

# HELICOPTER PARENTS & THE CAO

Dr. Stephanie Fabritius, Centre  
Dr. Roger Casey, Rollins





# The Chopper Test

- 1. Check most recurrent number on parents' cell phone call history.
- 2. Is Dean's phone number on parents' speed dial?
- 3. When referring to course schedule, is pronoun "we" used?
- 4. When son or daughter is asked question, who answers?

The Dean of Students  
risks becoming  
The Dean of Parents

“Our little investment.”

The Black Hawk Down:

Protected  
Connected  
Corrected

PROTECTED

How did you learn to ride a  
bicycle?

al-Qa'ida  
Condoms  
Columbine (and V. Tech)  
Amber Alerts  
Avian Flu  
SPF 45  
Sanitizing Gel

CONNECTED

# College Parents of America Survey

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

CORRECTED

Pharmaceutical use for  
behavioral modification in  
adolescents up 77% between  
2000-2003.

According to *Psychology Today*,  
the medication most frequently  
prescribed on college campuses?



Generation RX

“The mental state of students is now so precarious for so many that it is interfering with the core mission of the university.”

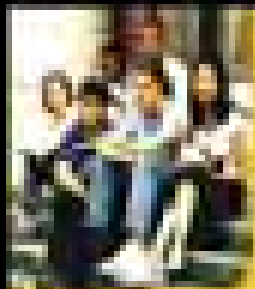
Dr. Steven Hyman  
Provost of Harvard University;  
Former Director,  
National Institute of Mental Health

# COLLEGE



OF THE

# OVERWHELMED



THE CAMPUS MENTAL  
HEALTH CRISIS AND  
WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

RICHARD  
KASSOFF, MD.

Director of the National Student Reliance  
Network (NSRN) at Johns Hopkins University

TERESA PAT  
DISBROW

“I wish my parents had some  
hobby other than me.”

--*Psychology Today*

“A Nation of Wimps”

(November 2004)

Enough of the stereotype!

# Who are our students?

- Students – Millennials;
- Parents – Gen Xers



# Important Cultural Influences

- Internet social networking
- 9/11
- Columbine
- Cell phones



- “One of the issues that this generation has is that they have been to Katmandu and scaled Mount Everest, but they have never had to ask “Do you want fries with that?” – Camille Helkowski (Associate Director of the Loyola Career Center)

Should we be surprised?



- Cell Phones – “world’s longest umbilical cord”
- Parents as partners
- “Careless” language on the part of college administrators
- K-12 history of expecting parent participation
- Gen Xers experience

- “It comes from a world where we routinely talk about the need for parents to be involved in their kid’s lives when they are younger – work with them on their homework and get to know their teachers. That’s all good. But it has kind of evolved into the situation where it continues on to college.”
- -- Randy Hays, Dean of Students, Centre



## Institutional Report 2006



# Positive Connections

- Feedback about quality of experience.
- Supportive network
- Keep students academically focused.
- Financial resources.
- Keep us informed about family issues.
- Keep us informed about academic struggles

# More Positive Connections

- Genuine concern about student.
- Parents SHOULD be interested and ask (their students) how they are doing.
- Advocates for admission.
- Parents Committee (Centre )

# This year, what are your greatest concerns regarding your student?

	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>Great</b>	<b>Some</b>
Academics	13.3%	23.9%	27.7%
Campus or community involvement opportunities	2.8%	14.0%	30.9%
Career planning	9.4%	21.6%	35.1%
Finances	19.8%	25.0%	30.2%
Health and safety	17.5%	25.4%	33.6%
Personal relationships	6.4%	21.7%	37.8%

At your tables...

What positive connections do you see with parents on your campus?

Often the connections can have negative consequences...

- Parents filling out roommate forms or standing over shoulder when students fill them out.
- Parents requesting wake-up calls for student.
- Concern that son/daughter has X for a roommate.
- Parent overly involved in student's success in athletic conference.
- TV satellite reception?
- Centre Commitment
- Academic integrity cases
- Advising

# How do parents justify such interference?

- Concern about treatment of student
- Concern about safety and well-being of child.
- “I paid for this!”
- Vicariously reliving their college experience
- Compensating for their own “latch-key” childhood.
- Wanting the “best” for their child
- Anxious for information

# Consequences of Helicopter Parents

- Students don't learn how to deal with difficult situations themselves; they become passive waiting for their problem to be solved.
- Students don't learn to take alternative action; if something can't be solved to their (or their parents' satisfaction), then they don't know how to come up with an alternative solution.
- Students gain an unhealthy sense of themselves. ALL students are "special".

At your tables...

What are some negative consequences or situations of helicopter parents (or lack of concerned parents) that you have witnessed on your campus?

How did you handle these situations?

What can we do?

- (Frequent) Communication is key.
- Comprehensive Parent Programs
- Parent Orientation
- Mailings at critical points in the term – e.g. before students come home.
- Special activities on Family Weekend.
- Parents' Council
- Parent Newsletter
- Parent Website

# More Best Practices

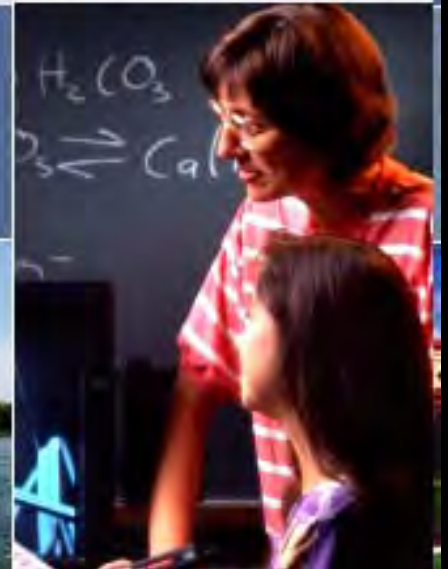
- Talk openly about parents' role in empowering students. Personal responsibility.
- Parent Relations Position.
- Question of the Month (U of Minnesota) or Ask Deanie (at SMU).
- Parent Handbook
- Demonstrate safety preparedness

ROLLINS COLLEGE



# R-Town

*News and Information for Rollins Parents*

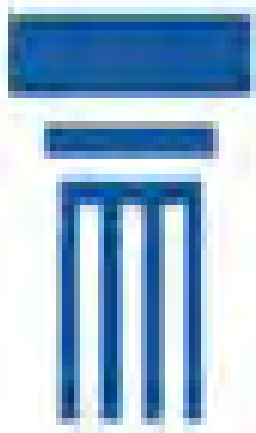




## Parent Handbook



- Make distinction between “letting go” and transitioning. BOTH student and parent transitions.
- Consistent messages from all staff and faculty on letting students take personal responsibility.
- Discuss transition of student in terms of developmental stages.
- Most sources urge against using FERPA as shield.
- Be aware that your parents are getting information from:



College Parents  
of America

[www.collegeparents.org](http://www.collegeparents.org)

# Hoverings: A Blog for College Parents |

# Great Statements

- Colgate University website – “Partnering for a Colgate Education”

<http://www.colgate.edu/desktopdefault1.aspx?tabid+2145>

- Southwestern University website – “Guide for First-year Parents”

<http://www.southwestern.edu/gateways/parents/guide.php>

# Colgate University

- “Problem solving is a key feature of a Colgate education. When allowed to work through the problems, students have opportunities to learn important skills of communication, team work, problems, and working across difference in a local and global context. This means we allow students to struggle with problems and grope for answers...

- We invite you to support the process of helping your children become adept at problem solving over the next four years. We encourage you to partner with us in four ways: 1) Ask them questions, as opposed to providing answers.
- Encourage them to learn to identify and use available resources, but avoid the temptation of making the call yourself.
- Help them understand that process is crucial in an educational environment. The quick fix often blunts the learning.
- Take us up on offers to help, but avoid the temptation of getting overly involved in processes that are designed for students to do alone.”

# at your tables . . .

- What are you doing on your campus – both to squelch the negative connections and to enhance the positive connections?

ask your colleagues . . .