

Do I Advise College Students or Their Parents?

Lady Cox

Office of Parent Services

Mississippi State University

MSU's Office of Parent Services

- Main point-of-contact for all MSU parents
- Creates and distributes Parent Handbook
- E-mails bi-weekly newsletter to parents
- Hosts Parents' Weekend
- Counsels LOTS of parents on college life
- Works with faculty and staff to learn about parents and what to do with them

What is your worst parent story?



Do I advise students or parents?

- How do we understand today's parents and students?
- Why we should/should not talk to parents?
- What should we do when parents call?





What to do when parents call



Today's Parent Profile

- Baby Boomer Generation – b. 1946-1963
- Wealthiest and most-educated in history
- Very competitive
- Highly concerned with safety
- “Baby on Board” signs
- “My Child is an Honor Student” stickers
- Very influential in student's life
- Engaged technologically
- High expectations for student's college experience

Today's Student Profile

- Hard-working
- Smart and practical
- Achievement-oriented
- Rule-followers
- Responsible
- Confident with a sense of invincibility
- Techno-savvy
- Multi-taskers
- Community service-oriented (82% volunteer monthly)



Today's Student Behavior

- Freshmen lack basic skills
- Mental health problems increasingly apparent
- Soaring college tuition = sense of entitlement
- Increasing technological lifelines
- Parental involvement increasing

Impact of Parental Hovering

- Inflated egos
- Poor self-advocacy skills
- Lack of problem-solving abilities
- Over-pressured
- Difficulty making decisions
- Little common sense
- Strong family bond
- Incentive to do well



Understanding parent needs

Parents want:

- Information, information, information
- Excellent customer service
- Value, think of college as an investment

Parents think:

- Their students can't do it on their own.
- Since they are paying for it, they have rights.
- That calling is contacting anyone is normal.



So, why do we even
talk to parents?



Why do we even talk to parents?

- You don't have to
- You might learn something
- You might be able to improve your relationship with a student

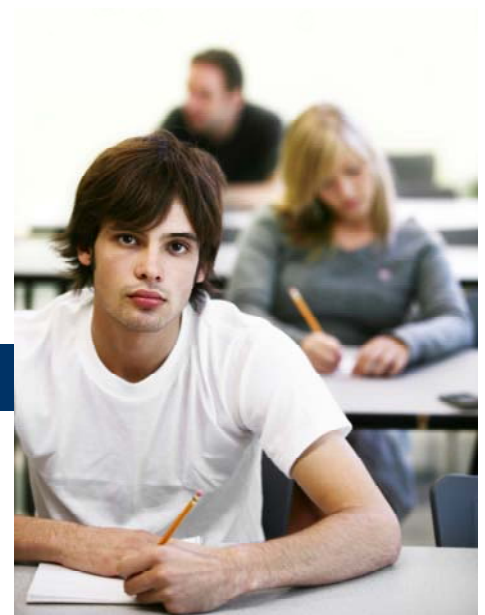


When talking to parents remember:

- Advisors care about the success of their students.
- A parent that calls is concerned about their student.
- You can learn from the parent ways to help their student.
- Parents can learn from you ways to help their student.

Pros in talking to parents

- You might learn about a student in distress
- You might learn of a problem the student hasn't told you about
- You might learn of a campus problem that should be fixed
- You might be able to improve your relationship with the student



Cons in talking to parents

- You'll encourage a parent to call again
- You could get less interaction from the student
- You could teach the student that they don't have to meet with you
- You miss an opportunity for encouraging a student to be independent in life beyond college



What to do when a
parent calls



What should I do if a parent calls?

- Listen first to see why they are calling
- Talk in policies, not in specifics
- Ask for the student to come and talk to you
- Refer the parent to Office of Parent Services

Commons questions from parents

- Why should ___ take this class?
- My student is failing, can she drop a class?
- Why did my son get a D on this paper?
- Can I come in and talk to you?
- Other questions?



Quote by Betty Ford:

It's always been my feeling that God lends you your children until they're about eighteen years old.

If you haven't made your points with them by then, it's too late.

