was learning about Site A cross-campus initiatives. Participant A noted,

We know . . . there is learning going on. We know that 70% of the newsletter gets down to students through their parent and family members, so that information is being shared.

For Site A’s parent service office, there was an emphasis on communicating with parents on the importance of student development to achieve student success. The parent service office staff recognized that student development required a team effort including the office, the parents, the student, and other members of the university. Site A’s parent service office began this collaboration as early as orientation and remained a resource to parents as long as a student was enrolled at the university. Communication was achieved through presentations, phone calls, text messaging, and the parent service office website. Because the parents of undergraduate students at Site A had a range of circumstances, the parent service office tried to understand the needs of its parental audience to ensure communication with the maximum number of parents.

Theme 2: Cultivating Parent and Family Ambassadors

Another way that the Site A parent service office worked together with parents for the purposes of student development was through the cultivation of parent and family ambassadors. An ambassador panel of parents, known as the parent council, was formed with the intent of having a select group of parents serve as a group of representatives for

parental issues; this group also had fiduciary responsibilities for parental donations. Both the parental representation and fiduciary responsibility directly supported student success through student development. Participant C gave a brief synopsis of the origin of the parent council at Site A:

One of my close colleagues had a parent/family council that was raising a lot of money for student affairs. And so my thinking was here is an opportunity for me to start something and eventually maybe lead into a development arm of parents who could support student affairs, because we don't have a constituency that we can pull from for donors, because the School of Business takes the business students, [the School of] Education [takes its students], . . . , all the academic units; you know, there is nothing left.

So the parents were a natural constituency for us to consider, but we had to build friends. . . . So we set it up as in an advisory capacity. We invited them to campus twice a year and we educated them about the university. We've used them as our advocates over the years for budget issues with our general assembly, and they have been very effective in that respect.

Participant A agreed with Participant C's sentiments when it came to building a parent alliance first. Once the relationships were built, soliciting donations specifically from parents was the next step. Participant A indicated:

I think that that's important in us building those relationships and making sure that, like, our parent/family council is who allocates the money is also giving money, making sure that we are being as good stewards in the university, good stewards with information, being team players with development and giving them the information they need to be successful. Currently, there is no fundraising plan for parent and family members. So I've been pushing.

Participant A noted that the council "allocates money." This notion of money allocation to support student services contributes to student success through student development. It gives students opportunities they may not have had otherwise. Participant C discussed parent council allocations:

And each year we made telephone calls. They give parents a choice as to whether they want to donate to [Site A's] Families Fund, which then is allocated by the

parent/family council, or if they want to give to an academic unit, and most of the money goes there. But over the years we have been the beneficiary of anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

So we've done things like buy a teaching station for career services, resource materials for multicultural resource center, benches for our walking trail, safety equipment for our rape aggression defense classes, as well as other safety items that they give out, like the little pen lights to put on our keychain and whatever they decide to give out and we give those first to the police. The parent/family program now funds half of the cost for us to run leadership every year for 60 to 70 students who are here. They have also established a scholarship that is awarded ever year. . . . There are so many things that they have done out of that fund over the years that have been beneficiaries. It's not a lot of money but it makes a big difference to the students here.

Participant F commented on his experience with allocation:

I've actually presented before the parent/family [council] a couple of times since I've been here, mostly on housing and our strategic plan and projects with them. They also very pretty graciously funded us over the past 2 years, have kind of, they've raised money and they've done it with some of their money to [add] game equipment in the residence house.

Participant H commented on academic uses of the funds:

The other thing is the parents [council], they have established scholarships and . . . actually contribute to a part of money that allows departments to apply for grants that has things to enhance the college experience for students.

Parental donations to Site A's student affairs contributed to student development by allowing students to have opportunities that they may not have had otherwise. While the parent service office director and vice chancellor appreciated the funding, they believed that the council would be able to do more in the future, in terms of participation and financial commitment. These actions would further contribute to student development. Participant A commented on the demographics of the council:

We do have some business guys on there; we have a couple of CEOs, a couple of guys that probably feel that they make a lot of money, [a] couple of realtors. But overall it's teachers, which is great, because they want to be involved, they really

want to be involved, they're really passionate about it. But the vision for the council when it was founded was a development council. But we never moved in that direction. So how are we going to move in that direction is something of, that's a challenge.

But I'd say our base challenge right now is . . . how we're going to make them more of a development piece. How we're going to make it more effective, how we're going to get more of the right people on the council. And how we're going to balance the people that really want to be on the council and maybe could, can't afford to be on the council.

The data demonstrated the parent council's importance to student development for student success. With the council's funding initiatives, students ultimately benefited by being afforded more opportunities than if the funding did not materialize.

Site A: Findings for Research Question 2,

University Administrator Perceptions of the Role of the Parent Service Office

Site A's parent service office was multifaceted. In addition to handling both orientation and parent responsibilities, it was also responsible for being a liaison between parents and other administrators. Because the parent service office often made referrals to other administrators, it was essential that these university administrators formed perceptions of the parent service office. Findings of this study revealed that many administrators not only knew about the parent service office on campus, but also worked collaboratively with the office to ensure initiatives were uniformly presented to the parents. They viewed the parent service office as helpful, especially when administrators reflected on the limited volume of parental questions they received in their office. When asked about perceptions of what the on-campus parent service office did, three main themes emerged: (1) a communication conveyor between parents and administrators, (2) an event coordinator, and (3) an advocate of parents with other administrators.

Theme 1: Communication Conveyor

Fielding many questions from parents, the Site A parent service office relied on telephone, a website, email, a newsletter, and texting as the primary modes of communication to parents. Collectively, these modes provided robust university information to parents on both a macro and micro level that encompassed topics regarding university initiatives to answer specific parent questions associated with their student's life at the university. With this proactive communication approach, the parent service office answered most parent questions that came through the university.

Participant C confirmed that the parent service office helped her office:

[Parents] don't contact me so much, because they are told when they're here at orientation that they . . . have a generic email address [they can use to contact the university]. They have obviously telephones, and they have now [been] introduced to [the] texting system. So they use that office as the conduit through which to identify where the appropriate office is that they need to be referred. So that office actually handles a lot of questions and responses. You know, that's not to say that we don't get occasional concerns and complaints registered that end up on my desk. But I would say on average is if I look at the last 2 years, no more than one or two a month.

Participant D agreed with Participant C's perception that the parent service office handled many parent questions. Upon being asked what she thought the parent service office did on a daily basis with parents, Participant D responded,

I honestly don't know other than what's on the website. I mean, I imagine that there are dozens of calls that come in to them before they ever make it to the dean of student's office. And so I think they're probably a resource and kind of a triage operation on a daily basis, aside from their events in the public face that they present to the university. And my guess is that they're welcoming that too so that parents feel like there is somebody I can call and get some direction.

Participant E also felt that one of the parent service office's primary roles was communication:

I think their role is communication. When there are issues that are going on, like when the tuition increased 2 and 3 years in a row, there's—that's a strong vehicle for communicating with the parents as to why this happened, what this will mean, if you have questions call this number. I think they are great advocates in communication. When we need advocacy, you know, people to write letters to the legislator or to the governor, our parents are right on it. You know, I think that group helps facilitate that.

Participant B also confirmed that the parent service office assisted her office's efforts in interacting with parents as well:

We do have obviously a very strong relationship with our student affairs division, and the parent and family operations are run by student affairs. So very often, when we do receive calls, parents have called us directly before exploring other opportunities to resolve issues. So very often, we are able to direct them back to the Office of Student Affairs to witness issues around registration or housing.

Participant F agreed that the office was a clearinghouse of resources:

I think they work really hard to try to be the central source of information and resource [so] that a parent can call them pretty much [about] anything. And they can get support there or get redirected to the private person or referrer or whatever. So I think that . . . certainly helps in our office so much, because I think it limits the number of calls we get. . . . It limits parents calling, trying to get a hold of an RA [resident assistant] or the coordinator of residence life, any of those kind of things. So I don't get, it could be the nature of our students to some degree as well, but I—we don't get a huge amount of calls here.

Participant I also commented on her perceptions of how the parent service office contributed to student development. She stated,

My sense is that they try to be really proactive, just in the emails that I've received from them about the kind of information they're looking for to put out in their newsletters. I think they really try to reach out to parents; they try to find ways to keep parents in touch with their students in ways that are not—that allow the student to feel some sort of autonomous thought.

When administrators were asked about their perceptions of the parent service office, many of them spoke broadly about the everyday functions of the office. For

example, Participant D listed what she thought the on-campus parent service office was responsible for:

The [summer] send-off, the family weekend, a pretty active website, a newsletter. I think, you know, also just being available for calls and things like that. And I know they do extensive programming at [freshmen orientation] both times of year.

Participant E described the parent service office in the following way:

I don't really know what they do, but I always saw [the parent service office] as like the college version of the PTA [parent-teacher association]. There are college parents, school parents who want to be involved. They want to know what's going on at the school that their child is attending. They want to feel connected, and that's why I see that office, that's their job, to connect the parents, address issues and concerns they have, figure out, get information from the parents as to how we can help their children—well, PTA but for college.

Participant H had the following observations about the role of the parent service office:

What I'm familiar with is that on a daily basis they want to keep parents informed. They want to push as much information out to parents as it relates to anything related to their son or daughter or the things that are going on, on campus. I also see that office role as . . . providing those tools in terms of how do you, for lack of a better word, manage your son or daughter while they are in a college experience. And then the other piece of it really is . . . getting the information out to parents. . . . Some primary functions [are] the parent weekend orientation, welcome weekend, and as well as the newsletter, as well as keeping the website information up-to-date as it relates to the parent/family.

Theme 2: Event Coordinator

Although the parent service office took on many responsibilities including communication and working with various administrators, it was also known around campus for planning events. Many administrators indicated that they saw the parent service office as being an event coordinator for a plethora of different events, including minor events that keep parents engaged with the campus, as well as larger events such as

first-year student and parent orientation and family weekend. The parent service office director described a few of the smaller events that promoted parental engagement:

We advertise an opportunity for parent/family members by birthdays for those students, so we have a lot of parent/family members who have never spent a birthday apart from those students ever. So we have an opportunity, for \$20 we'll send orientation leaders, a balloon or a pom-pom and a personalized card to the student's class and we want to sing them out, they'll sing to them in front of all their friends.

So we try to have a diverse array of offerings that can help any parent/family member, no matter what the situation is. . . . We try to make our programming as diverse as possible. [That] includes dance events, includes theatre events, includes art museum, includes athletics. So it's not like every time you come to campus you're going to be hit in the face with athletics.

Participant H reflected on all the event planning that the parent service office was responsible for:

We have parent weekend that [the parent] office coordinates, which is, I think, is one of the biggest events, and we've linked it to other [events]. We're getting ready to split it out from homecoming. . . . His office is responsible for like, we have welcome week. And so that office is responsible for planning, and that's the first week of classes or that weekend of classes when they move into residence halls. So his office really coordinates not only the activities with where they collaborate with another department and plan activities for students, but they also put together a schedule for parents.

Orientation was mentioned by most of the participants, which may be due to their knowledge of the joint capacity of the parent service office with the orientation office. (Orientation is discussed in depth under Research Question 3, pp. 83-85.) Several participants indicated that they presented to parents at orientation. This was confirmed by an assessment report that the researcher collected from Participant A prior to leaving campus. The assessment report highlighted many strengths of the orientation program, which included many of the orientation sessions, materials and services, and orientation staff. Several of the comments related to strengths revolved around the helpfulness of

staff and students and the variety of topics at orientation. One particular comment in the “improvement” section captured the researcher’s attention. The attendee wrote, “Help attending parents to connect faster—this didn’t happen until the second day, so the first day was quite awkward and lonely.”

Another specific event, family weekend, was cited by 7 of the 11 participants that the researcher interviewed. Participants A, B, C, D, E, F, and H all affirmed in general terms that family weekend was a major facet of the parent service office. While the participants’ affirmations were brief, Participant C went into detail about the spring and fall family weekends:

We have homecoming, which is when we do our Fall Family Weekend. We also have a Spring Family Weekend. . . . Our Spring Family Weekend this year . . . was in April, and it was the day of our international fest. Well, there [was] so much going on in campus that day. So all they did was have a lunch and then the parents kind of did their own things. So there didn’t have to be a lot of ancillary programming because there [was] so much going on already on campus. . . . We typically don’t have a large attendance at the spring events. . . . In the fall, . . . it’s mostly parents of our first-year students, those who want to check in or whatever.

The parent service office director reflected on some specific fun and cost-saving opportunities that were a part of family weekend:

Here, we’ve added a “take your parent to class day.” So if students get permission from their professor, they can bring their parent with them to class on a Friday before family weekend. And that’s an opportunity for a parent/family members to come to class, see what their student’s life is, get a little snapshot of what their student is doing, and it’s a free event for us.

. . . We’re talking with the rec center right now about doing a morning Zumba on that Saturday. So it’d be free to us. The rec center would maybe spend \$50 on an instructor; they’d be happy to do that. And it won’t, the cost will not go on to parent/family members. Our cost per family weekend right now for a full week is \$65; last year was the first year we ever even broke even. So we made \$0.22 a person last year, which is about where we want to be. I mean, we don’t want to be making money, we don’t want to be losing money. We’ve always lost about \$10,000 to \$12,000.

Based on the assessment report on family weekend, most parent respondents found out about family weekend through orientation. Of those that responded, most attended family weekend one weekend day. Many of the respondents indicated that they did not attend the formal events associated with family weekend. However, the majority of respondents indicated that the length of family weekend was appropriate.

Theme 3: Parental Advocacy

Site A administrators were becoming increasingly aware that parental engagement was increasing on their college campus. Because of this, parents were considered a constituency. More administrators were cognizant that information should be catered specifically to them. Participant A remarked on the diversity of the parent population at Site A:

We see a lot of parents, a lot of diverse backgrounds, a lot of different definitions of what parent and family members are. So we allow any definition that student wants to bring, so it could be a single parent. It could be two parents. It could even be the neighbor down the street who has raised them basically.

Participant D also observed that parents were taking a more active stance when it came to college decision making. She indicated:

I actually have found an improvement over the last couple of years, I think. I mean I think, probably, I'm only talking from one office's standpoint. But I found helicoptering to be—have been worse a couple of years ago than it seems to be now. They want to be present. They want to listen, but I'm finding more and more opportunities for the student to ask the question and the parent to just be there to add and support.

From Participant H's perspective, parents also served as an important part of the student experience. He stated,

The biggest thing for me . . . I want to convey is we definitely feel like parents play a critical role, and that's son or daughter's college experience, and I appreciate really having conversations with parents. And oftentimes, when our student is looking at some serious charges or something like that, I'll even encourage the student [to] have a parent come in and sit in on [the] meeting, so they can kind of see how we were doing.

While each of the administrators recounted ways they worked directly with parents, they also worked with the parent service office as well. Historically, the parent service office reached out to other departments across campus. Participant A reflected:

We're very mindful in making sure that family connections has timely information like I talked about. We're making sure that we're partnering with folks like housing to make sure that parent and family members are knowledgeable about the housing deadline, because usually we didn't send anything out to parent/family members about housing and then all of a sudden the student didn't have housing and they didn't understand why. So we will—we send stuff out on that.

However, instead of the parent service office asking offices to partner with them, other offices were contacting the parent service office to distribute information out to parents. Participant A indicated:

Overall, demand over the last year has increased for parent/family programs across the campus, so career services wants to add something in the newsletter every month; campus activities wants to mention the student organizations every month—you know, these sorts of things. It's great—I love it.

To effectively advocate on behalf of parents, the parent service office conducted a needs assessment with the parent population in 2011. The survey findings revealed that parents were unsatisfied with the communication processes in place at Site A. Parents felt they were getting different answers when calling different offices with questions. The parent service office realized it needed better communication between offices. Participant A reflected:

We did a needs assessment last fall to our parent-family association just to see what they have going on and what their needs are; whether we're meeting their needs; where we can go above and beyond with our expectations, you know. And our number one thing that we saw was miscommunication between offices; [that] was the biggest issue that we saw on campus.

Because of this feedback, the dean of students office and the parent service office aligned themselves to develop a training session for their colleagues to ensure all departments understood how to communicate with parents effectively. This training session was being expanded to include several divisions in Site A. Participant A elaborated:

This training program we've rolled out in March or February, it was me and the dean of students' office, and it was only offered to enrollment management, student affairs. . . . In the fall, we're going to be put on . . . [the] training schedule.

The training session content comprised four subsections, known as the 4 Ps: perspective, professionalism, patience, and promise. Table 4.5 is an excerpt from a presentation made by the dean of students and the parent program director at Institution A. The 4Ps were themes administrative departments should keep in mind as they dealt with parents on the phone, through email, or in person.

Table 4.5
The 4 Ps to Establishing Effective Partnerships with Parent/Family Programs at Institution A

<p><u>Keep perspective</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy vs. sympathy • Inclusive language • Remember this is a family affair 	<p><u>Be professional</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand various forms of support • Ease concerns • Remain calm, no matter the parent's demeanor
<p><u>Have patience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trust • Be personal • Recognize their contributions 	<p><u>Be careful what you promise</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be realistic and truthful • Know your stuff

The parent service office director offered a rationale for the training:

Part of the understanding [is that] parent and family members have a perspective that this is a family affair, they're trying to get what's best for the student and we're trying to help faculty and staff as well as parents when they come to our orientation because this is very similar to what I do at our orientation: Try and get them to understand that we all have the same goal in mind. We all want the students to grow and develop, we all want the students to be successful, we all want the students to graduate, we all want the students to get a good job, and you know, be the best people they can be. So there is—I think that there is a perception out there that we may [have] different goals, but in reality we have the same goal. . . . Part of that training will also be going over our resources, encouraging people if they're talking to parent/family members [and] they don't know an answer to a question, to send them to us and we'll funnel them onto the right source.

By ensuring communication among the university community, the various offices could offer parents a better experience and encourage students' continued enrollment.

Site A: Findings for Research Question 3,

Parent Service Office Adherence to CAS Standards

This section discusses adherence to CAS standards in four areas: mission statement, leadership, external relations, and programming.

Mission Statement

Mission statements provide the parent service office's philosophy on the way the office works with parents and students. CAS standards indicate that "the mission of Parent and Family Programs (PFP) is to build collaboration between parents and families and the institution for the common goals of student learning, development, and success" (Appendix E, p. 1). When asked about the specifics of Site A's parent service office mission statement, the parent service office director indicated:

Our mission statement is broad because of our type of office, because it's orientation and family program. We have a very broad mission statement, which is not as focused as it necessarily should be. Part of the new website will include a mission statement for parent . . . programs. So that will narrow this down a little bit. We'll talk about the advocacy . . . and helping student succeed having the same goal in mind. But it is very broad. So it mainly focuses on first-year students in retention.

Because retention efforts begin as soon as a student officially enrolls, that time point also marks the first time administrators show concern for student success. Thus, first-year orientation is highly regarded as the kick-off university program for newly matriculated students and for parents to discover the parent service office. During this time, they also find out more about the office, such as resources, programs, and services coordinated for students and their families. Beyond orientation, Site A's parent program director indicated that its office's top goal is for students to be successful as they grow and develop through their time at the college. The parent program director stated:

We all want the students to grow and develop, we all want the students to be successful, we all want the students to graduate, we all want the students to get a good job and, you know, be the best people they can be. . . . So making sure that we understand that as a campus community as well as parents understanding that we have that similar goal too.

The parent program director continued with his assessment of the mission statement:

It's something we review every year at least. We review it every year at our staff retreat, which is November. And something that we're always looking to improve and make more well-rounded, make more succinct because, when I first got here, we had like a three-paragraph mission statement. It's now two sentences. But I think it's something that is important that we can succinctly inform others about what we do as an office, which is important. But yes, I think it should have more parent/family stuff in it.

The CAS standards and guidelines for Parent and Family Programs indicate in their mission criteria that such programs "must enhance overall educational experiences

by incorporating student learning and development outcomes in their mission.” However, when putting theory into practice, the parent service office director at Institution A admitted it was not so easy.

So in orientation, we had student learning goals. . . . As for connecting the parent/family programs, we do not have a specific student learning outcome because we have not really figured out how we measure that based on what our parent/family program does. There is learning going on. We know that 70% of the newsletter gets down to students through their parent and family members, so that information is being shared. We know that but we’re not sure how we measure student learning outcome through parent/family program. We’ve discussed it.

Although challenges in measuring student learning outcomes existed at Institution A, student retention was highly important to the culture and indirectly established student success. The parent service office director from Institution A stated:

Everything we do is based on retention. So if we see an uptick in that retention number, we know that we’ve done something right. Everything I do in the parent/family side, we try to tie to retention in some way, shape, or form, giving those students resources they need to be successful.

The researcher looked at the parent service office website for accessibility and information about mission. The website was very easy to find, and the mission statement was prominently displayed in the “About Us” section.

Leadership

The CAS standards delineate what is expected of leaders with organizational authority over parent and family programs. The full list appears in Appendix E, and some highlights are as follows:

- Articulate a vision and mission for their programs and services
- Set goals and objectives based on the needs of the population served and desired student learning and development outcomes
- Advocate for their programs and services

- Promote campus environments that provide meaningful opportunities for student learning, development, and integration
- Identify and find means to address individual, organizational, or environmental conditions that foster or inhibit mission achievement
- Advocate for representation in strategic planning initiatives at appropriate divisional and institutional levels
- Initiate collaborative interactions with stakeholders who have legitimate concerns and interests in the functional area

While there are many ways to illustrate how the parent service office exemplified these standards, this section focuses on raising awareness of the office and its services and assessment.

Raising awareness of the office’s existence and services. At the time of this study, Institution A’s parent service office had been in existence for 3 years. Because the office was relatively new, the director had to solicit buy-in for the office before it became official and then continue to advocate for it. A parent orientation function had been in place since the mid 1980s. The vice chancellor helped to form that component because of her passion for first-year orientation and her belief in the importance of parental engagement. Once parent service offices began to open at colleges and universities across the nation with an obvious influence on parental engagement, the vice chancellor indicated that it was time to add the initiative to her school. The program proved successful, and administrators from the admissions office, the dean of students’ office, and the vice chancellor’s office began to continually recommend the parent service office to their constituents. The parent service office director indicated:

I think if you talk to the [admissions director], you talk to [the dean of students], you talk to the [vice chancellor of student affairs], they all view us very favorably. I mean [the admissions director] now uses us as her courting technique a good bit. . . . We take care of the parent/family members too, you know. [The dean of students] helps—uses us a good bit in talking with parent/family members using our resources. I think faculty are always a challenge.

The parent service office director estimated that he collaborated with seven different divisions in fall 2011. He continued to prospect for new departments to collaborate with because it enhanced the programming efforts. He reflected:

We can[’t] do our job for orientation without being integral to what they do in offices, so those partnerships are important. We send out emails all the time, looking for new collaborators for our family connections, looking for new ideas for family weekend.

Once the parent program generated campus approval, its popularity soared, especially in terms of the communication sent to parents. The parent service office director indicated:

Overall, demand in, over the last year has increased for parent/family programs across the campus, so career services wants to add something in the newsletter every month, campus activities wants [to add] a student org every month, these sort of things. It’s great—I love it.

The housing director confirmed that he too wanted to be involved with parent communications. He noted,

So we also have talked recently with the office—the parents/family office—about future communications. Like we will include things in their newsletter and their communications with parents, but also as we try to kind of keep parents aware or kind of timelines with housing selection, those kind of things, things they may want to participate in.

Administrators viewed parents as valued constituents whose opinions mattered.

The dean of students indicated:

We definitely feel like parents play a critical role in their son or daughter’s college experience, and I appreciate really having conversations with parents.

The parent service office director also shared his philosophy on parent interaction:

I would rather see a parent that is overtly involved than not involved at all. I think that’s an important thing.

Assessment. Site A continually solicited feedback through surveys. In fall 2011, the parent service office conducted a needs assessment survey to determine families' needs. The survey responses were integral to developing a new cross-divisional program among university departments. Additionally, because of the feedback from the survey, the newsletter began to include more on-campus and diverse features.

The researcher had an opportunity to review the assessment responses. Over 250 respondents, all parent association members, noted their role as parent/guardian to their student. Communication was a frequent qualitative response given in answer to the question, "What are the strengths of the parent association?" However, in responding to the qualitative question, "Please list any roadblocks or obstacles that you, as a parent or family member, have experienced at the school," several respondents indicated confusion and frustration when there was miscommunication between offices, which affected their ultimate satisfaction. Based on the survey responses, the parent program office developed a training session for other university administrators on working with parent and family members and invited members of the university community to attend. While this programming initiative did not directly affect parents, having more harmonious interactions with the university factions would indirectly help the overall experience and goal of student success.

Site A continually solicited feedback after every major event it sponsored, including transfer/adult parent and family orientation program, freshmen parent and family orientation program, and family weekend. Each survey used a mixed-method approach to gain both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the parent experience at

each of the functions. Survey participants were entered into a campus bookstore drawing as an incentive to fill out the survey.

Parent feedback helped establish parent goals for their students. Institution A indicated that a large number of its parents cited “to graduate and get a job, or a better job” as their number one goal for their student. Participants echoed this information during interviews.

External Relations

According to CAS standards, parent and family programs “must” reach relevant individuals, campus offices, and external agencies to:

- Establish, maintain, and promote effective relations
- Disseminate information about their own and other related programs and services
- Coordinate and collaborate, where appropriate, in offering programs and services to meet the needs of students and promote their achievement of student learning and development outcomes

This section discusses how administrators and parents worked together to promote student success and how parents collaborated through volunteering in a university setting.

Administrators fostering effective relations with parents. To promote effective relations, administrators at Site A empathized with parents consistently. Empathy was implemented in understanding the parent’s point of view whenever a parent contacted the parent service office. For example, the parent service office wanted to boost the number of phone calls it received to the point where parents viewed the office as a first point of contact. The parent service office evolved by technologically enhancing its service, including adding a texting number to which parents could text questions and receive an

answer within 24 hours. The parent service office director indicated that he enjoyed talking to parents and welcomed parent participation. He reflected:

I just really think [parents] should be more involved than they [are] already, which is good. I think it's a perspective that not necessarily everyone takes when it comes to parent/family programming. It's a perspective that a lot of universities, especially in the early 2000s and late 90s, said, "Parents have no place here." They're partners here. We need to treat them as partners and as friends of the university.

The parent service office had allies across the university for treating parents as partners. These allies were frequently mentioned by the parent service office director as close collaborators. For example, Participant I indicated,

I listen. I want to understand, and I want to do my best to guide that person to what might be the next best step. And many times that next best step is with another office, which often is not what people want to hear. So I try to give them a name, give them a direct number, let the person I'm referring them to know, explain the situation, and hopefully they don't have to go through it all over again.

The dean of students shared a similar philosophy. "We don't want parents having to call all over the place so we would do everything to try to address their concerns." The vice chancellor of student affairs also encouraged parents to call with concerns. She indicated: "I always say if you have an issue, [and] you can't get it resolved somewhere else, call me."

Parents fostering effective relations with other parents. Site A appeared to have an active cohort of parents who enjoyed volunteering on behalf of the university. They attended meetings of the parent association/parent council, hosted or participated in a summer send-off, or volunteered to usher at events. Parents enjoyed talking to one another in order to *pay forward* their experiences. A parent of a senior might volunteer to

speak to parents of a first-year student to guide them through expectations and personal experiences.

Site A offered parents an opportunity to be part of their parent association or parent council. Any parent who signed up with the parent service office to receive continuous information about Site A was automatically a part of the parent association. The parent council, on the other hand, was a small group of parents who sat on a board, met a few times of year, and had fiduciary responsibilities. Neither group had a membership fee. The vice chancellor of student affairs provided insight into the history of the council:

One of my close colleagues had a . . . council that was raising a lot of money for student affairs. And so my thinking was here is an opportunity for me to start something and eventually maybe lead into a development arm of parents who could support student affairs, because we won't have a constituency that we can pull from donors. . . . So we set it up as in an advisory capacity. We invited them to campus twice a year and we educated them about the university. We've used them as our advocates over the years for budget issues and our general assembly, and they have been very effective in that respect.

Regardless of whether a parent was affiliated with the parent association or the parent council, he or she was welcome to serve as an ambassador for the university. The vice chancellor of student affairs explained:

[The parent service office] also use parents at different events. For example, they invite members of the parent . . . council to come to a[n orientation] session to kind of be the expert and interact with parents who maybe have not had a child in school and what it's like, what would you [do] in that kind of thing. They engage members of our parent . . . council and our summer send-offs, which is a growing program in areas where we have a significant number of students coming in.

Summer send-offs provided another way for families to be ambassadors for the university. The events were get-togethers in localized parts of the country where a concentrated number of university students lived. It was an opportunity for first-year

students and parents to meet with seasoned students and parents and form networks. The opportunity to match prospective parents and students with current parents and students at a local send-off or to have them meet one another during orientation was important to the parent service office director at Institution A.

Those opportunities for them to meet each other before they come to school. So the students have friends when they come in, parents have a support network where they could talk to other parents and understand what's going on. It gives me an opportunity to plug our program. And it gives me an opportunity to search for members for our council.

The chancellor at Institution A agreed that the interaction of parents and families was important:

So I think the summer send-offs are really very, very important. We do a number of other programs that actually gives an opportunity to interact with parents and families. We do, in conjunction with our homecoming every fall, we coordinate what we call family weekend, and we do invite all of the families of our current students to be on campus. . . . So it's a nice way to give the parents and families a better sense of what actually goes on, on the campus.

Finally, regardless of where parents lived, they were welcome to contribute to the university's annual fund, and more specifically contribute to a specific fund set up by the parent council. Through telephone calls made during the university's annual fund, the council received allocations of \$25,000 to \$50,000 over the years. Participants A, C, F, and H all indicated that money raised by the council went to career services, a multicultural resource center, a bench, safety equipment, residence hall equipment, speaker honorariums, and weather-related relief trips. Even with all the donations, Participant A would like to see even more:

I would like to see us move into more of a donor relations office in certain extent. So we're doing the referral, we're building the relationships. But since we have the relationships it makes sense for us to work with development in order to optimize those relationships.

Programming

According to the CAS standards, parent and family programs should help families maintain a connection to the institution. These programs should not only coordinate programming to keep constituents connected to the university, but also ensure that the programming is quality-based. Among the CAS standards, the following guidelines were issued to ensure compliance:

- Distribute information on a timely basis to take advantage of the impact of naturally occurring developmental stages experienced by students and families
- Encourage parents and families to work with their student so that the student will learn to access institutional resources independently
- Assist parents and families to investigate and navigate institutional resources, services, and programs
- Collaborate with essential campus partners
- Consider diverse perspectives in developing parent and family programs
- Provide information for faculty members and staff to help them interact effectively with parents and families and understand their expectations

The following sections outline the target population for quality-based programming, as well as tangible examples of how quality-based programming was conducted.

Student success was the primary goal of Site A's parent service office director. To promote student success, the director ensured that quality programming involved building collaboration among constituents. Such programming furthered student development and provided networking opportunities. Examples of programming have been mentioned throughout the chapter and are summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Types of Programming Initiatives from the Parent Service Office in Site A

Program	Location	Constituents
Parent and family orientation	In person	School, families, students
Parent and family weekends	In person	School, families, students
Move-in	In person	School, families, students
Send-off events	In person	School, families, students
Educational workshops	In person and online	School, families
Seminars	In person and online	School, families
Newsletters	Online and mail	School, families, students
Fundraising	In person and online	School, families
Other	In person, online, and mail	School, families, students

Diverse needs for programming. The parents at Site A were close-knit, predominantly middle working-class families, who lived relatively close to the school and whose students were first-generation college students. Participant C summed up the student and parent population of the school by sharing:

One of the things that our population deals with is because we . . . have a lot of students who come from about an 18-county radius. So in a sense, we are kind of an urban campus. And many of those students work on the weekends. So they see their parents more often.

The admissions director also commented about the population:

Our students come from all walks of life. We are truly the most diverse campus in [our] system. I would say that much more than ethnic background and age, it's socioeconomic, it's geographic origin, and so we serve a wide variety of students, many of whom are first-generation college students, as defined by neither parent having attained a 4-year degree.

The first-generation college student was a demographic aspect that many administrators touched on during their interviews. Participant B observed,

And they are all first-generation college students, so the interaction[s] with those parents and grandparents are particularly important. Many of the parents, and especially the grandparents, are, you know, have a native language other than English, and so communication is sometimes challenging. But I think we really do

an excellent job in interacting with the parents and families and in continuing to update them on the progress that their student is making while they are here.

To accommodate a parent population whose primary language may not be English and who may not have graduated from a 4-year college, the university used events as a way to ensure parents could come to campus to experience what their student did on a daily basis. This could be in the form of an evening of basketball, a family weekend, or attending classes with the student. As mentioned under Theme 2, family weekend included diverse events, including artistic events and not just athletics, and the office offered ways for families to recognize their student's birthday. The parent service office director wanted to ensure that out-of-pocket costs were kept at a minimum for both his office and for the parents and families that he served.

Orientation. An example of a major programming initiative was first-year orientation. Orientation was a time for learning about the college, including receiving counseling on classes and campus life and registering for the upcoming academic semester. Because Site A recognized that transitioning to college required support from families, all were welcome to attend. Institution A stated on its website: "An orientation to campus life is important to help families support their students through the various changes and experiences they will encounter. Although students need to make their own decisions, they also need support." This notion was confirmed by the chancellor:

We do engage our orientation staff, in particular in programming, to help them better understand the challenges not only of students coming in, but the challenges that the parents are facing. Particularly if it's the first child in the family to go to college, it's always a challenge in some respects. I think it's more challenging for the parents [than] it is the students.

Site A offered separate tracks for students and their families. By separating the family unit during orientation, students were able to make independent decisions, while still receiving support from their families. This was the first indication of the university's promotion of student success, as well as the university indicating to the parents that they were interested in working together to making student success possible. Participant C noted that orientation was a time in which administrators tried to align their mission with that of the parents:

We give parents so much information and resource guides during orientation. We said to them, "Here is where you can help us, help your students." And then we talk about scenarios.

As Participant A oversaw both new students and parents, the researcher asked about the balance of the two offices. Participant A answered,

Well, part of it is orientation is the first introduction parents have at campus, at many places, so it's the first time they can really interact with us. So it's kind of a natural fit, if you think about it. If we've build that relationship first, . . . we just maintain the relationship. Most of our parent and family members that are contacting us are first-year parent family members.

Participant E shared her viewpoint on orientation:

[It's] a real machine, because they bring in, I would say, about 350 students in each program and it's a day and a half, overnight program. Parents are able to register; they have to pay a fee. Students are paid for in their own fee structure at the university. But there is a side-by-side program for parents and students in it—I mean, there's some interaction, but part of it is helping that parents start to make that adjustment about: Okay, when my child calls home and tells me all these things, what are they wanting from me. They [are] wanting a different reaction from me than what I gave them; they probably [are] not wanting me to tell them what to do. They're wanting me to listen and to be as friendly more at that point. But it's helping them move into maturity and wise decision making, and so I think that family programs help foster some of the discussions in groups.

Participant I reflected on the format of the orientation presentations that

Participant E alluded to above:

We try to introduce new topics, so recently we've introduced living learning communities. We want to make that more prevalent in the presentations, how do we move things around. So there is that whole business. But we do a presentation for parents about the things that they're going to want to know to understand the student's official relationship about the university. So we talked to them and do that for about—we talk to them about the importance of keeping an address updated, and it's the student's responsibility, student's responsibility for their records, how registration works, VA benefits.

As many parents who visited the university during orientation were relatively local and/or did not want to experience sleeping in a residence hall room, most opted to not stay on campus. The housing director indicated that, although the option was there for parents to sleep overnight in the residence halls during orientation, the “largest group of parents [who did so] was maybe 50 or 60.”

At orientation, administrators ensured that a parent guide was distributed to each parent. This brochure went into depth on how parents and families could support their student during their time at the school. It also detailed on-campus resources and addressed many questions that parents or family members might have.

The brochure itself was a 61-page booklet that provided school-specific information, including “campus resources, local insight, and helpful information.” It contained a letter from the chancellor. It went into detail about many of the campus departments and provided maps and accommodation information. It also contained pictures of faculty, staff, and students. The brochure included off-campus advertising as well. There was information about stores, hotels, and restaurants. The creation of the brochure was outsourced to a company that provided a similar service for many colleges and universities nationwide.

Site B: Process Overview

Institution B is located in the Midwestern region of the United States. This large, public, nonprofit institution has over 42,000 enrolled students, a little more than half of whom are undergraduates. The university is a 4-year research institution offering comprehensive doctoral studies along with medical and veterinary degrees. It is primarily a residential campus. Women constitute 51% of the student population, and most students indicate they are in-state (59%). The parent service office of Institution B has existed for over 5 years, employs two full-time staff and student interns, and reports to the university relations division. The office has over 20,000 parents on its mailing list.

Prior to visiting Site B, the interviewer contacted a key member of the staff, Participant L, the parent program coordinator, who serves as the parent service office director. Participant L was instrumental in providing contact information for the researcher, based on the key titles relevant to this study. She emailed 12 administrators to give them a courtesy notice that the researcher would be contacting them with an interview request. Of those originally contacted, three people confirmed they could meet with the researcher directly, and four found designees for the researcher to meet with. The remaining individuals who were interviewed were identified by either Participant L or the researcher because of their historical work with the parent program or because of their perceived interaction with parents. The participants are listed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7
Interview Participants from Site B

Participant code	Title	Division	Gender
L	Parent Program Coordinator	University Relations	Female
M	Assistant Parent Program Coordinator	University Relations	Female
N	Assistant Director	University Communications Marketing	Female
O	Associate Dean of Students	Student Life	Male
P	Housing Program Manager	Student Life	Male
Q	Associate Director, Visitor and Information Programs	University Relations	Female
R	Executive Director, University Health Services	University Health Services	Female
S	Director, Undergraduate Advising	General Services, Academic Advising	Female
T	Chief of Staff	Office of the President	Female
U	Director	Center for First Year Experience	Female
V	Financial Aid Advisor	Enrollment Management	Female
W	Financial Aid Assistant Director	Enrollment Management	Female

The site visit to Institution A occurred over a 3-day period, from Monday to Wednesday, and the researcher arrived over the weekend to prepare. The researcher participated in a campus tour for prospective students, observed some orientation sessions for new students and parents, and observed the physical campus, the administrative staff, students, and parents who were on campus for orientation. The schedule appears in Table 4.8. A detailed narrative of Site B immediately follows Table 4.8.

Table 4.8
Activities During the Visit to Site B

Day	Time	Activity	Comments
Monday	Morning	Interview of Participant N and observations	Observe the visitor center, download visitor app to get around campus, review visitor brochures
	Late morning	Prospective student tour led by admissions office (2½ hours, with videos, question and answer session, and campus tour)	Observe interactions between parents and prospective college students, as well as between parents and the college ambassador leading the tour; become further acclimated to the campus; make on-campus observations
	Early afternoon	Orientation sessions, including a parent session	Observe new students and parents and the messages given particularly to parents during orientation
Tuesday	Morning/early afternoon	Interview of Participants P, L, M, Q, and R and lunch with last three participants	
Wednesday	Morning	Phone interview of Participant B; interview of Participants S, T, V, W, O	
	Midday	Lunch and observations	Observations of student union, bookstore
	Afternoon	Interview of Participant U	

Site B: Site Visit

Prior to conducting Site Visit B, the interviewer contacted a key member of the site staff, Participant L, the parent program coordinator, who served as the parent office director. Participant L was instrumental in providing contact information for the researcher based on the key titles relevant to this study. The researcher gave Participant L the titles of people that she sought to interview in order to answer the research questions for this study. The parent office director emailed 12 administrators to give them a courtesy notice that the researcher would be contacting them with an interview request. Of the people Participant L originally contacted, three people confirmed they could meet with the researcher directly, and four found designees for the researcher to meet with. The remaining people that were interviewed were identified by either Participant L or the

researcher because of their historical work with the parent program and/or because of their perceived office's interaction with parents. This recruitment process took approximately 20 days.

Another task that the researcher completed prior to leaving for the site visit was signing up for a prospective student tour and for orientation. Because parents are known to take campus tours, the researcher believed that she could freely observe interactions between parents and their prospective college student as well as between parents and the college ambassador leading the tour. Furthermore, the researcher believed the tour would be a good way to acclimate herself to the campus prior to the start of interviews and would provide an opportunity to make on-campus observations. The tours, which provides an overview of the campus, were led by the university's admissions office. To sign up for the tour, the researcher visited Institution B's website for prospective graduate students and signed up for a tour time that aligned with when the researcher would be on campus. The earliest time available was the morning of the first day of administrator interviews. Orientation events followed that afternoon.

The researcher arrived to the Site B area on a Saturday evening. The researcher looked at maps to determine the best place to park on campus and buildings that she wanted to observe. During this reflection period, the researcher also reviewed the interview protocol to ensure that she was very familiar with the questions prior to asking them. She also checked the electronic equipment to record the interviews to ensure they were both functioning properly.

In preparation for her visit on Monday, the researcher drove to the campus on Sunday. It took approximately 20 minutes for the researcher to go from the hotel to the

campus. She noticed that for a weekend, there was a lot of traffic in the area. Although she considered parking the car to walk around, she decided that she would have plenty of time to make observations the following day.

To account for Monday rush-hour traffic, the researcher left the hotel at 7:15 AM for her 8:30 AM interview with Participant N. There was no traffic en route to the campus, which surprised the researcher. With the knowledge of the vicinity that she had gained the previous day, the researcher found a small parking lot next to the student center. The lot had a capacity for approximately 25 cars, and meters were in place for up to 2 hours of parking. Trees aligned the oval lot. The researcher also noticed a body of water behind a building. The researcher planned to meet Participant N across the street. She noted that there would be enough time to move the car between Participant N's interview and the campus tour.

It took the researcher 3 minutes to get from the parking lot to the meeting place of Participant N. En route to the building, the researcher noted the extended walkway space between buildings. The meeting place was in a building where many university events were held. The outside of the building consisted of red bricks and white trim. The inside of the building contained elegantly appointed furniture. When Participant N met with the researcher, it was noted that the designated meeting place happened to be closed for business that particular day, so they embarked on another destination to sit and talk. Participant N and the researcher walked back to the vicinity of where the researcher had parked her car. They entered a large, dark, stone-faced building that looked like it was built in the 1920s. Participant N indicated that it was one of two student centers on campus. Upon entering the building, there was a coffee shop and several empty tables.

Students were entering and leaving the coffee shop. Participant N and the researcher sat at one of the tables and began the interview. However, a few minutes into it, they quickly realized that the overhead music might interfere with the recording of the interview. They tried moving tables within the coffee shop but could not find a quiet table without musical interference. Participant N and the researcher moved once again to another part of the union. They passed by a food venue, which opened to a sitting area that overlooked a body of water. Participant N and the researcher conducted the interview there.

Upon completion of the interview, the researcher decided to move her car into a garage to be closer to the destination of her next visit. With the help of a campus map and her GPS, the researcher found the campus visitor center. However, she was unable to locate the garage. The researcher parked the car around a circular drive and entered the visitor center to obtain information on where to park. The visitor center was staffed by two students. Large posters about the campus as well as campus brochures aligned the room of the visitor center. By reading the posters, she found that the school had a visitor app that could be installed on a smartphone and contained school information, as well as a map and GPS information. The researcher downloaded the app. The students gave the researcher an additional map and indicated that garage parking was located right next door. However, the researcher first had to obtain a parking pass.

The researcher went to the parking office desk to secure a parking pass and then moved the car into the garage. The researcher estimated that she had a 10- to 15-minute walk to her next destination and decided to use the college's app. En route, she noticed a lot of college students and non-college students walking on the same pathway. The

roadway was fairly busy on the left, and store fronts adorned the right. The researcher arrived to the second student center in 12 minutes.

The researcher entered the building and noticed many people sitting around. There were people sitting at a desk, which the researcher discovered was for a hotel. Walking past the desk, there was another long desk where five students were sitting. The researcher asked one of them where the orientation room was. Two of the students were unsure. The researcher clarified she was looking for a particular room and the students directed her upstairs. The researcher went to the steps and noticed a large sign announcing the freshman orientation schedule. The researcher decided that she would be able to make both the prospective student tour and sit in on some orientation sessions. The researcher continued upstairs to the prospective student tour.

The presentation and tour was estimated to take approximately 2½ hours. The researcher entered into an auditorium where she estimated about 80 people were in attendance, a mix of both parents and students. For the presentation portion, the admissions staff showed a video and presenters talked about the perks of the campus. When the presentation was over, parents and students asked questions about the school. Parents asked about AP credit, transferring schools, and the relationship between the flagship school and other schools in the system.

When the presentation was over, people were broken up into different tour groups. The tour consisted of 12 people. Most students were in-state, prospective first-year students. Each of these students had at least one parent with them. There was one graduate student who flew in to specifically see the school. The graduate student was not accompanied by a parent.

As soon as the tour started, the researcher noticed that one parent started asking a multitude of questions about Starbucks locations and academic facilities. Shortly after, other parents started asking questions. The students did not ask many questions compared with the parents. In addition to the Starbucks and academic facilities questions, several parents were interested in seeing a residence hall room and asked about on-campus parking.

One initial impression of the campus was that it was very large. Different sections of the campus had a very different ambiance: some parts were large and sprawling, while others were intimate and tree-lined. Some buildings were recently built while others had a very classic look. The campus tour took approximately an hour and 15 minutes. The researcher reflected that she was glad to have taken the tour to become acclimated to the campus. She felt more confident in knowing where her appointments were and how buildings interrelated with each other.

The tour ended where it began, in the student center. The researcher was happy that it ended there, as the orientation session began immediately when the researcher returned to the building. The freshman orientation session began in the same auditorium where the prospective student tour took place. It looked like about 300 seats were set up. The researcher debated if she should grab some lunch prior to the start of orientation; instead, she ate a granola bar that was in her purse.

The researcher entered the auditorium and reflected that it was fun being a prospective student and an admitted student in the same day. She began to observe her surroundings. She noted that by the beginning of the orientation session, there were approximately 150 parents and students in attendance. At the start of the presentation,

parents and guests were immediately recognized and given a round of applause by the campus staff and admitted students in attendance.

The presenters next announced a separate session for parents and guests to “practice for your students to make independent decisions.” This phrase was highlighted again when reiterating that the school did not tell students which courses to take, but rather the students made independent decisions. The presenters also cited a *Wall Street Journal* article indicating that students are leaving college without being critical thinkers.

After the parents/guests and student groups split up, the researcher accompanied the parents into the parent/guest session room. This room was more of an amphitheater - style room with 200 to 300 seats. The first speaker was from the advising office and addressed the tutoring service available to students. Next FERPA was discussed, and the presenters reiterated that students need to be independent. Parents were asked about goals for their student. Parent responses related to jobs, good friends and networks, enjoying the college experience, and learning to enjoy learning. Parents asked whether students would be advised on the appropriate amount of credits to take and when they would sign up for courses for the semester. Other questions addressed schedule changes/schedule timing, AP scores/opting out of classes, majors, credit transfers, and core requirements. When the questions were finished, parents were advised that students would be stressed from the orientation. Once again, the staff stated that it was students’ responsibility to make decisions and that they learned from failure. Several resource books were recommended to parents.

Next the parent director spoke to the parents. She indicated that parents would be receiving newsletters and referred to the parent handbook. She advised parents that when

students would come home from break, they would indicate that they would be returning home at a certain time. She warned parents that they would not be asking parents for their permission to do this. From this example, the parent director warned parents that their role was changing from problem solver to mentor/coach. She encouraged parents to be proud of their students and avoid being “nit-picky” about grades, especially as students were looking for encouragement. The parent director indicated that cards, packages, and not making too many changes at home helped with a student’s adjustment to college. She stated that 12 contacts per week between parents and student was the national average. She advised parents to talk to their students about finances and alcohol. Finally, she mentioned an online poll with parents and students about their intent on communicating with each other. Results showed that 73% of parents planned to communicate with their student “occasionally,” while 59% of students planned to communicate with their parents “occasionally.” This prompted several parents to ask how to text their student.

When the parent session ended, the researcher decided to introduce herself to the parent director before she left the session. Upon making her way down to the front of the room, the parent director noticed the researcher and introduced herself. The researcher was impressed that the parent director took the initiative of finding out about the researcher prior to her arrival on campus. The parent director asked how the visit was going so far and indicated she was looking forward to meeting with the researcher the next day. They walked out of the room together. The researcher noticed that many parents were holding orientation materials. She asked the parent director if she could have some. The parent director led her to a registration desk and asked the student behind

the desk to give the researcher all the materials typically given to parents. The parent director left to go to another session.

The researcher wanted to attend another session immediately after the parent session. However, the room capacity was filled with parents attending the session. Instead of taking a seat intended for a parent, the researcher tried sitting in a computer lab outside of the room to overhear what was presented, but the presenter closed the door. The researcher decided to go back to the car and reflect on what she had seen and heard in both sessions, as well as review the orientation materials.

The next day, the researcher left the hotel at 9:00 AM to allow time to park the car and walk to her 10:00 AM interview. The researcher parked in the same garage as the previous day. When she arrived for the first interview, she walked inside and did not see anyone at the reception desk. She waited a few moments for the staff to arrive. She announced that she had a meeting with Participant P. The receptionist instructed her to take a seat. The cream and wood chairs reminded the researcher of what was in her residence hall room when she was in college. When Participant P was ready, the researcher met him inside his office. She sat in one of the two chairs in front of his desk.

Upon the conclusion of the interview, the researcher went back to the student union to reflect on what was said. When she entered the building, she noticed a rock climbing wall, which was something she was surprised she did not notice the previous day.

The next set of interviews came with Participants L, M, and Q, as they all worked together in the parent service office. The parent office director indicated that within a 3-hour block of time, all three staff members would meet with the researcher, and

Participants L, M, Q, and another colleague (not interviewed) would go to lunch to answer any informal questions. The researcher met with Participant Q first and then Participant M. The researcher reflected that she was excited about how much detail the two of them provided and was looking forward to meeting Participant L after lunch. The researcher and the three staff members walked outside to a nearby pub/restaurant. They each ordered lunch and paid separately for their own food. The interior of the restaurant was dark and small but crowded. A table was obtained in the far corner of the room. The lunch was brought out to all attendees about 10 to 15 minutes after it was ordered. Upon completing the meal, the staff went back to the office, and the researcher and Participant L conducted their interview. On conclusion of the interview, Participant L encouraged the researcher to try the ice cream shop downstairs.

The researcher had one more interview to conduct that day. She had a little time before it started, so she decided to walk around the area surrounding the university. She noticed a street filled with eclectic stores and restaurants. She walked down there and observed many college students around. She also noticed a prominent government building very near the campus.

The researcher began walking towards the final interview of the day, with Participant R. She noticed that the building she was going to looked fairly modern with a lot of glass. She passed by an art museum en route to the building. When the researcher got to the building, she took the elevator. When walking down the hall, she noticed the office where she would be meeting with Participant V the following day. The researcher reflected that the building held a myriad of services. The building itself was a bit sterile with gray carpet and tight corridors. She noticed several students walking around. She

quickly ascertained that students were there only if they had a specific purpose for being there.

When the researcher got to the office of Participant R, she noted the door was locked. Peering through the window of the door, the researcher noticed that there were multiple offices and cubicles. The researcher waited outside the door for 15 minutes and then called Participant R's office phone. She picked up and profusely apologized. She was inside but lost track of time. She also admitted that sometimes when she was by herself, she kept the door locked. The interview proceeded as planned. Upon its conclusion, the researcher walked back to the car to return to the hotel and prepare for the following day's interviews.

The following day, the researcher rose early to call Participant B at Site A. Because Participant B was not able to meet the researcher when she was on campus, Participant B and the researcher mutually agreed to conduct a phone interview.

As soon as the phone interview concluded, the researcher had to leave for Site B's campus, as the first interview was approximately an hour after the phone call with Participant B ended. The researcher drove to campus and parked in a different garage that was closer to the interview buildings she would be in. The researcher prepared for back-to-back interviews during the course of the day.

The interview with Participant S took place in a building that stood on top of a very large hill. The researcher remembered that the tour guides on the prospective student tour warned participants about climbing the hill. It was not easy for newcomers or for seasoned staff and students. The researcher climbed the hill and felt she got a good workout. Upon going on top of the hill, she looked at a statue in front of the building. As

she was admiring the statue, she turned around and noticed the spectacular view of the city below. There seemed to be something prominent about the cream building and where it was situated.

The researcher went inside the building and noticed that it was very dark and gray. It was a stark contrast from the outside view. She went to Participant S's office and was right on time for the interview. However, Participant S was running a few minutes late. When she arrived, she apologized for her tardiness. The researcher followed her into a brightly lit office. The furniture looked new. The researcher took one of the seats in front of Participant S's desk, and the researcher and Participant S had a good conversation filled with lots of detail.

Although the interview with Participant S was a bit delayed, that did not hinder the time of the next interview, which occurred in the same building. The researcher went to Participant T's office. She was greeted by a friendly staff member. The office was light and airy. The staff member asked if the researcher wanted anything to drink, and the researcher declined. A few minutes later, Participant T invited the researcher into her office. Participant T offered some unique insights to the study, for which the researcher was appreciative.

Upon conclusion of the interview, the researcher had to go back down the hill for the next interview, which took place in the same building as Participant R's interview the preceding day. When the researcher arrived at Participant V's office suite, she was taken back to the office immediately. Upon meeting Participant V, the researcher was surprised yet excited to learn that Participant V had invited Participant W to join the conversation. Participant V felt that Participant W would have different yet useful insights. The

researcher was appreciative. The office was warm with blue carpeting. The researcher sat with her back to a floor-to-ceiling window. During the course of the interview, Participants V and W observed a bird that resembled a hawk that looked like it was ready to crash through the window heading towards the researcher's head. The researcher was thankful she did not observe that.

Upon conclusion of the interview, the researcher headed back to the building on the hill to meet with Participant O. Participant O was in his office at the time of the researcher's arrival. The hallway to the suite was bright and a stark contrast to the hallways that the researcher observed earlier in the day. The office was on another level of the building. When the researcher met with Participant O, she noted that his office was well lit, cream colored, and spacious.

Upon conclusion of the interview, the researcher went back down the hill to one of the unions. Before her final interview later in the afternoon, the researcher decided to go back to the student union to get some lunch, try the ice cream that Participant L had suggested, and go to the bookstore. When she entered the building, she noticed a very small store to the right of the entrance. Although the store was small, it carried items such as t-shirts and snack foods. The size of the store was two aisles deep. The researcher decided to purchase a t-shirt at the store. However, she did not observe any merchandise specifically for parents.

Upon leaving the store, the researcher went to the eating area to purchase some lunch. She took her lunch to the main eating area, where she had met with Participant N a few days prior. Several students were enjoying their lunch inside, but many more people were sitting outside. The researcher finished her lunch and went to purchase ice cream

from a different store in the union. She took the ice cream outside and observed lots of multicolored chairs and tables. There was a stage, behind which there was a large body of water with several boats. The sun was shining and the temperature was moderate. Lots of people of all ages were talking, laughing, and eating. The researcher enjoyed her ice cream at one of the tables and observed the various people around her.

Afterwards, the researcher walked to the campus bookstore to observe family merchandise. The bookstore was very large, carrying a vast array of school merchandise, city/state merchandise, and other essentials for college students. The bookstore itself was located on the edge of campus. The researcher did not see any merchandise specifically for parents and families. However, she did note that the store clerks were extremely helpful. They encouraged the researcher to check the website for specific items that may include parents. When the researcher returned to the hotel that afternoon, she found 11 items for “Mom” and 14 items for “Dad.” This merchandise did not automatically pop up as options on the main page but was found through specific searches.

The researcher went back to the student union to meet with Participant U. When she arrived, Participant U indicated that she worked in an open area and led the researcher around the main hall of the upper level of the student center to some seats in an alcove area. It was quiet enough to hear each other but there was constant foot traffic around.

Upon conclusion of the interview, the researcher felt this site visit was as successful as Site A’s. She reflected once again on how generous so many staff members had been with their time and insights. The researcher returned to the hotel approximately an hour later to begin the transcription process and reflect on the entire time at Site B.

Site B: Findings for Research Question 1, Collaboration for Quality Student Development and Student Learning Outcomes

CAS indicates that “institutions are responsible for creating learning environments that provide a choice of educational opportunities and challenge students to learn and develop while providing support to nurture their development” (CAS, 2009, p. 9). A student’s development can be supported in several ways. At Site B, student success was of paramount importance to the parent service office. When asked about student development and student learning outcomes, two main themes emerged at Site B: (1) by supporting parents, the office was supporting student success and (2) empowering parents to be ambassadors.

Theme 1: Student Success

Participant L strongly believed that student success was based on involved parents. She reflected:

I think studies have shown that involved parents equals a student in the end who is successful. And so, I think by those things and by us embracing parents, I think we help them with all those things. . . . They feel like they are part of the process and know that we are a resource for them and that there is place for parents here that ultimately in the end will, you know, student success, the student will be successful along the way. We are hoping that the parent will—if the parent calls and asks the question, then when the student calls the parent, the parent can say: Well, did you try this? And did you try this? And did you try this? So, the parents are more, they understand what that role is.

The researcher asked Participant M about ways the office promoted student development. She responded:

Oh, I think we just want parents and families to be aware of all the ways that their students can become leaders on campus, and so that’s really important to us. A lot

of times when I talk to a parent and they say my student is having a difficult time finding their niche or getting that independence or maturity, I ask: Well, what is your student involved with on campus? And not always, but a lot of times it's nothing. And so, just allowing those student development opportunities to be showcased, promoting their student to be a part of them . . . So, I think that that's something we try to communicate with parents—that student development is incredibly important. That there are [a] variety of ways to do it and that your student should really try out a lot of new things and then dive deeply into the things that really interest him or her.

The researcher asked Participant L about whether the office had parent learning outcomes. She stated:

Oh sure, and we put those in our calendar and we put those on our website. . . . One of them is that they learn the appropriate role of coach and mentor. Another one is that they understand how their students seek support services on campus for health and safety and have a good balance. Another one is that they develop an affinity for [Site B].

The researcher had an opportunity to obtain the calendar at orientation. The researcher also noted that a PDF of the calendar could be found on the parent program office website. Upon first receiving the calendar, the researcher noticed the heavy weight of it. Just by holding it, the researcher knew this was not just any calendar. The calendar was approximately $8\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ inches in size.

The opening pages of the calendar contained letters from the chancellor and the parent program director, as well as goals for parents. The calendar was an academic year calendar, running from August of one year to August of the next year. Each month had a tip for parents for a development process that their student might be facing. For example, in August, a four-paragraph tip began as follows:

Students are thinking about their new fall living arrangements. If your student is living in a shared living environment, discuss how shared responsibilities (paying bills, cleaning, and other duties) have been working out. How are new living arrangements going to change budget needs?

The calendar also listed university events, major holidays, and tips for when a university-related matter was due. For example, one tip indicated on August 25, “Students should verify their ‘mailing’ address is current on [the university portal].” The calendar had a page that showed the remaining 4 months of the calendar year. It also provided a list of major holidays. The second half of the calendar contained university resources for families. This material included a contact list, important university dates, multiple pages of specific campus resources, and advice for families of first-year students.

Participant L indicated that parents “learn the appropriate role of coach and mentor.” This theme surfaced during the course of interviews with most Site B administrators (8 of 11, 73%). Of those who mentioned coaching, all noted a difference between parents who coach/mentor their child versus parents who solved problems on behalf of their child. Participants L, M, N, O, P, Q, S, and U all ascertained that coaching a student led to student success. Participant U explained the difference between a coach and a problem-solving parent:

I think that a problem solver is somebody who steps in and—like a parent or family member who directly calls the campus to get something done. So for example, a student talks to their parents and they are like: Oh my gosh, my roommate is so difficult and I don’t know what to do and they are really interrupting my study habits and they are, you know, whatever all of the things that a student might complain to their parents about their roommate real or imagined type concerns. And so a problem solver will say: This is really terrible. I am going to call the director of housing or whatever, call your hall director, and get you a roommate change. And so that’s what I would call maybe not even an effective problem solver but somebody who is stepping in. Whereas a coach would say: Well, tell me more about what that relationship is and have you talked to your house fellow about that, and do you have, have you had good conversations with your roommate? Have you tried talking to them about it? And so somebody who is kind of coaching the student . . . is encouraging the student to solve their own problems or address their own issues as opposed to somebody who just leaps in and takes care of it. Some of it is, I think, also a matter of

convenience, and I see a lot of parents and family members really appreciating how much stress students are under. I think that's another change that isn't maybe directly related to what you are doing, but it feels like there is a higher pressure to not make mistakes right now than maybe there was 10 or 15 years ago.

Participant O also posited that parents' roles up until the time the student came to college had been problem solvers. But now that the student is in college, he encouraged them to think more like coaches. He said:

It's very natural for parents these days, I think, to be the problem solver, and it's almost counterintuitive to be the coach. . . . One of the great things [is] that most of our parents actually get it. And that's where I like to put it: this is how you're changing. . . . You're just doing things differently. You're not loving them any less, but you now have a very clear role in the coaching, in the encouraging task. . . . It's really more important now for the parents [to] understand what the university can and cannot do.

Participant S spoke about the practice of coaching parents during orientation, as this was the first opportunity parents had to learn to start thinking less like a problem solver and more like a coach.

That's a big point I stress in [orientation to parents] is [the students] have got to do this. You can't do this for them because that's not helping anybody. And so parents really heed that advice and take a step back and let the student struggle a little bit. That's going to make a big difference. . . . If the parents aren't letting them make mistakes or have a little bumps in the road because the parent always sweeps in, then the students don't have these opportunities. And that's kind of thing we are talking about at [orientation] now. Just put it out there. If you keep coming in and rescuing them every time there is a problem, then you are going to end up with the kid that moves back in with you. I get off the things that they really don't want and make a point of saying we are on the same team here. We all want your student to grow, mature, learn, graduate, get a job; everyone wants that. So here are the things we think you can do to help that happen. And they seem to really respond to that.

Participant N added that collaboration between the parent service office and parents to effectively teach them the correct ways to coach students occurs on an ongoing basis through communication. She stated:

We definitely promote independence all the time. You'll see that in our materials where we'll say: You know, this is a huge teachable moment (or teachable time, I guess, much more than a single moment), and as much as you want to be involved, you also want to encourage students to develop independence. That's very much a part of what we say. Not in a dismissive way, not in a strong, a please-go-away, leave-us-alone, [leave] your student alone [way], not at all. . . . Part of what we do is educate parents about resources. So, we're able to work together and say: All right, you've tried for 3 weeks, you're still miserable. According to what I've read from the parent program, you should talk to your house fellow now. I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to intervene and make that phone call myself. You need to walk down the hall and find that person and have a conversation. So, it's that coaching mode that's really important to us.

Theme 2: University Parent Ambassadors

When parents felt a connection to the university, the institution encouraged them to serve as ambassadors. This, in turn, fostered university success in terms of student retention, funding, and representation. Colleges retained students because parents advocated for their persistence to graduation. Participant M spoke at length about the rationale to ensure parents built an affinity with Site B:

Really our goal and our mission and the heart of it is student success, and we understand that connecting parents and families to campus, making them advocates for our university, partners in their student success, that's all rooted back to the students. . . . Part of that is building an affinity for the university, so that's one component of that. In terms of having them feel like they can come visit their student at campus, that they feel connected, that they advocate for us potentially even. I mean some of us look at it as an opportunity where they are also compelled to give money; I don't know why. But of course I mean that's a little bit separate from student success but at the root of student success it's connecting them to resources, making them aware of the support systems that are in place for their student.

And we feel too, if their parents have a—going back to affinity of good feelings about the university, that's talked about in the home. That's translated to the student, and student enjoys time with their parents on campus. So, that's one component, but the other is just letting their parents know—we know and I'm sure you know from research that students, more than ever, go to their parents for advice. And so, with that, we see them as a partner, strategic partner, and we want to engage them for the betterment of our student's experience.

Participant T spoke at length about the evolution of Site B parents' need to connect with the university, prior to the opening of the parent service office on campus.

She reflected:

I was at the alumni association at that time. And actually we were somewhat involved, because we were doing so many activities. We were joining with admissions and doing some admitted students receptions, and parents were saying, "I want to be connected." And then parents were saying "I want to be part of the alumni association in my city." . . . want to connect with other people, and so we tried to connect.

So that alumni network ended up being a pretty big deal for the parents, and then the parents themselves knew one another from these receptions and then realize: Okay, well now we can get out of the state. Did you see the letter from the Parents Program—we can do x or y.

Participant Q also cited that parents' engagement with the alumni association is what drove the university to open up a parent service office on campus. She stated:

I think the alumni association started to create all these things for parents because all parents were asking and we were trying to, you know, trying to serve those needs at the same time. University housing was doing things in other places. . . . I think 2005-2006 is when we did that research and really kind of learned about what our campus culture was and what our philosophy was as it related to parent engagement. And for the most part, there was a lot of support. But there were some folks that were concerned about engaging with parents and the whole idea of helicopter parents and just perpetuating the problem, and really, students are adults and they should be, you know, treated as such, and parents shouldn't be involved.

Parents being good stewards to the university drove the university to look at them as a constituency. Because of parental engagement, the parent service office and the university viewed parents not only as a demographic group that wanted to be involved, but one that played an integral part in student success at the university.

Site B: Findings for Research Question 2,

University Administrator Perceptions of the Role of the Parent Service Office

Site B's parent service office was an independent office housed in an atypical, non-student affairs division. However, not being housed in student affairs was a credit to this office, as it felt it could establish more contacts in other divisions to support its goals. Because of the unique positioning of the parent service office and because several administrators who played a major role in bringing the parent service office to fruition were interviewed for this study, a detailed background of the history of the parent service office is provided below. This history provides context for administrators' perceptions of the role of the parent service office, which immediately follows the two participants' recollection of the parent service office evolution.

Theme 1: Parent Service Office Background

When asked about the history of the parent service office, Participant Q recounted:

So, [the parent service office was] in student affairs but things changed over time, and there was an office that was created as part of the chancellor's initiative for visitors. And so eventually the information services piece and the visitor's piece came together and our office was within the chancellor's office for a while. But then, I think it was, like 3 years ago the university saw that there was a need of sort of realigning all those office across campus that work on sort of what you call it university relations and PR. . . . [Our division] is relatively new and that, just again, just try to realign services, but I do know like parent programs on a lot of campuses are part of student life. It's unique that we are not, but I think it is directly reflected about the fact that it was really a chancellor's initiative that the parent program started to begin with and so when it started, it started then within our office which was very closely aligned with the chancellor's office at that time.

And actually, it was literally the chancellor who you know, after I think seeing and hearing about trends in parent involvement and knowing our campus really had no centralized resource for parents or service of parents. Actually our director

[was instructed] . . . to develop and research and figure out how we could create an office or service for parents. And so, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work very closely on sort of the groundwork in doing internal research, external research, looking at other colleges and universities, how they were serving parents.

Looking at what our parents wanted, there was, you know data, some data available through our orientation group, and they had surveyed on what parents wanted. And then, also looking at our campus, what was all currently going on for parents, because really what was happening is there were all of these services for parents that were popping up in response to parent engagements but they weren't necessarily coordinated, they weren't necessarily centralized. I think some offices felt like they had to do more for parents than really was within their purview.

But really, you know, after we developed the concept of the program, we really got great support across campus, and it was neat because the approach that we took and what we launched in 2007 was a walk before you run approach. We want to build a foundation that then we could build upon, you know, as years to come, so it really started with the nuts and bolts of the program. We started with a website, we started with, you know, a phone and email line for parents were the main things that we started with, because we wanted to see: Okay, how did that work? You know, we pulled together what we thought they wanted.

But we really didn't know until we got all the questions and things and then we were able to build on and add shortly thereafter a newsletter, shortly thereafter a calendar for parents. So it was definitely something that we are able to develop and grow, and a critical part of it was truly our partnerships, because through the parent program we really don't have much. It's all those offices across campus that have the deadlines, the policies, the procedures, the resources, and so trying to figure out, you know, how to pull all of that information together and then also make it put it forward to students in a way that, or to parents in a way that empowered their students. So, that actually empowered parents to empower their students. And so those are really interesting times and interesting journey and really, I feel personally very privileged being able to be a part of that kind of from the ground up.

Participant N also played an integral part in bringing the parent service office to campus and recounted several facts about the parent service office. She reflected:

We needed at the request of our chancellor to look at all prospective student communications if we could make improvements and work together on more things. There were pockets all over campus doing things, but nothing centralized. So I took, stepped away from the alumni magazine for about 2 years to work on this special project with units on campus.

In the process of [benchmarking against other schools], . . . I started to notice all of these links on homepages to parent programs, and I thought: That's interesting. I knew that we had, certainly we had parents services on our campus, but they were in pockets all over the place and not a central place that parents could turn to.

So, what I brought forward at that point was a proposal that we start a new parent program, . . . which would be a one-stop shop that parents can turn to when they're working with [Site B]. So I put that proposal forward, some ideas for how that might work, where it might fit in with our university structure. And the chancellor made the decision to put it as part of [the division where the parent service office is currently housed]. . . . If you look at organizations for parent programs, most often they are connected to dean of students, something like that, occasionally at communications office, sometimes at admissions office. [Staff from Site B's division where parent services is housed] were already working with a lot of parents. So that made sense.

That group was given one FTE to add through the mix, you know, hire someone or run the parent program, and our office was charged with supporting them on communications effort. . . . I worked very closely with them in terms of coming up with story ideas, finalizing copy which [was] used in the newsletter, and a special printed calendar that they do every year. I work with them to sort of fine tune, make sure we're putting out a professional product. That's a quick background on the program, and I can't say enough about how the parent program staff laid the groundwork. And they did a tremendous amount of outreach at the very beginning to say: We're starting this program. How would you like to partner with us? What kind of information are you currently giving to parents? Is there anything we can help with? And, as I said, it was one person at that point, someone who is already on the visitor and information program staff.

Now, they have a second full-time staff member, and she has been brought in first and foremost to work on [an] international parent program because we have a lot of international students—one of the highest proportions at a public university. We have more than 4,000 students, especially coming from Asian countries. So, we're sort of phasing it in and reconfiguring information that we have for our domestic parents. We're now translating into Chinese and building a website for parents of Chinese students. So, little by little, we're getting there and we'll branch out from there and do other languages eventually.

Theme 2: Innovative Communicator

While the perceptions of many administrators reflected that the parent service office was responsible for communication to parents through the website, through orientation handouts, and through coordinating activities, many administrators cited other

unique factors about the parent service office, including being a clearinghouse of resources for parents and hosting periodic webchats between on-campus administrators and parents.

When the researcher asked Participant U about her reflections on the parent service office's primary functions, she recounted:

I would say their primary function is for serving as a kind of a point of contact and a central point of contact for parents and families who have questions about the campus . . . and then they also push out some really great information through their newsletter, through their websites, through the presentations they do at our orientation and making people aware in that way. . . . I see them as an information resource primarily and then also advocacy in the sense that they don't necessarily say: Okay, we got this parent with this problem; we want to make you make this right for the parent. I mean they definitely work with all of the partners on campus to find out what's the best appropriate solution, but they can kind of, they know who to talk to about certain things. . . . Those folks are really, really good at collaborating with others on campus that can kind of come together and solve whatever the issue is.

Participant P agreed with Participant U's assessment of the parent service office being an "information resource." Participant P reflected about the parent service office:

And I really see that 3 years after when they first came . . . they are really kind of a clearinghouse for parents to get them to the resources that they need. . . . They send emails out to parents of students. They have their newsletters that they do, and I think they are done on a semesterly basis. They also have, you know, various outreach programs that they do, and publications. You know, they've got a lot of maps and just general campus information.

Participant P continued by discussing her personal involvement with the parent service office:

We work closely with them. I meet on a regular basis with [the director], and she and I kind of provide updates to one another of what's happening and issues that may be relevant to both offices, either in terms of you know student or parent issues or you know upcoming processes. And just kind of also, another office who is, so to speak, a gathering place for you know questions and such similar to our office, so we have a lot of parallels in what we do.

Participant R reflected that although parents found her office on their own, there were times when the parent program made referrals between parents and her office:

Most parents actually find us independently. But sometimes I'll get parent referred through the parent program. So, I think they do a lot of like kind of being a resource to parents if they have a concern or if their student has a need. And then, they also do quite a few proactive things too, like we worked with them sometimes, they've contacted us about various—writing articles or little news briefs on various health topics that are of interest to parents. We've done a couple of web chats with them. They host web chats for parents, and so we did one.

Participant T took a more holistic view of what the parent service office does. She indicated:

To be honest with you, I don't know the details of their daily interactions. I do know that they are responsible for monitoring what we are hearing from parents, what we are hearing from students about what they wish their parents would know. . . . I know they have been integrated and thinking about where parents might connect to the institution in more meaningful ways, whether it means development or other volunteer opportunities that the campus could benefit from their experience and expertise. So I know they have been connected to the foundation in particular on that piece.

They have been connected to some of the areas where parents first touched the campus and then more parents exit, so whether it means a complication and preparing for that or the SOAR [Support Options for Achievement and Retention] pieces or the tour guiding pieces. They are trying to ensure that the experience parents receive here is sort of, is similar and that they may, they may hear different information, they may experience different things, . . . but they are getting a feel for who and how we work here and that there is always a point of contact or there should always be a point of contact and they can provide it.

Administrators saw the parent service office as being a communication conduit between the university and the parents so that the parents had resources available.

Administrators frequently complimented the parent service office for its ambassadorial role, especially given the short timeframe that the parent service office has been in existence.

**Site B: Findings for Research Question 3,
Parent Service Office Adherence to CAS Standards**

As with Site A, this section discusses adherence to CAS standards in four areas: mission statement, leadership, external relations, and programming.

Mission Statement

CAS standards define the office's mission as follows:

The mission of Parent and Family Programs (PFP) is to build collaboration between parents and families and the institution for the common goals of student learning, development, and success.

PFP must develop, disseminate, implement and regularly review their mission. Mission statements must be consistent with the mission of the institution and with professional standards. PFP in higher education must enhance overall experiences by incorporating student learning and developmental outcomes in their mission. (Appendix E, p. 1)

The full-time staff members of Institution B's parent service office were unanimous in indicating how important their mission statement was to the office.

Participant M confirmed:

Yes, the core of our mission statement, it's also on our website as well, but it is to support student success. And we do that by connecting parents and family members and informing them about the resources on campus, but our root of the mission is actually student success. . . . We understand that connecting parents and families to campus, making them advocates for our university, partners, and their student success, that's all rooted back to the students.

Participant L confirmed that the heart of their mission statement was student success. When the researcher asked about the frequency of referring to the mission statement when planning for programs and services, Participant L responded:

I feel like maybe less now than we did when we first started, although we know supporting student success, which is in that. I mean we use that every week and

we do talk about that; . . . I don't think about it as the mission statement. So, yeah, I guess more often than I think.

Participant M also mentioned that an unofficial mission of the office was as important as, if not more important than, the official mission statement. She reflected on a situation where she helped a parent with a very random request—locating a stuffed animal similar to a student's pet that had died:

Going above and beyond like that is the mission of our office. It's the philosophy. It's the guiding principle. And I think that's why we are successful. I think those little things go a long way, and I think that's why our satisfaction rate is where it is. And so that's really been a joy to kind of go above and beyond even with those funny requests.

Participant L also was confident that the office was continually fulfilling the office's mission through assessment. She recounted:

We do surveys every couple of years. We did just do a survey of our parents, who from the start of the program they graduated after 4 years, we assume they graduated. And we surveyed them and did get really good results from parents. . . . Over 89% of them said that they felt connected to the university, they felt, they rated the level of communication they received from the university high. And so we are, we pretty much feel like we are fulfilling our mission.

The researcher went to the website to look for Site B's mission statement. She noticed that information for parents was not prominently listed on the school's main webpage. She found a link for parents at the very bottom of the page. The parent program website had a very easy-to-read format. Although a mission statement did not exist on the website, there was a section on goals for parents as well as many resources.

Leadership

The CAS standards related to leadership were highlighted on page 73. This section focuses on Site B's advocacy and buy-in to demonstrate the leadership skills of the staff.

At the time of this study, Institution B's parent service office had been in existence for approximately 5 years. Because the parent program was relatively new, the founding members and the current director had to solicit buy-in for the office before it became official and then continually advocate for it. Participant N worked on the original benchmarking project to look into other universities' initiatives on student success. Through her research, she observed many university websites linking parents to on-campus services. Because of this, Participant N submitted a proposal to the chancellor, advocating that a parent program office be brought to Institution B's campus.

When the chancellor approved the proposal, advocacy began around campus. Participant N reflected on the groundwork of the parent service office:

[The associate director of visitor and information programs] had tons of meetings on campus with any group she could find. She started to build a relationship with the dean of students, with the registrar's office, with the bursar's office, where the bills would be paid. Certainly with admissions, which is a key partnership and just doing a face-to-face, one-on-one meeting to say: Here's what we're trying to start. Would you be willing to work with us? We're not going to pretend to be experts in your area. But what we want to know is what can we send parents to get the information that we need and make sure that we're not bounced around all over campus, phone call to phone call.

Although there was internal research, the team also gathered external feedback prior to the parent service office opening on campus. Participant Q further clarified how parent input contributed to institutional knowledge.

Looking at what our parents wanted, there was . . . some data available through our orientation group, and they had surveyed on what parents wanted. And then, also looking at our campus, what was all currently going on for parents, because really what was happening is there were all of these services for parents that were popping up in response to parent engagements but they weren't necessarily coordinated, they weren't necessarily centralized. I think some offices felt like that they had to do more for parents than really was within their purview.

Participant S remembered when the on-campus parent service office was forming and agreed with its establishment process. She indicated:

I think that whole effect was one of the most well-done things I have seen we do as far as taking it slowly, getting a lot of stakeholder buy-in and feedback, really focusing on partnerships and that, focusing on like: We are going to do this our way. . . —just being really confident in what they were doing, [with] organized follow through, using the right channels. . . This was just really well done, and it didn't create any friction in other offices that could have been the home of it.

It was not long afterwards that the current parent program director was hired and assumed the role of parent advocate. Participant M recalled:

So, then they were able to get buy-in, some campus buy-in, and then hired me. And then we spent about 5 months really looking at what services we were going to offer. And we looked at kind of the best services that we liked from lots of different schools and kind of picked and chose which ones we thought were a good fit for [our school] and decided that we would start a program and would start very slowly. . . . We did reach out to parents and asked what services they would use most, what they would like. And then, it was mostly just looking at, still looking at some other models, what we liked, and then expanding from there with a calendar and handbook was the next kind of piece.

Participant N remembered when the parent service office started:

I can't say enough about how the parent program staff laid the groundwork and they did a tremendous amount of outreach at the very beginning to say: We're starting this program. How would you like to partner with us? What kind of information are you currently giving to parents? Is there anything we can help with? And as I said, it was one person at that point, someone who is already on the visitor and information program staff.

Participant Q spoke candidly about lessons learned when forming the parent service office:

Doing your homework first and . . . the parallel research that we did internally and externally, I think, was really, really helpful. . . . [It] gives you a good sense of your own campus and what culture already exists and what already exists on your campus, because probably you are not going to have millions of dollars to be able to develop this program. And so doing your best to leverage what's . . . existing and not . . . take it over, but because you couldn't even . . . wrap our arms on all parent communication . . . even if we wanted to. But trying to figure out how you can leverage those existing resources and how you fit into that.

Following the establishment and success of the parent service office, Participant L indicated that a few primary goals of the office included “advocating for the university and supporting the university [and] also being aware of things that are happening in the campus and community, informing their students about that.” In addition to administrators, the parent service office viewed parents as strategic partners; thus, buy-in from the constituency was important as well. Participant Q summed up:

It's all those offices across campus that have the deadlines, the policies, the procedures, the resources, and so trying to figure out, you know, how to pull all of that information together, and then also make it, put it forward to students in a way that, or to parents, in a way that empowered their students. So, that actually empowered parents to empower their students.

The parent service office continued to solicit departmental and parent input to determine direction. Participant N surmised:

They hold a meeting once a year. We used to meet more frequently, but as the parent program sort of, you know, got their legs underneath them, they didn't need us as much. They now bring us in once a year. They report back on what's happened in the previous years in terms of how many parents are involved, in terms of the context of the program, what kinds of things do people need, finding out what those areas are needing from the parent program and bouncing new ideas off the group.

As for parental input, the parent service office director indicated the office conducted surveys with parents every 2 years. One survey was a pre- and posttest evaluation mailed to the population of parents that saw the parent service office open and were about to see their child graduate. From that survey, the parent service office director indicated that approximately 89% of those surveyed noted they felt connected to the university and rated communication from the university at a high level. This feedback provided proof of fulfilling the office's mission.

External Relations

According to CAS standards, PFP "must" reach relevant individuals, campus offices, and external agencies to:

- Establish, maintain, and promote effective relations
- Disseminate information about their own and other related programs and services
- Coordinate and collaborate, where appropriate, in offering programs and services to meet the needs of students and promote their achievement of student learning and development outcomes

This section discusses how administrators and parents worked together to promote student success and how parents collaborated through volunteering in a university setting.

Many parents at Institution B helped students pay their tuition bills. Parents often let administrators know that they funded their student's education, especially when the student faced resistance in getting a solution to a problem at the university. Participant L reflected on parents and their consumer mindset:

I've heard probably more than any other phrase, ". . . but I'm paying." . . . It's just a tricky situation because certainly, they are making a huge investment in their student's education and it's a sacrifice for a lot of parents, and we respect and honor that.

The dedicated staff in the parent service office provided parents with high customer service. As noted in the Mission section, the office made it a point of “going above and beyond” for parents, even for unusual requests.

Participant R agreed with the parent service office’s ability to empathize with parents. She observed:

If nothing else, they are in [an] office where somebody can feel that they are being heard, and I think that’s really important. . . . A lot of it ties to, you know, a consumer society. You know, when you call in, you are upset about a product, you want to be heard, and I think that they provide that.

Not only did the parent service office empathize with parents who had a consumer mindset but they were also cognizant of some of the common fears of parents. Parent telephone referrals from one department to another were a case in point. Participant L indicated that the office knew how to find answers for parents “and one of our goals isn’t to transfer parents in terms of phone calls as much but to have a personal contact that we can go to.”

Several administrators cited health and safety as Site B’s parents’ primary concern. Participant M spoke about the collaborative spirit behind health and safety.

Because we have such close collaborations with our departments across campus, we are able to easily sort of make those connections, and I would say, you know, the questions that are more sensitive are challenging. The division of student life is really our go-to and that when you talk about escalation, I feel like those, because those, a lot of times [questions] surround safety [and] well-being of students.

The university health services director confirmed that she frequently interacted with parents.

I get a lot of parent calls like in the beginning of the year or even throughout the year when a parent will have health concerns about their student, you know medical concerns or actually many times mental health concerns, or otherwise

their student is having difficulty on campus and they'll contact me in my role at the health service to try to get that student connected to whatever resources they need.

When it was learned that health and safety issues were important to parents and to student success, the staff of the parent service office ensured representation of applicable staff on the parent program departmental advisory council. Participant N added that in forming the departmental advisory council, the division of university health services was key to the team because of parental concern about safety and health.

The parent program staff joined the emergency operations group to initiate a parent notification system for emergencies. Parents received notification via text and email, if needed. Other departments used the parent program to deliver important information to parents regarding health issues affecting students on campus.

Due to FERPA, administrators could only speak to parents about student-related matters if the student signed a consent form that allowed communication between administrators and parents. Parents typically wanted to view grades and other personal information and frequently indicated that they paid for at least some of the student's bill and had a right to see the information. Participant R recalled that it worked the opposite way as well: "In most cases when I've had a student who has had a serious concern, whether that's mental health or medical, they want their parents involved. So, once the student gets consent, then I can speak freely with the parent."

Every administrator interviewed had an opinion about parents interpreting FERPA. Many administrators referred parents to either the registrar's office or the parent service office. The parent service office usually exhibited quality leadership skills when working with parents on FERPA-related issues. Participant V stated:

Luckily, FERPA is housed in the registrar's office, so they take the brunt of explaining FERPA and the reasons behind it. That's their responsibility, is to make FERPA known for parents and students. Their brochures, they have a website, they actually give trainings.

Participant P observed:

There are certainly a few, again didn't know the numbers, who say, "Wait just a minute! I'm paying for my student's education. Every penny. I deserve to see this information." This is where the parent program really excels at very calmly working with parents to say, "I understand why you might behave that way. But here is the reasoning and here is what you can do with your student."

Participant T also reflected:

To be honest with you, our office doesn't do very much of it. We rely on the parents office; we rely on the [orientation] program; we rely on information that goes out during their early part of the year, and then we rely on ensuring that we are directing people to our regular points [of contact].

The parent service office staff demonstrated their leadership skills in a variety of ways to both their internal and external constituents. They frequently empathized with parents and advocated on their behalf to their cohort of colleagues. Colleagues were willing to work with the parent service office to bring consistency and quality resolutions to their concerns.

Programming

Selections from the CAS standards were highlighted on page 81 for Site A. Programming involved building collaboration among constituents, which could further student learning and development, as well as provide networking opportunities. Some examples of programming at Site B are listed in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9
Types of Programming Initiatives from the Parent Service Office in Site B

Program	Location	Constituents
Parent and family orientation	In person	School, families, students
Parent and family weekends	In person	School, families, students
Move-in	In person	School, families, students
Send-off events	In person	School, families, students
Educational workshops	In person and online	School, families
Seminars	In person and online	School, families
Newsletters	Online and mail	School, families, students
Fundraising	In person and online	School, families
Other	In person, online, and mail	School, families, students

This section outlines the target population for quality-based programming and provides tangible examples of how quality-based programming was conducted.

In order to coordinate quality programming efforts, the parent service office needed to understand the population and goals of the parents. By understanding subset populations, a parent service office director could forward proper information to most people. At Site B, Participant L summarized this notion by stating, “I think going back to student success and reaching those goals, we have to make sure we are reaching all parents to be able to support success for all students, and that’s something that we continue to think about.”

In terms of parent demographics, the parents at Institution B were predominantly college educated, predominantly middle to high socioeconomic class, and represented nationalities from all over the world. Institution B’s parent program office considered parents in many different capacities. Participant L stated:

Well, one of our goals is just to be transparent about [student development] in our newsletter. We also want to make sure we are covering, well, two things: We are covering the right amount of topics in a wide variety, diverse topics, and we are also communicating to all parents because kind of, as I was talking about earlier, we are not necessarily communicating to all parents and we’ve actually thought a little bit and analyzed about our, in terms of our parent population, if they have attended college, what their income might be.

Having such a diverse parent population made large-scale events like orientation challenging but not impossible. The next session showcases Site B's first-year orientation program.

First-year orientation. Orientation provided the first opportunity for the office to communicate with parents. Participant M stated:

Once [parents and families] register for [orientation], they come into our database and then we start right away with that welcome newsletter and that's the first point of contact. . . . We automatically get [parents' and families'] names at [orientation] when they register to come [for orientation] with their student. Their info is automatically put into our system. But [in prior years], parents had to sign themselves up. . . . We actually had a card we handed out and said, "Here if you are interested" and they'd fill it out and we would come back and type it in. It was very time consuming and there were a lot of spelling errors, because you couldn't read handwriting. So we learned . . . they can opt out instead of opting in.

Because some parents elected not to attend first-year orientation, they may have not officially been in the database. However, the parent service office affirmed they captured the majority of parents' information at orientation and made attempts to reach the remainder through various means during the 4 years of student enrollment.

The orientation program lasted 1½ days, with the agenda developed through the collaboration of the parent service office and orientation office. Separate tracks were offered for parents and students, and parents were offered the calendar discussed earlier in this chapter. Parents also had the opportunity to meet with administrators from different areas and to sleep in a dormitory.

Administrators of the orientation program indicated that the format of the parent sessions recently changed, with parents given the opportunity to choose sessions of greatest interest to them. Parents also had the opportunity to attend conference-style sessions, allowing them to interact in a more personable fashion. Participant M

summarized: “We really took a step back, looked at all the info, cut unnecessary info, and just kind of kept the basics and what parents really need to know.” Participant P noted that the administrators have “become more intentional” in regards to orientation being a “teaching and learning experience,” with a move to “less information and more coaching about parenting and the relationship between the students.”

Dovetailing on Participant P’s point on coaching parents, Participant O spoke about the need to change parents’ paradigm when students came to college.

The real message here ought to be it’s time to change. just like when your child went from elementary school to junior high, you changed. When your child went from junior high to high school, you changed. When your child went from freshman in high school to senior, you changed. It’s the next time to change. You’re not letting go of anything. You’re just doing things differently. You’re not loving them any less, but you now have a very clear role in the coaching, in the encouraging, ask that because the communication allows for such direct contact on a regular basis. It’s really more important now for the parents to understand what the university can and cannot do.

Participant S shared the history of the parent orientation:

What we were doing previous to this year was telling parents every single thing we could think of about the college experience, and I thought and I said this for years and finally we made the change. We were just enabling them to think that that was their responsibility to have to know about all that stuff. So when we literally—and this is the example that I can’t get out of my head—we were telling them how long the cord has to be to get from the computer to the outlet in the residence hall. . . . The new model is talking more about in general what’s going to happen and what the parent’s role is. And so I now do a new presentation myself and a number of other advisors where we talk to parents about the advising and enrollment process and we spend a little bit of time at presentation talking about what’s happening, but at a high level—kind of here is what the student is going to do, here is the kind of questions that are going to be asked, here is the kind of decisions they probably have to make, and then telling the parents and here is how you should have a conversation with them after this program or dinner tonight that can be helpful. And it feels like it’s making a difference.

We are not giving them as much time to ask questions during sessions because that seems snowball and . . . we get to the question about how long the cord has to be. And so they with fewer time to ask questions, they just sort of move on and

they are just sort of okay. So that shift in philosophy for the parent program had SOAR [Support Options for Achievement and Retention] is very new, just a week and a half old. But our early indications is that it's really working.

The researcher had the opportunity to attend several parent orientation sessions at Institution B during the site visit. The researcher observed that after the opening session concluded for a mixed audience of first-year students and their families, facilitators advised the audience that students would break off from their parents to attend concurrent sessions separately. Utilizing the first of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors to rationalize student development, an administrator said to the parents that the separation was "practice for you and your students to make independent decisions." Although the administrator stressed to parents that independent decision making was important to the student, parents still wanted additional information to help students make informed decisions. The parents used the orientation session to take the time to learn more about academics. The researcher observed the following questions asked by parents during the orientation session: When will students sign up for courses next semester? When do they schedule classes for this term? How do students place out of classes? If a student didn't get into a specific school (nursing or business) and still wanted to pursue the field, would he or she be behind? If a student is a transfer student, do grades/credits transfer? Do you work with Rate My Professor? Are there core requirements that students need to fulfill? In their session, parents also reported some of the goals they had for their students, including getting a job after graduation, finding a job they like, making friends and networking, enjoying the experience, and learning to enjoy learning.

The parent coordinator led another session for parents. She spoke about the changes that parents might see in their students, especially when they came home during breaks. She also coached parents on changing their role from problem solver to mentor.

An online poll was conducted during Site B's orientation with parents and students asking a single question of both populations: How often do you plan on communicating with your student (or parent)? The outcome was 24% of both parents and students believed that they would text each other every day, while 73% of parents and 59% of students would text occasionally.

Communication initiatives. Reaching parents who did not attend orientation was a concern because signing up for orientation was connected with signing up to receive information through the parent service office. One group of parents unable to attend orientation was those from other countries. Participant L indicated how Site B addressed this concern:

We actually conducted an online survey that we sent—I meticulously went through 26,000 parents and found parents that were living abroad and emailed them and sent them the survey and so we have that data. We've also surveyed students. We've gone to events through international student services, we've spoken with campus partners, and we customized 30 pages of content, which are inclusive of all the main topics that we talked about. Just international students have very similar needs to domestic students as well, but recognizing that some things are different.

For example, even in our "Frequently Asked Questions," we said, okay, I'm visiting my student, how do I get a visa, and so we have a section about that. . . . For students' understanding, it's appropriate to question your professors; it's not inappropriate. In fact, it might help your grade if you do that. It's appropriate to ask questions. It's all right even to dress casually and bring food to class. So we've also wanted to shed light on those types of things for parents so that they could inform their students about that.

Based on the directive of the former chancellor, the parent service office began to focus on China because the country represented Institution B's largest international student population. The university also had an office in China.

Understanding that different cultures had different needs, Participant L was hired to specifically work with this population. She was trying to better understand this population in order to serve their needs. This effort included reading different books about Chinese parents, cultivating relationships with Chinese students to learn more about their upbringing and culture, and collaborating with campus partners, including faculty familiar with Chinese culture to learn more about norms and to write a welcome letter in Chinese. Participant L reflected:

We did ask [Chinese students] questions not just about their experience on campus, but what their parents ask them about, and we actually compared that with asking parents in the survey, "What do you ask your student about? What are your main concerns?" . . . We've been trying to outreach the faculty too to learn more about those cultural norms. . . . We've been trying to work with [an on-campus professor] who intends to write a letter to parents in Chinese welcoming them to campus. So, it's been helpful to learn about those cultural norms.

After orientation, bringing large numbers of parents back to campus for more learning opportunities could be a challenge. Institution B indicated that family weekends netted the largest number of families returning to campus to visit their student. However, it was difficult to weave a curriculum into a weekend when parents saw their children for the first time in weeks. Institution B developed communication measures, such as newsletters, comprehensive websites, and social media, to keep the parents informed about happenings on campus and in their students' lives. Participant L indicated:

We've been trying to drive to either printed resources that we give them at orientation or drive them to the web for a lot more of the nitty-gritty kind of hard factual information and really trying to use our time and presence here with them

to do more of the sort of training, . . . trying to help them understand the transition process again and see them in the role as how they can be supporters of their students' success.

The parent service office website contained valuable data for parents, especially for those who missed orientation or who would like a refresher course after orientation.

At Institution B, the parent service office was very proud of their annual calendar.

However, administrators from across the university complimented the webchats the office had coordinated since 2009. Each is highlighted below.

At Institution B, during orientation all families received an annual calendar filled with important dates, resources, and a handbook. Participant L commented about the calendar:

We have a few different services and resources; one is our calendar and handbook. So the front is a calendar, in the side component it has what's happening with your students. So month by month, you know if they're taking certain exams or testing. . . . The front section we have our goals for parents and we also have a letter from the chancellor and the parent program. And the back is a handbook, which is sort of a print version of our website. Obviously not as much content, because it's a print version, but we try to showcase all of the different resources especially for families who might not have Internet access. It also has a table that has like when payments are due, and we have all different student organization offices.

Participant M agreed that the calendar was a "key and important piece":

We and lots of other departments get a lot less phone calls because we've anticipated what parents are going to ask. Because every day they'll need to know, and here it's every contact that they need to know, you know with this whole section on what's happening with your student.

While the calendar provided global information, the webchats provided a focus on specific areas by bringing together key administrators with particular expertise on a topic.

The office offered approximately six webchats annually. Participant L commented:

Web chats are an opportunity to get, and this is another we outreach to partners—we ask them to come. They are experts in a particular topic—for example, study abroad or financial matters—and we host a web chat where parents can ask questions. So it's cool, it's live, it's interactive, and the transcript, it stays posted online.

The researcher examined a webchat transcript from August 11, 2011, that discussed the first-year experience before students moved to campus. Eleven administrators plus the moderator were present at the webchat. Departmental representatives were present from the dean of students office, university health service office, student financial aid, advising, housing, the registrar, the parent program, the first-year experience, and the involvement office. For this webchat, 51 participants, including parents and students, asked 145 questions. Two people asked 21 to 22 questions each, while a little over half of the respondents asked one question each. The session started at 11:56 am and ended at 1:05 pm. A parent asked the first question immediately after the introductions. Some of the information asked about included housing (on and off campus), weather, transportation, financial aid, athletics, parents weekend, registration, gun laws, health (immunizations, insurance), first-year experience, jobs, international students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues. Answers were provided in a few sentences. In most cases, the group provided an email address or a specific website where the parent could find more details. Occasionally, the administrators would ask questions of the parents to gain feedback. In one particular case, they asked, “How well do you think [orientation] prepared you for the upcoming year?” Seven parents provided feedback about their thoughts on orientation. The parent service office at Institution B has sponsored 18 webchats to date.

In summary of Chapter 4, the parent offices at both Site A and Site B had some commonalities in themes. Both of the parent offices stressed the importance of student success for promoting student development and student learning outcomes. They indirectly emphasized that the way to promote student success is through different communication channels with parents. These channels consisted of electronic communication (email, webchats, website), systematic newsletters, in-person workshops (first year orientation), special events (parents weekend, football/basketball games), and training of colleagues on effectively communicating with university parents. Both Site A and Site B demonstrated that cultivating parent ambassadors also help with student success. Both Site A and Site B parent offices promoted actively engaged parents as a means to assist parents who may be new to the college or as a constituency to provide monetary donations to benefit the students.

Administrator perceptions differed between the two schools. At Site A, common themes among administrators about Site A's parent office role included: (1) communication conveyor, (2) event coordinator, and (3) parent advocate. While many of Site B's administrators attested to Site B's parent office being a (1) communicator conveyor, (2) event coordinator, and (3) parent advocate, more time was focused on administrators recollection of Site A's parent office's creation and their present day innovative practices.

In the next chapter, the analysis will be categorized into themes, by each school, and subsequently recommendations about the practicality of the study's findings will be introduced.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the demand for ensuring quality on college campuses as well as meeting expectations of parents, the purpose of this exploratory, multiple case study was to investigate the way in which professionals in parent service offices at two research universities implemented quality-based services for their stakeholders. Prior to this study, a minimal amount of research existed on college parent programs and none specifically on how administrators implemented quality-based services in their parent service offices. The researcher was unable to locate any studies related to the use of Council for the Advancement in Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards by Parent and Family Programs. This study discussed not only best practices of two universities' parent service offices but also the perceptions of administrators about the office.

The two higher education institutions participating in the study were chosen based on their use of the CAS Standards for Parent and Family Programs as well as recommendations from leading parent service practitioners and researchers. A total of 23 campus administrators were interviewed for this study, with 11 from one school and 12 from the other. In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected documents pertaining to parents and made on-campus observations to triangulate data through a case study approach. The researcher spent 4 days at each school to collect data. To understand parent programs at the two universities, this study utilized three primary research questions:

1. Using Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards and guidelines, how are university parent service offices collaborating

- with parents and families of undergraduate students for quality student development and student learning outcomes?
2. How do university administrators perceive the parent service office role on their campus?
 3. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines?
 - 3a. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on mission?
 - 3b. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on leadership?
 - 3c. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on campus and external relations?
 - 3d. How are university parent service offices adhering to the CAS standards and guidelines on programming?

The next section reviews major themes and subthemes that evolved from the study. That section is followed by recommendations for future research, implications for practice, a discussion of study limitations, and conclusions.

Major Themes and Subthemes

Site A: Findings for Research Question 1, Collaboration for Quality Student

Development and Student Learning Outcomes

Theme 1. Connecting parents and families to campus through systematic communication efforts. Parents are commonly a key component in their student's life

past high school. Unlike previous generations of college students, many college students of the current Millennial generation maintain contact with their parents weekly, if not daily, to make decisions in their daily life (Education Advisory Board, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Lowery, 2001; Ullom & Faulkner, 2005). Modern college parents stay in touch with their children more than those in previous generations (Coburn, 2006; College Parents of America, 2007; Daniel et al., 2001; Howe et al., 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Tyre, 2002; Taub, 2008).

Although some colleges have prohibited parents from attending college orientation (Wills, 2005), college administrators are recognizing that parents are not disengaging from the college campus. As college administrators recognized that students and parents were in frequent contact, they initiated more opportunities to welcome parents to campus. These events included sessions like admitted student day and freshman orientation. Freshman orientation programs often included separate tracks for first-year students and their parents. Through events like these, universities sent a symbolic message that parents and families were welcome on the campus. Other factors, such as a parent portal on the main university website, a Facebook account, frequent communication with parents, and a parent service office, all demonstrated to parents that student success was multifaceted.

Connecting parents and families to campus is consistent with the literature, given that today's parents of traditional-aged college students want to remain involved (Howe et al., 2003). As college is a time for exploration, parents continue to communicate with their student to assist with decision-making and to ensure the student's safety (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Many parents have a hard time letting go of the responsibility that they

have become accustomed to in the previous 18 years (Coburn & Treeger, 1997; Jones & Ginsburg, 2006; Pizzolato & Hicklen, 2011; Coomes & DeBard, 2004).

Theme 2: Cultivating parent and family ambassadors. A college can develop affinity with parents through programming, communication, or alumni status. When parents have allegiance towards a specific college, they can promote student success through motivation and fundraising. Parent advocacy is influential in students' lives. The connection through the college allows parents to seek resources or, in the case of donations, to create resources that will benefit their student or students in future classes.

Site A elected to have a cohort of ambassadorial parents, known as the parent council, in order to have a select group of parents serve as a group of representatives who would advocate for university parents. While currently these parents serve as advocates for the school pertaining to budget issues, there is anticipation that there might be opportunities for the council members to both contribute and advocate for donations from parents across the university.

Because of parental support, Institution A was a direct beneficiary of over \$25,000 from parent fundraising through the university's development office. Once money was raised, the parent council allocated its use to benefit student development through recreational and professional opportunities. The literature supports using parent ambassadors and notes that they have been involved for almost three decades. Wilkinson (1989) advocated for parents as recruitment ambassadors and stated,

With increased pressures, short staff, and limited budgets, you frequently need to call upon volunteers to help fill the gaps. What better group than parents? . . . After all, they have been PTA members, Little League coaches, and teacher aides, so they are ready to extend that commitment and support through the college years. (p. 145)

Site A: Findings for Research Question 2, University Administrator Perceptions of the Role of the Parent Service Office

Theme 1: Communication conveyor. As engaged parents are interacting with colleges more frequently, parent service offices have opened at a rapid rate (Savage & Petree, 2009). The parent service offices continually try to educate parents about school happenings and student development issues. Ensuring that parents are well informed allows them to feel that they are a part of the college experience with their student and helps them make informed decisions, especially when students come to parents with questions.

After the parent service office establishes an initial connection with the parent, whether through telephone, website, email, newsletter, or texting, the parent service office could communicate regularly with this constituent group about educational sessions, on-campus resources, and university events. The positive connection between a parent and a college office is consistent with the literature for providing information to parents and establishing a relationship with parents (Oldroyd, 1989, p. 7).

Theme 2: Event coordinator. Site A is responsible for coordinating both large and small events in order to ensure that parents feel connected to the college campus. Many of the participants at Site A indicated that its parent service office is known to sponsor events such as first-year and parent orientation, family weekend, and summer send-offs. Smaller-scale events were created for local parents to take part in events on a continual basis. The parent service office worked with other on-campus offices to coordinate athletic, dance, and theater events. While coordinating each of these initiatives, Site A also kept in mind its parent population's socioeconomic status. Keeping

cost-saving measures in mind ensured the maximum amount of parental participation in each event.

Theme 3: Parental advocacy. The Site A parent service office was initially envisioned by the vice chancellor, who recognized that parents serve as an important constituency. To capitalize on the vision, buy in from other senior administrators, staff, and parents was gained to make the parent service office a reality on campus. The staff who directly oversee the parent service office continue to promote the office among their colleagues. It is not an easy task to solicit buy in from a myriad of departments, as different departments have competing agendas due to “philosophical, legal, administrative, financial, or political reasons” (Mullendore et al., 2005, p. 4). Yet, once support is extended by other departments, the parent service office has greater influence when serving parents. The biggest example is that the parent service office showcases a unified front when working with parents. If the parent service office does not know the answer to a question, the parent service office administrator can call a colleague to get an answer to a question. Parents appreciate having a resource in one location, rather than having to make different phone calls to campus administrators to find the answer. Another symbolic example of achieved buy-in occurs when outside departments not only know about the parent service office but also refer parents to that office, collaborate on intercampus events, and serve on parent service office advisory boards.

Site A relied on survey data to ensure that direct messaging occurring from the parent service office to the parents was being properly transmitted. Assessment is an important tool when soliciting buy-in from constituents. To create buy-in from others, offices can conduct different forms of research to ascertain the population needs.

Assessment can be accomplished in the form of focus groups, interviews, online polls, and needs assessment surveys (Education Advisory Board, 2010; Sims, 1995). Once feedback is gained and analyzed, it should drive changes. Needs assessment practices were advocated for student learning outcomes (Sims, 1995; Winston & Moore, 1991) and early parent programs (Glazerman, 1989).

Site A's parent service office's use of assessment demonstrated that it was committed to advocating for parents by allowing parent voices to be conveyed to the parent service office. The parent service office took feedback from its needs assessment survey and found that its communication efforts were not as efficient as school administrators thought. Subsequently, the administrators turned the information into a learning opportunity for colleagues to work with parents effectively by providing interdepartmental training.

Site A: Findings for Research Question 3, Parent Service Office Adherence to CAS Standards

Mission statement. Mission statements provide the philosophy on the way the parent service office works with parents and students. Hirt (2009) opined that mission statements “inform” external constituencies, while they provide structure for internal constituents to “conform” to, as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

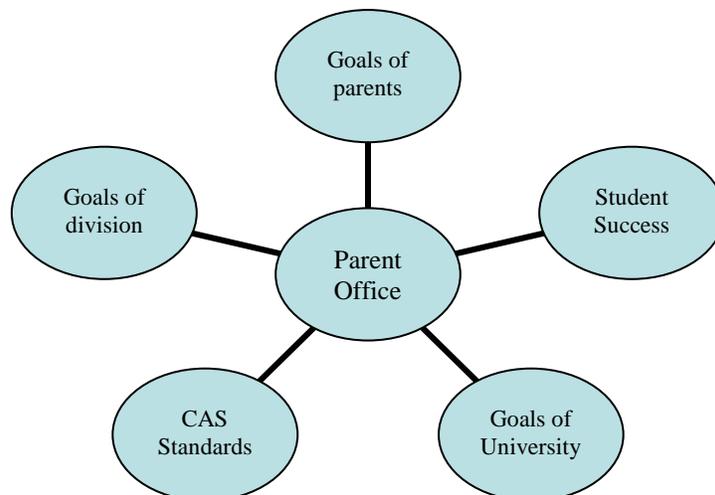


Figure 5.1. Parent service offices’ connection with multiple areas when pursuing their mission.

Site A’s mission statement was purposefully kept broad in order to accommodate work overseen by the joint office. The joint office concept, which includes parent programs and first-year orientation overseen by the same administrators, worked for Site A. As Site A welcomes many first generation students onto campus, having a joint office allows the university to work with parents and students as soon as the student begins college and sequentially follows both parent and student throughout the student’s college career. The mission statement focused primarily on first-year retention to ensure that parents understood that the office’s primary focus was student success.

Leadership. Staff development training sessions for quality customer service to parents are essential for fostering quality customer service (Mullendore et al., 2005; Jackson & Murphy, 2005). Feedback from a 2011 needs assessment at Institution A indicated that parents were getting different answers from different campus offices, leading to a great deal of confusion and frustration. The parent service office collaborated with the dean of students office to offer a cross-divisional training, which began in winter

2012. Through the presentation, staff within the university community had the opportunity to learn about establishing effective relationships with parents. As the different offices worked together, parents would be less frustrated with the system and have a better experience with the university. It is conceivable that this could lead to quicker and more consistent answers on finding resources to help their student. That, in turn, could contribute to student success, which directly correlated with the main mission and goal of the parent service office.

External relations. *Administrators fostering effective relations with parents.* In order to promote effective relations, administrators at Site A empathized with parents consistently. Empathy was implemented in understanding the parent's point of view whenever a parent contacted the parent service office. For example, the parent service office wanted to boost the number of phone calls it received to the point where parents viewed the office as a first point of contact. The parent service office evolved by technologically enhancing its service, including adding a texting number to which parents could text questions and receive an answer within 24 hours. Chaffee and Seymour (1991) indicated that employee aptitude, customer service, and value of the dollar are important to constituents when interacting with the university. Administrators at Site A empathized with parents as constituents and consumer. The administrators strove to exhibit high-quality customer service to ensure the parent's experience met or exceeded expectations.

Parents fostering effective relations with other parents. Site A appeared to have an active cohort of parents, who enjoyed volunteering on behalf of the university. They attended meetings of the parent association/parent council, agreed to host or participate in a summer send-off, or volunteered to usher at events. Parents enjoyed talking to one

another in order to *pay forward* their experiences. An example of this occurred when a parent volunteered to speak to parents of incoming first-year students in order to share personal experiences and reflections during summer send-offs. Administrators enjoyed this type of parental interaction because it increased parental involvement with the university (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005), and parents served as the best ambassadors to other parents (Education Advisory Board, 2010; Todd, 1989). Parents also served as ambassadors through the on-campus parent association or parent council. At Site A, the members of the parent council were entirely parents of undergraduate college students. They served in an advisory capacity and considered the voice of parents to weigh in and advocate on issues. They also held fiduciary responsibilities by overseeing funds and allocating those funds for use within the division of student affairs.

Programming. *Diverse needs for programming.* Demographically, the parents at Site A were close-knit, predominantly middle working-class families, who lived relatively close to the school and whose students were first-generation college students. Site A administrators frequently dealt with diverse populations, specifically first-generation students whose immediate family members had not received a college degree. The parents of these students may be reluctant to come to campus or may be extremely interested in understanding the culture of a college campus. Campus administrators were cognizant of these extremes and made it a point to offer diverse programming to reach as many parents as possible.

Considering the many ethnicities, national origins, educational experiences, and socioeconomic statuses of families of students in college today, university administrators need to consider many different populations when conducting outreach to parents (Terry

et al., 2005). One study conducted by The Education Advisory Board (2010) found that a nontraditional parent can look for student assistance from the multicultural center, the international office, or the athletics department (p. 47).

Orientation. An example of a major programming initiative was first-year orientation. Orientation was a time for learning about the college, including receiving counseling on classes and campus life and registering for the upcoming academic semester. Site A had two orientations that ran concurrently: a first-year orientation and a parent orientation. Ward-Roof (2005) indicated that initiating a parent orientation program symbolizes a partnership between the parent and the university as well as an introduction to parents of their roles on campus (p. 32). During the time of orientation, parents become familiarized with their student's new surroundings (Education Advisory Board, 2010; Severino, 1989). Having a joint office overseeing both first-year orientation and parent programs ensured a successful preliminary experience into college life for both populations.

Site B: Findings for Research Question 1, Collaboration for Quality Student Development and Student Learning Outcomes

Theme 1: Student success. At Site B, student success was of paramount importance to the parent service office, as indicated by the office staff. The office believes that by supporting parents, students will ultimately be successful at the school. In order to cultivate parents to effectively work with students during their college years, Site B placed a heavy emphasis on ensuring that parents thought less like problem solvers and more like coaches to their students. Because of the parent service office resources and networks, parents were in a better position to begin the process of coaching or

mentoring their student as opposed to solving the issues for them (Mullendore et al., 2005). This led to student success due to less dependency on the parent and more self-development by the student (see Figure 5.2).

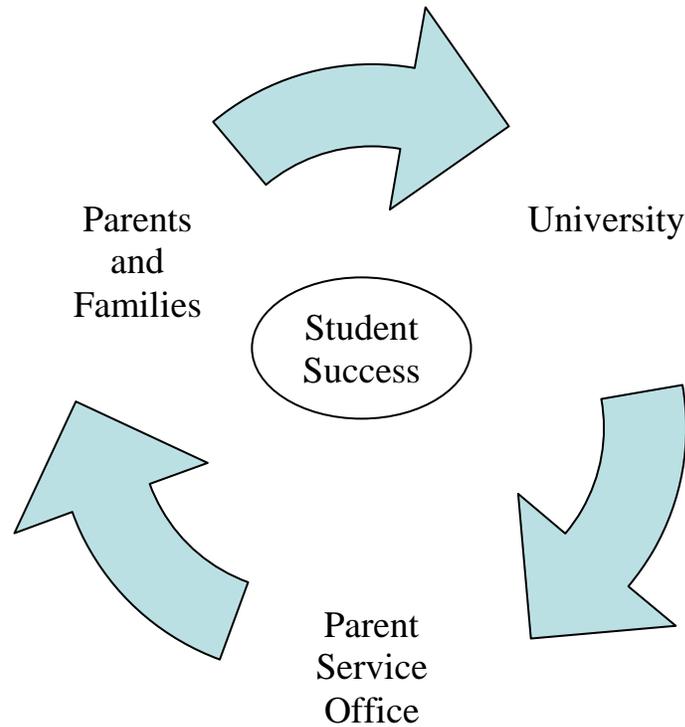


Figure 5.2. Supporting student success through three-pronged collaboration.

Theme 2: University parent ambassadors. Ward-Roof (2005) recommended that when planning for parent orientation programs, administrators should “[i]nclude current students and parents of current students in the parent orientation program. Parents are usually excited to learn from those who have experienced college life before them” (p. 32). When parents felt a connection to the university, the institution encouraged them to serve as ambassadors. This, in turn, fostered university success in terms of student retention, funding, and representation. Because of parental engagement, the parent service office and the university looked at parents not only as a demographic group that

wanted to be involved, but one that played an integral part in student success at the university.

Site B: Findings for Research Question 2, University Administrator Perceptions of the Role of the Parent Service Office

Site B's parent service office was an independent office housed in an atypical, non-student affairs division and was described as an "information resource" for parents by one Site B administrator. However, not being housed in student affairs was a credit to this office, as staff felt they could establish more contacts in other divisions to support their goals. By crossing divisional lines, the parent service office was perceived as being an independent entity for which a vast amount of information could be conveyed to parents. Housing the parent service office in an independent was a fascinating model to observe. As more schools strategically place parent offices, it would be good for them to consider housing it in a division that is neither student affairs or development. Ellis (2009) posited that from a student affairs point of view, "long term committees comprised of a range of stakeholders serve to give all perspectives a voice in the dialogue about an issue" (p. 451).

Serving as a clearinghouse of information for parents had challenges. Because departments had varying deadlines at Site B, the parent service office served to streamline information. The timeliness of other departments' submissions in external communication showed their approval of the parent service office and aided student success.

Site B: Findings for Research Question 3, Parent Service Office Adherence to CAS Standards

Mission statement. The Site B parent service office’s mission statement addressed connecting parents and family members and informing them about the resources on campus, which leads to student success. The literature supports this view, as Mullendore et al. (2005) indicated that administrators should uniformly articulate the parental role on campus. Cohen and Halsey (1985) also stated: “When parents clearly understand the mission of the university, they are in a better position to support that mission as it relates to their child” (p. 96).

The parent service office administrators also made the point that “going above and beyond” was an unofficial mission of the parent service office. The staff frequently made a point to participate in special initiatives to help parents, such as tracking down a stuffed animal for a student by the parent’s request. Chaffee and Seymour (1991) indicated that employee aptitude, customer service, and the value of the dollar are important to constituents when interacting with the university.

Leadership. Leadership came in the form of strong advocacy for the creation of the parent service office, as well as subsequently initiating buy-in efforts in support of the relatively newly formed office. Site B staff demonstrated high leadership skills, as they navigated the direction of the parent service office to ensure buy-in from various stakeholders. It was helpful to the staff to have the assistance of interdepartmental colleagues’ and constituents’ input and feedback. Meetings of an advisory board comprised of administrators from across the university served as focus groups to guide the direction of the soon-to-be-formed parent service office.

External relations. Jackson and Murphy (2005) recommended that student affairs professionals create a position that frames the relationship between the university and the parent, as it would lead to a helpful and productive relationship between the two populations. While Site B's parent service office was not based in student affairs, the notion of population identification and roles applies. Parents of college students typically identify themselves as primary assistants in funding college tuition bills. Howe and Strauss (2007) indicated that parents are becoming more consumer focused.

When a problem arises at a university, parents have indicated to Site B's parent service office that they paid a certain amount of money and demand good service for all the money they have invested into their student's college career. In response, Site B's parent service office empathizes with parents and is proactive in identifying common fears of parents and working to remedy them.

Site B's participants all spoke about relaying information to parents on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This federal law, initiated in 1974, gave adult students more independence when it came to grades and other personal information. Because interpretation of the policy is subjective, there are many misconceptions about FERPA (Lowery, 2005). Interpretations vary from college to college. Consumer-minded parents, especially those who are paying their student's bill, become upset when notified they are not entitled to see their student's transcript or other personal information without the student's consent (Weeks, 2001). Administrators spend many hours educating parents on the FERPA policy during first-year orientation, in handbooks, and when contacted. During the course of the interviews, administrators indicated that a high emphasis was placed on discussing FERPA during orientation. However, parents still showed a great

amount of confusion about the policy during the student's first year of college.

International parents required more instruction on FERPA regulations.

Programming. Site B had three major programming initiatives for parents: parent orientation, the parent program calendar/handbook, and communications to parent populations that were unable to come to campus.

Site B's orientation consisted of two separate tracks for both parents and incoming students. The separate tracks allowed administrators to teach parents about student development and give resources to the parents in order to begin the coaching process. By educating parents about these topics, parents and students adjusted to the student's transition more quickly (Perigo, 1985).

Site B developed a calendar that included a parent handbook, important university deadlines, and tips for effective student development. This calendar served as a wall calendar but also conveyed information to parents about on-campus events that may be affecting their student on a particular day, week, or month.

Because parents may not be able to travel to campus events, finding other ways to disseminate information and communicate to parents becomes critical (Education Advisory Board, 2010, pp. 37-39; Mullendore & Banahan, 2007, pp. 6-7). Site B hosted periodic topic-based webchats for parents to learn information about their student's general college life experience directly from administrators. These webchats lasted approximately an hour. Parents had the opportunity to ask questions of certain cross-divisional staff at Site B, who were sitting around a conference table during the webchat.

Another initiative that the parent program focused on was international parents. Osfield and Terrell (2009) opined that "higher education is becoming increasingly

international in practice” (p. 120). Site B ascertained that its largest international student population was from China. Parents from a country as far away as China may face challenges in visiting the campus and their student, challenges in understanding American cultural customs, and challenges in understanding the English language. Thus, the parent service office developed a pilot program that translated documents into Chinese and provided more appropriate information about student life and travel for people who lived far away. These initiatives included obtaining visas and dealing with homesickness. The parent website also had a link on its website for Spanish-speaking parents to ask questions to post and receive answers in Spanish.

Summary of Findings

This study has five principal findings:

1. The two parent service offices studied have solid foundations in place, including a mission statement and communication goals. These values will lead to quality student development and student learning outcomes, as parents and the parent service office administrators collaborate on a united front for bringing the best educational experience to the student.
2. The two parent service offices studied continue to offer a diverse range of programming options, such as a first-year parent orientation track, to account for the many different parent populations at the university. Administrators are collaborating with parents in order for parents to help their students make independent and informed decisions, leading to quality student development and student learning outcomes.

3. The two parent service offices studied continually advocate for their programs and services. They also continue to achieve buy-in with their internal and external constituents through continual assessment. Gaining feedback from target populations leads to new parent-inspired innovations, as well as promote a sense of institutional reliability among parents. More informed parents leads to quality student development and student learning outcomes.
4. The parent service offices studied actively creates and maintains relationships with other constituents, including parents, by creating good customer relations. Since today's college parents typically have a consumer mindset and actively hold schools accountable, an alliance between parent and university promotes student development and student learning outcomes due to the parent believing in the university. With ongoing support of parents, such as (1) consistent messaging to both constituents (parents and students), (2) a universal knowledge of available resources, and (3) ongoing education of parents to effectively work with their college student, the student benefits due to communication consistency between the school, the student, and the parent. With accurate information from the school, parents are able to encourage and support their student at college. Furthermore, perceptions of university administrators are equally important.
5. Many administrators interviewed during the study indicated that they knew the parent service office existed. The administrators who could articulate parent service office functionality usually interacted with the office frequently, through participation in meetings, presentations, and communications. They served as the dominant voices throughout the interviews. The administrators who did not know

that the parent service office existed or could not articulate functionality portray an opportunity where parent service offices can further develop on-campus relations.

Implications for Practice

Over the years, universities have had many different types of relationships with parents. Parents formed networks when their children, primarily sons, went to college in the 1920s. This evolved into a few universities looking to parents to contribute donations. As a result of student protests in the 1960s, universities essentially banned parents from being part of their students' lives, as FERPA became federal policy in 1974. At the time of this study, however, parental engagement was the highest it had ever been. In order to think about the future of the parent service office, one has to examine a number of factors, including parental generation, socioeconomic status, educational status of parents, and societal perceptions of both the value of higher education and consumerism.

In 2014, we are at a point where there are two generations of parents of the Millennial population: the Baby Boomers and Generation X. Both generations of parents have traditional-aged students enrolled as undergraduates in colleges. As the Generation X parent becomes more predominant, researchers expect that parents will be more aggressive in getting both their and their student's needs met at any cost. Howe and Strauss (2007) indicated, "As Gen Xers replace Boomers in the ranks of collegiate parents over [the decade started 2010], the 'no child left behind' parents of the K-12 world will become the 'not with my child you don't' parents of higher education." This may contrast with what administrators are accustomed to seeing from parents. It is likely that these parents will be holding administrators more accountable than ever before; thus,

a quality-oriented parent service office becomes essential to a university campus. Exemplifying standard practices to a pragmatic population is a key to success; therefore, implementing standards and guidelines in the parent service office is also essential.

Parent service offices need to consider the population of Generation X parents. Generally, those in this generation, which was heavily focused on materialism growing up, needed to see a purpose in everything they did (i.e., “What’s in it for me?”) and were more cynical about their college experience than was the Baby Boomer generation (Howe & Strauss, 2007). In addition to adhering to standards, parent service offices should listen to constituents to ensure they offer programming that parallels the parents’ values. The parents of Generation X will not participate in a program just because it is available. They want a program that will benefit both them and their student. One example would be having a panel of professors from the university talk about current topics during first-year orientation.

Parent service offices should consider expanding their purview to include extended families as well. We have already seen the evolution on campus between student and parents. Many colleges view parents and their students as a unit. However, with socioeconomic factors as well as delayed independence, the family circle is undergoing expansion. It is likely that the unit will expand to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, stepparents, domestic partners, and friends. This will also mean that parent service offices should invest time to ensure they communicate through all social media to all generations. Such communication includes written letters, email, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, websites, and text messaging. Each school should also consider its specific

population by ascertaining how its own parents and families like to receive communication.

In addition to expanding their purview, parent service offices should also consider how their office appears to parents. Thought should be given to the school's budget and leadership. For some schools, it might be more feasible to invest in a one-in-one office that focuses on communication, programming, event planning, and fundraising. For other schools, it might be better for the office to separate into two offices, where one parent service office handles the needs of parents, while the other focuses largely on fundraising. The answer to this question will vary from school to school. The researcher advocates for having one office on campus, which will be less confusing to the parent. It will allow for unification of services, such as information dissemination. Furthermore, university resources do not have to split. Collaboration from all parts of the university is the key to making the parent service office function. If two parent service offices operate in two different divisions, they should coordinate efforts as much as possible.

Parent service office openings will probably begin to slow because many colleges and universities already have one. No matter what stage the office is in, administrators should equip parent service office staff with proper budgets, resources, and education. It is difficult to run a quality parent service office without benchmarking and needs assessment. It is also not fruitful to transfer staff members from one department to another without ensuring that the transferred staff members understand the parent demographic. By ensuring the parent service office has quality standards in its mission statement, programming, leadership, and campus and external relationships, the university and parents will directly benefit. With uniformed support from the parent and

university as well as formalized parental engagement, a student would be on the path to success in college.

Study Conclusions

Parental engagement at the collegiate level has reached an all-time high, thus creating a need for parent service offices on college campuses. Parent service offices that follow quality-based criteria to bring quality programming to campus seemingly accrue high satisfaction levels from parents.

Using the CAS standards as a conceptual framework, this study took an in-depth look at model programs and the perceptions of administrators. It was found that a high interpersonal approach makes for the best possible quality programming. A high interpersonal approach means strong communication media to disseminate information, a great deal of collaboration among colleagues and constituents, and strong leadership skills to achieve buy-in from collaborators to keep satisfaction levels high.

Five principal findings emerged: (a) articulating goals/values leads to quality student development and student learning outcomes; (b) offering a diverse range of programming options helps parents to support development; (c) achieving buy-in from constituents yields parent-inspired innovations and promotes a sense of institutional reliability among parents; (d) creating and maintaining relationships promotes university advocacy among parents; (e) developing inter-departmental relations ensures parent service office visibility.

In the end, collaboration leads to innovative ideas, improved communication, and the ultimate goal of all collaborators—student success.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study addressed an empirical research gap on parent service offices. While journal articles, books, and dissertations have been written about undergraduate parental involvement and engagement (Cohen, 1985; Scott & Daniel, 2001), most empirical research has not specifically addressed the advent of parent service. However, nonempirical literature—such as self-help books, magazine articles, newspaper articles, publications of college associations on collegiate parental involvement, and conference presentations—on this topic has steadily increased since 1990. Savage and Petree (2009) concluded that a major area to contribute to the parent services field was assessment. Their findings indicated that few comprehensive surveys existed on the utilization of parent service offices, satisfaction levels with overall programming and services, and outcome assessment.

Therefore, researchers have deemed empirical studies to add to the knowledge as essential. Researchers predicted that the parents of college students would continue to advocate and seek information on college campuses for the next several decades, causing a paradigm shift in college administration (Howe et al., 2003). The trend of parents thinking like consumers of their student's education is expected to be ongoing.

Varied possibilities exist for future research. Future researchers may want to use this study as a model, using different schools and different criteria. This would contribute to both the practical and empirical knowledge base of the parent services field.

This study also limited its scope to the university, administrators, and parents. There are many outside college parent advocacy groups and several college parent and family associations and knowledge communities. Studies could examine these

organizations to understand how they contribute to furthering the mission of a typical college parent service office.

Both of the schools that were studied cited “student success” as their overarching mission. Further studies should be done on parent service offices that use other themes for their foundation.

The CAS standards designed for Parent and Family Programs were unveiled in 2010. When the researcher queried others in the field about institutions frequently employing CAS standards, only a handful of school parent programs were doing so, although others expressed interest in the standards’ application and use. Therefore, future researchers could study the Parent and Family Programs actively using CAS standards. Determining the use of CAS standards might offer better understanding about exemplary programs and curricula for those wishing to implement CAS standards in their office.

Many participants indicated a difference between a parent who coaches or mentors the student through issues and a parent who solves problems on behalf of the student. Many administrators educate parents to become coaches and mentors to their students during first-year orientation and through additional correspondence. Many administrators reported that this could ultimately help with student development and allow students to make independent decisions. Research could examine the effects of educating parents who mentor their college-aged students through school.

Finally, a longitudinal study involving first-year students whose parents went through an educational program at orientation would have value. This assessment could report any changed behaviors in students whose parents learned to seek effective resources versus students whose parents had limited or no educational connection.

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARENT SERVICE OFFICE

DIRECTORS AND STAFF

Biographical/warm-up questions (for parent service office professionals)

1. How long have you worked in this office? What is your current role? Has it changed over time?
2. Please share some of the pressing issues that your office is experiencing when it comes to parent and family relations.
3. How do you see the functions of this office changing in 5 years?

Subquestion 1. How do parent service office professionals utilize their mission statement for the purposes of building collaboration between the parent service office and their stakeholders?

1. Does your office have a mission statement in place? If so, how often do you refer to the mission statement when working with parents? How do the services and programs that you offer reflect the mission statement?
- 2a. Does your office have student learning outcome goals? Describe the relationship, if any, between your parent programs and services and student learning outcomes.
- 2b. Does your office have student development outcome goals? Describe the relationship, if any, between your parent programs and services and student development outcomes.
3. How do you know when you have achieved the goals and objectives that are outlined in your office's mission statement?
4. How do you fulfill your mission statement for the purposes of building collaboration between your office and your stakeholders?

Subquestion 2. In what ways do parent service office professionals exhibit effective and ethical leadership to parents and families of university students?

1. Describe your professional role on campus. How do you think parents perceive your role? How do you think administrators outside of your office perceive your role?
- 2a. How often do you advocate to other administrators to support the students' parents and families?
- 2b. How often do you advocate to other administrators to support your office's programs and services?
- 3a. What are some of the needs of parents and families in providing for their student's development?

- 3b. What are some of the needs of parents and families in providing for their student's learning?
- 3c. To what extent do you formulate your goals and objectives to support those needs?
- 4a. Describe the various methods that your office uses to communicate with parents and families (electronic, print, text, etc).
- 4b. How many times a year do you communicate with parents and families using each of these methods?
- 4c. Describe your most successful means of communicating with parents and families.

Subquestion 3. In what ways do parent service office professionals establish, maintain, and promote effective relations among relevant individuals, campus offices, and external agencies?

- 1a. Which on-campus departments do you have partnerships with?
- 1b. What are some initiatives that you have cosponsored?
- 2a. What are some of the benefits for your office from working with other departments?
- 2b. What are some of the challenges that you face when working with other departments?
- 3. In the event of an emergency, describe your office's role in communicating with parents and the media.

Subquestion 4. In what ways do parent service office professionals establish and promote programming initiatives?

- 1a. Describe one or two of your more outstanding programs that you coordinate for parents.
- 1b. What is the reason for running the programs?

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF

Biographical/Warm-up questions

- 1a. How many years has the parent service office been on campus?
- 1b. Please provide me with a brief history, if possible.
- 1c. How long have you worked in this office?
- 2a. How often are parents and families contacting your office?
- 2b. If so, please describe the reason(s) they are contacting your office.

Subquestion 5. How do university non-parent service office professionals compare to university parent service office professionals in their ability to interact with parents and families?

- 1a. How often does your office collaborate with the university parent service office?
- 1b. If you do collaborate with the parent service office, please elaborate on the specific projects that your office has collaborated on.
2. How do you personally collaborate with the university parent service office?
- 3a. How would you perceive the role of the parent service office on campus?
- 3b. What do you think the parent service office does on a daily basis?
4. How often do you refer parents to the parent service office on campus?

Subquestion 6. What are the non-parent service office professionals' perceptions of the parent professionals' compliance with CAS standards?

1. What types of programs and services do you think your university parent service office offers to parents and families?
- 2a. In what ways do you think your university parent service office contributes to student learning?
- 2b. In what ways do you think your university parent service office contributes to student development?

APPENDIX C:

OBSERVATIONAL FIELD NOTE FORM

Setting: _____

Date/time: _____

Length of observation: _____

Description of object/person
(insights, hunches, themes)

Reflective notes:

APPENDIX D:
DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM

Site: _____

Document number: _____

Date obtained: _____

Name or description of document: _____

Event or contact, if any, with which document is associated:

Significance or importance of document:

Brief summary of contents:

Remember: If document is crucial to a particular contact, make a copy
and include with the write-up. Otherwise, store in document file.

Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 55

APPENDIX E:

CAS STANDARDS FOR PARENT AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

PARENT and FAMILY PROGRAMS CAS STANDARDS and GUIDELINES

Part 1. MISSION

The mission of Parent and Family Programs (PFP) is to build collaboration between parents and families and the institution for the common goals of student learning, development, and success.

PFP must develop, disseminate, implement, and regularly review their mission. Mission statements must be consistent with the mission of the institution and with professional standards. PFP in higher education must enhance overall educational experiences by incorporating student learning and development outcomes in their mission.

Inherent in the mission statement should be a vision for students and their families to develop lifelong affinity for the institution and its initiatives.

Part 2. PROGRAM

The formal education of students, consisting of the curriculum and the co-curriculum, must promote student learning and development outcomes that are purposeful and holistic and that prepare students for satisfying and productive lifestyles, work, and civic participation. The student learning and development outcome domains and their related dimensions are:

- knowledge acquisition, integration, construction, and application
 - Dimensions: understanding knowledge from a range of disciplines; connecting knowledge to other knowledge, ideas, and experiences; constructing knowledge; and relating knowledge to daily life
- cognitive complexity
 - Dimensions: critical thinking; reflective thinking; effective reasoning; and creativity
- intrapersonal development
 - Dimensions: realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect; identity development; commitment to ethics and integrity; and spiritual awareness

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- **interpersonal competence**
 - **Dimensions: meaningful relationships; interdependence; collaboration; and effective leadership**
- **humanitarianism and civic engagement**
 - **Dimensions: understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences; social responsibility; global perspective; and sense of civic responsibility**
- **practical competence**
 - **Dimensions: pursuing goals; communicating effectively; technical competence; managing personal affairs; managing career development; demonstrating professionalism; maintaining health and wellness; and living a purposeful and satisfying life**

[See the *Council for the Advancement of Standards Learning and Developmental Outcomes* statement for examples of outcomes related to these domains and dimensions.]

Consistent with the institutional mission, Parent and Family Programs (PFP) must identify relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes from among the six domains and related dimensions. When creating opportunities for student learning and development, programs and services must explore possibilities for collaboration with faculty members and other colleagues. PFP must assess relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes and provide evidence of their impact on student learning and development.

PFP must articulate how they contribute to or support students' learning and development in the domains not specifically assessed.

PFP must be:

- **integrated into the life of the institution**
- **intentional and coherent**
- **guided by theories and knowledge of learning and development**
- **reflective of developmental and demographic profiles of the student population served**
- **responsive to needs of individuals, diverse and special populations, and relevant constituencies**

PFP must help families maintain a connection to the institution.

PFP should provide programming and services in person and on-line, information about issues related to student learning and development, and opportunities to interact with other families and students.

Programming and services may include parent and family orientation programs, parent and family weekends, move-in and send-off events, educational workshops and seminars,

newsletters, and fund-raising. Other programs should be specifically reflective of the institutional history, traditions, and culture.

PFP must:

- **distribute information on a timely basis to take advantage of the impact of naturally occurring developmental stages experienced by students and families**
- **encourage parents and families to work with their student so that the student will learn to access institutional resources independently**
- **assist parents and families to investigate and navigate institutional resources, services, and programs**
- **collaborate with essential campus partners**
- **consider diverse perspectives in developing parent and family programs**
- **provide information for faculty members and staff to help them interact effectively with parents and families and understand their expectations**
- **advocate for the appropriate distribution of emergency information to parents and families in accordance with institutional policy**

Programming should address topics such as:

- educational planning (academic advising, selection of major)
- standards of academic progress and other academic policies
- career planning
- student budgeting and money management
- educational costs, financial aid, and financial planning
- health and wellness
- resources to support students with disabilities
- resources through visitor services
- institutional support services (study skills, tutoring, and other learning assistance programs)
- diversity, multicultural, and international programs and services
- membership in a diverse community and interactions across differences
- involvement in co-curricular activities
- campus safety
- global citizenship
- on-campus, off-campus, commuter, or distance learner student issues
- information related to the transition to college and the potential change in family dynamics
- organization and roles of the institution's administration
- realistic parent and family expectations of their student
- appropriate levels of involvement with their student and the institution
- campus policies on rights and responsibilities, conduct, and access to educational records

Part 3. LEADERSHIP

Because effective and ethical leadership is essential to the success of all organizations, Parent and Family Programs (PFP) leaders with organizational authority for the programs and services must:

- **articulate a vision and mission for their programs and services**
- **set goals and objectives based on the needs of the population served and desired student learning and development outcomes**
- **advocate for their programs and services**
- **promote campus environments that provide meaningful opportunities for student learning, development, and integration**
- **identify and find means to address individual, organizational, or environmental conditions that foster or inhibit mission achievement**
- **advocate for representation in strategic planning initiatives at appropriate divisional and institutional levels**
- **initiate collaborative interactions with stakeholders who have legitimate concerns and interests in the functional area**
- **apply effective practices to educational and administrative processes**
- **prescribe and model ethical behavior**
- **communicate effectively**
- **manage financial resources, including planning, allocation, monitoring, and analysis**
- **incorporate sustainability practices in the management and design of programs, services, and facilities**
- **manage human resource processes including recruitment, selection, development, supervision, performance planning, and evaluation**
- **empower professional, support, and student staff to accept leadership opportunities**
- **encourage and support scholarly contribution to the profession**
- **be informed about and integrate appropriate technologies into programs and services**
- **be knowledgeable about federal, state/provincial, and local laws relevant to the programs and services and ensure staff members understand their responsibilities through appropriate training**
- **develop and continuously improve programs and services in response to the changing needs of students and other populations served and the evolving institutional priorities**
- **recognize environmental conditions that may negatively influence the safety of staff and students and propose interventions that mitigate such conditions**

Part 10. CAMPUS and EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Parent and Family Programs (PFP) must reach out to relevant individuals, campus offices, and external agencies to:

- **establish, maintain, and promote effective relations**
- **disseminate information about their own and other related programs and services**
- **coordinate and collaborate, where appropriate, in offering programs and services to meet the needs of students and promote their achievement of student learning and development outcomes**

PFP should create a role for parents and family members within the institution through a parent/families organization, association, or club. Such a group should develop family affinity for the institution, offer referral to programs and services, and provide opportunities for parents and families to have input on institutional matters affecting their students. A staff member of the institution should be charged with supporting and advising such an organization.

PFP should inform family members about issues that impact the health, well-being, and success of students through a variety of delivery methods/communication methods, including newsletters, e-newsletters, websites, social networking, and educational programming. This material should display appropriate institutional branding.

PFP should provide a parents and family resource guide or handbook to address student-life topics of priority to the institution (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, service-learning and study abroad opportunities, research opportunities, financial literacy, health and wellness), resources and benefits available to parents and families, institutional policies and procedures, the academic calendar, and support services for students and their families.

PFP must have procedures and guidelines consistent with institutional policy for responding to threats, emergencies, and crisis situations. Systems and procedures must be in place to disseminate timely and accurate information to students and other members of the campus community during emergency situations.

PFP should be represented on the institutional crisis response team. PFP should advocate for appropriate information to be sent to parents in the event of an emergency or campus crisis in accordance with institutional procedures.

PFP must have procedures and guidelines consistent with institutional policy for communicating with the media.

PFP content developed/approved in 2010

APPENDIX F:

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Information about the Research Study

Quality-Based Collegiate Parent Service Offices: A Multiple Case Study
{IRB}

You are invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Robert A. Chernak of the Department of Higher Education Administration, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University (GWU). Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary.

The purpose of this study is to address an empirical research gap on parent service offices. While there are journal articles, books, dissertations written about undergraduate parental involvement and engagement (Cohen, 1985; Daniel & Scott, 2001), most empirical research does not specifically address the parent service office boom. Consequently there have been no studies done specifically focusing on how administrators implement quality-based services in their parent service offices. With the examination of two collegiate parent service office's quality-based services, this study will add to the knowledge of empirical research by looking at each parent service office use of standards and perceptions of the parent service office by other university administrators.

A total of 20 participants at 2 institutions will be asked to take part in this study. You will be one of approximately 10 participants to be asked to take part at this location. If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an hour long interview for which you will share your perceptions about your on-campus parent service office as well as perceptions of your office's role with parents. The total amount of time you will spend in connection with this study is approximately two hours. One hour will be for the actual interview and the other hour might be needed at a later date to review your interview transcript for accuracy. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and you may stop your participation in this study at any time. The status of your employment will not, in any way, be affected should you choose not to participate or if you decide to withdraw from the study at any time.

There are no physical risks associated with this study. There is, however, the possible risk of loss of confidentiality or privacy. Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential. However, this can not be guaranteed. Some of the questions that will be asked as part of this study may make you feel uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer any of the questions. You may stop your participation in this study at any time. Participating in this study poses no risks that are not ordinarily encountered in daily life.

You will not benefit directly from your participation in this study. It is anticipated that the study will help student affairs administrators and, more specifically, college parent offices with an established benchmark. This study will contribute to the empirical research associated with parent service offices.

Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential. However, this can not be guaranteed. In order to protect confidentiality, all the participants' names will either be masked or removed. The participating institutions will be issued a pseudonym in order to retain its anonymity. All of the documents will be stored on a password protected personal computer. Research records, such as recordings and transcriptions, will be secured in a location known only to the researcher and will be destroyed upon conclusion of the study. If results of this research study are reported in journals or at scientific meetings, the people who participated in this study will not be named or identified.

The Office of Human Research of George Washington University, at telephone number (202) 994-2715, can provide further information about your rights as a research participant. Further information regarding this study may be obtained by contacting Toby Davidow, Doctoral Candidate at telephone number (202) 994-5015 or the Principal Investigator, Dr. Robert A. Chernak, at 202-994-7210.

To ensure anonymity, your signature is not required in this document unless you prefer to sign it. Your willingness to participate in this research study is implied if you proceed with completing the interview.

*Please keep a copy of this document in case you want to read it again.