Managing Millennial Parents
The arrival of Millennials on campus has been marked by helicopter parents of Millennials who are sometimes helpful, sometimes annoying, but always hovering.

Today’s protective, ultra-attached parents make their presence and agendas felt in every corner of college life.

–Howe & Strauss (2007)
Much research has been shared on the distinctive characteristics of the **Millennial Generation**, but college staff have also noted unique characteristics of their parents.

College staff describe these parents as **“helicoptering in”** to save the day and advocating before their students have a chance to problem-solve on their own.

“The more successful we are in helping parents understand the normal stages of late adolescent development, the less anxious they are likely to be about their own child’s behavior.”

“The less anxious they are, the more likely they are to support their child’s growth in appropriate and meaningful ways – and the less likely they are to intervene inappropriately.”

– Karen Levin Coburn

*Organizing a Ground Crew for Today’s Helicopter Parents 2006*
7 Core Traits of Millennials

- Special
- Sheltered
- Confident
- Team-Oriented
- Achieving
- Pressured
- Conventional

Millennial Students

- They are technologically savvy
- They have a **short attention span**
- Accustomed to immediate response (emails and texting)
- They are **over-achieving** and over-managed
- They are team players (in and out of the classroom)
- Have been **rewarded for participation**, not achievement
- They aim to please by following rules
- Most diverse population – they **embrace diversity**
- Low rates of violent crime, alcohol use, and teen pregnancy
- They are very trusting of authority
- Value "**word of mouth**" and reputation is very important
- Parents have protected and coddled them since birth
- Have high expectation of **authority & institutions**
10 Values that color the Millennial Perspective

1. **Timeliness**
   - They have a unique sense of time; they want everything now and forever has little meaning.

2. **Making a Difference**
   - They have unprecedented desire to ‘give back’ to their communities.

3. **Tolerance**
   - As most ethnically diverse generation, they have engrained sense that diversity should not only be tolerated, but embraced.

4. **Environmental Stewardship**
   - They want to live environmentally friendly and sustainable lives.

5. **Authenticity**
   - They want a message that is genuine, truthful, and straight-forward and are likely to reject “sugar-coated” messages.

6. **Family**
   - Strong parental involvement has led them to value their parent’s opinions and values.

7. **Global Perspective**
   - Technology has enabled them to communicate instantly around the globe; it is a small world.

8. **Technology**
   - First generation of adults raised with the internet and it has become a fundamental part of their existence.

9. **Personal Freedom**
   - Life is no longer a ‘track’ of milestones and ‘career’ is no longer the context for important life decisions.

10. **Team Work**
    - They believe ‘together we can accomplish more’ and are accustomed to working in groups.

DAD!

DAD!

DAD?
YOU'RE
OKAY??

I'M FINE.
WHY WOULDN'T
I BE?

I SENT YOU A MESSAGE, AND WHEN I
DIDN'T HEAR BACK FROM YOU, WELL,
NATURALLY I ASSUMED THE WORST!

I'M SO RELIEVED TO
SEE THAT YOU'RE NOT
DEAD OR LYING AT
THE BOTTOM OF AN
ABANDONED MINE-
SHAFT SOMEWHERE!

WHICH IS THE ONLY
LOGICAL REASON
IT WOULD TAKE
SOMEBODY SO
LONG TO HIT
"REPLY"?

NOT EVERYBODY CHECKS
THEIR EMAIL EVERY
15 SECONDS LIKE
YOU DO, JEREMY.

Millennials, Echo Boomers, Generation Y
A Generation Y child...

Taking his first steps.  Taking his first steps to independent living.
**Millennial Parents**

- **Parental engagement** coincides with the rise of the Millennial Generation, kids born **after 1982**
- Parents are Boomers or Generation X
- **Micromanagers** of their children’s lives
- Have **close** and **constant** contact with children
- Helicoptering/hovering/snow plowing
- **Over-protective** and sometimes intrusive
- Soccer moms, hockey dads
- **Individual Education Plan** advocates

“This generation of parents has had a hands-on approach to their children’s education from pre-school through high school.”

*Source: Organizing a Ground Crew for Today’s Helicopter Parents: Karen Levin Coburn (2006)*
"YES, MOTHER, I TOLD YOU, I'M DOING FINE ON MY OWN AT COLLEGE.... HEY, COULD YOU LOG ON AND FIND MY SCHEDULE, ORDER MY BOOKS AND CALL ME WHEN IT'S TIME FOR CLASS?"
College Students Talk About Parental Involvement

400 students were surveyed...

- 25% said their parents were overly involved to the point of embarrassment or annoyance.
- 38% said their parents have called in or attended meetings with student’s academic advisor.
- 31% said their parents have called a professor to complain about a grade yet!!
- 65% said they still ask their parents for academic or career advice

The Millennial Generation shares close/friendly relationships with their parents – more so than any other previous generation.

Freshman Jenna Sauber chats with her mom online several times a day and usually follows with a nightly phone call. She says, “I love it when my mom calls. She is my best friend.”

Source: Experience Inc. Online Poll of college students (2006) experience.com
The cell phone has recently become “the world’s longest umbilical cord.”

It is common to hear students walking between classes, complaining to their mothers about a mean professor or an unfair test.

Technology has enabled parents and their children to be in constant contact with each other.

**Helicopter Parent**: (n.) a colloquial, early 21st-century term for a parent who pays extremely close attention to his or her child's or children's experiences and problems, particularly at educational institutions.

- These parents rush to prevent any harm or failure from befalling their kids and will not let them learn from their own mistakes, sometimes even contrary to the children's wishes.

- They are so named because, like helicopters, they hover closely overhead, rarely out of reach, whether their children need them or not.

EXAMPLES OF HELICOPTER PARENTS
“HOVERING”

- Dad calls Residence Life at 11 pm to report there is a **mouse in his daughter's dorm** room.
- Mom complains about her son’s **roommate who snores** so loudly, her son is having trouble sleeping.
- A professor receives an email complaint about a student’s bad grade, saying, “**my son worked so hard on this paper and he really deserves an A.**”
- Mother talking to college admissions office (with unconscious **we**), “**We** are worried that if **we** don’t register early, **we** won’t get into the classes **we** want.”

Can you think of cases when a helicopter parent swooped in to fix problems for their college student?

Snow Plow Parents clear the path in front of their kids ensuring there are no bumps in the road.

Snow plowing away every slight opportunity for their child to accidently fall or make a mistake.

The child never learns how to plow the snow for his or herself, so the snow plow parent continues to plow.

Parents today are plowing their way to college, continuing to clear the path for their college students.

Behind them, follow the snow bunnies who love the bonding, not to mention the clear path, skipping right along after their parents.

Source: “Helicopter Parents Hover Over Campus” by: Betsa Marsh from: Miamian Magazine (spring 2007)
**Various Terms: Similar Meanings**

- **Blackhawk Moms**: "who attempt to **remake the terrain** so that it works better for their child to succeed, regardless of the consequences for anyone else."

- **Jet-Fighter**: "who arrive when helicopter parents become even **more aggressive** and **intervene more frequently** than those who hover."

- **Parent Bouncers**: "UVM has employed **parent bouncers**, students trained to redirect adults who try to attend their children's sessions."

- **Satellite Parents**: who keep an eye on their child’s world **from a distance** and maintain constant surveillance, but try not to directly hover.

- **Snowplow Parents**: “who are in front of their children trying to **clear a path** so their kids don’t have any bumps in the road through life.”

- **Trophy Kids**: who have been awarded for participation rather than achievement; products of the **‘everybody wins’ theory**, which awarded trophies to both the winner and the loser.

- **Stealth Fighter Parents**: “who are even more protective, digitally keyed-in for constant surveillance, **sharp eyes** on the target, and **ready to strike** at a moment’s notice to defend their children’s interests.”

- **Submarine Parent**: “who usually remains underwater and **out of sight**, yet is still able to **pop up very quickly** to the surface, in the case of an emergency.”

*Source: Thomas Huchko  [http://www.squidoo.com/helicopterparents]*
Parents of college students are...

- **Protective**
  - Want their sons/daughters safe and secure

- **Involved**
  - Want to help their kids achieve

- **Concerned**
  - Want their children to receive “their fair share”

- **Intelligent**
  - Majority of parents are college educated

- **Demanding**
  - Savvy customers, computer users, and connected to their cell phones 24/7
Parents of College Students

- Actively involved with college **admissions process**
  - Reviewing websites and college viewbooks
  - Accompanying child to college visits
- **High expectations** of child, college AND faculty members
  - Top-notch instruction AND first-rate facilities
  - Quick, even immediate responses to all questions
- Concerns about child’s **finances** (financial aid, tuition, room & board, other expenses)
- Rising tuition has made college an investment and they want to get **their money’s worth**
- Propensity to threaten legal action if they are not happy with some issue concerning their child
- **Constant contact** with child through cell phones
- Cleary Act and concerns with **campus safety**

College has become a co-decision and a co-purchase, uniting student and parent in ways never before seen.

“Good news mom! I was accepted to the college of your choice.”

“We’ve decided to support you for the rest of your life. It’s cheaper than sending you to college.”
This generation of parents has been more involved with children than any previous generation...

**Why?? Why?? Why?? Why??**

1. Boomer parents are used to being **in charge and in control** of their environment (aka their kids)
2. More families are having less children later in life, which results in greater **focus on child**
3. Anxiety to **“do it right”** – raising a child that is; parents began planning for college in pre-school
4. Students actually listen to their parents, identify with their values, and have **nothing to rebel against**
5. The increase in technology has enabled **constant contact**; student & parent are never ‘out of touch’

Source: “Senior Journal” citing Karen Levin Coburn (Wash State U in St. Lewis) 2006
"I blame my parents - they never set me any standards worth rebelling against."

"With a good education you can grow up to be anything I want you to be."
In 2010, the youngest Baby Boomers turn 50, & **majority** of Millennial parents will **become Gen X’ers**

We will see a dramatic shift in the mind-set of Millennial parents

Millennials born in the **1980’s** mostly have **Boomer** parents

Millennials born in the **1990’s** mostly have **Generation X** parents

Transition between Boomer and Generation X will be more dynamic than most expect

**This transition could cause higher education to experience institutional shifts unlike any seen before**

Parents of Millennials

Baby Boomers
- Fondly recall their K-12 education with optimistic and positive memories
- Recall their college experience as a positive influence for them
- Now, they want to replicate that experience for their children (albeit with less risk-taking)

Generation X
- Recall their K-12 education guardedly, cynically, and negatively
- Mixed verdict about whether college was a positive influence
- Now, they want to protect children from academic deficiencies and family problems (that they faced)

Stealth Fighter Parents “are even more protective, digitally keyed-in for constant surveillance, sharp eyes on the target, and ready to strike at a moment’s notice to defend their children’s interests.”

Boomers as College Parents

- Boomers were born 1943-1960 (78 million people)
- Came of age during the “Free Speech Movement,” consciousness awakening, and rebellion against GI’s
- Recall their college environment as a positive experience for peers, generation, and nation as whole
- Boomers generally think of education within the larger social context (community over individual)
- Inclined to trust teachers and schools (mostly)
- Term coined for their extreme parental involvement: “Helicopter Parents” constantly hovering

Generation X’ers as College Parents

- Generation X was born **1961-1981** (46 million)
- Came of age during the era of the ‘latchkey child,’ the divorce epidemic, and grunge explosion
- They learned young that they were largely on their own, which ensued **distrust of institution** (& school)
- X’ers generally think of college as an investment and they will expect a solid return
- Expect transparency of teachers/schools/administrators,
- Term coined for their extreme parental involvement: “**Stealth Fighter Parents**”
- They are much more concerned with their own child’s education than they are about the whole class’s education

The K-12
“No Child Left Behind”
Gen X parents
will become...
The Collegiate
“Not With My Child, You Don’t”
Stealth Fighter Parents
As tuition continues to increase (300x the rate of inflation), Gen X parents “will be particularly focused on their return on investment as their children go to college.”

They will demand college re-examine their entire product from a price and value-oriented perspective.

College is now a calculated market choice

Will question why to purchase “a whole college package with what they view as expensive extras” (liberal arts)

Will want option to “split college experience into component parts and pick & choose what their kids need.

“New competitors will emerge providing alternative choices for much of what college provides.”

“IN LOCO PARENTIS”

- In Loco Parentis is Latin for “In place of the parent”

- 1765 Sir William Blackstone wrote that when sending kids to school, Dad “may also delegate part of his parental authority during his life to the tutor or schoolmaster of the child; who is ‘in loco parentis,’ and has such a portion of the power of the parents committed to his charge.”

- 1861 Wheaton College adapted this idea (intended for grade school) for higher education by denying students the right to form a secret society.

- Those students sued (Pratt v. Wheaton College 1866) and lost because “judges have no more authority to interfere with college discipline than to control domestic discipline of a father in his home.”

IN LOCO PARENTIS

- **1960** six students at Alabama State College participated in an “anti-segregation lunch counter sit-in” and the college expelled them on grounds they had engaged in “conduct prejudicial to the school”

- **1961** (*Dixon v. Alabama STBE*) the court rejected the school’s claim of omnipotence and suddenly college became a contract between school and student

- *Since kids didn’t lose their constitutional rights in their backyard, they couldn’t lose them on campus.*

- **1974** (*Scheuer v. Rhoades*) ruled that Kent State students “had the right to sue the governor of Ohio for damages that incurred during the notorious 1970 shooting.”

- “*Students had been handed the key to their kingdom*”

“IN LOCO PARENTIS”

- **1977** Newsweek ran “The End of Expulsion?” which identified the disappearance of ‘in loco parentis’ in the last decade and even cited college administrators who ‘lean over backwards to avoid expelling students.’

- **1979** (Bradshaw v. Rawlings) concluded “The modern American college is not an insurer of the safety of it’s students. Rights formerly possessed by college administrators have been transferred to students.”

So then, how did our contemporary ‘nanny’ universities come about?

The shift happened during the mid-80’s when the Boomers became college administrators.

Administrators who got their degrees in the 60’s had a certain idea of how students should be governed and they found 3 tools for regaining control:

1. escalating ‘war on drugs’ and the mid-80’s change of drinking age from 18 to 21
2. intervening with students with mental health issues or who are seen as a risk for mental breakdown
3. rigid enforcement of political correctness which set standards for just how rowdy they were allowed to be

1978 Congress passed law ensuring federal loans will be granted to EVERY college student

This also gave colleges leverage to punish students because now the tax-payers were helping pay for their education

By mid-90’s colleges became so strict, they were rarely liable for any student misbehavior or misconduct

1988 Rutgers University, which had just banned bringing kegs into dorms, responded to a student’s death by embargoing all Greek events.

1997, after first-year student Scott Kreuger drank himself to death at a pledge event, MIT banned freshmen from participating in fraternities.

1999 Keri Krissik survived a heart attack, caused by her anorexia, at Stonehill College her first semester. They refused her readmittance the next semester because “they couldn’t monitor her” and were liable should anything injure her again.

By mid-90’s colleges stopped threatening to punish their kids if they came home late, schools simply took away the car keys.

If kids got themselves into trouble, it became a police matter.
According to FERPA, all parental rights are transferred to students of any age (including those under 18) if the student is attending an institution of higher education.

However, parents of a college student may have access to the student’s record if the parents claim the student as a dependent for tax purposes.

1998 FERPA amended to allow colleges to inform parents of drug or alcohol related issues

Colleges, therefore, have considerable discretion concerning FERPA and how it will be applied.
In dealing with this new generation of parents, here is a list of things to do and things not to do

Knowing parents...
Do NOT...

- Don’t tell them to “go away” after dropping off their student
  - Particularly freshmen
- Don’t state that you care as much about their student as they do
  - They have taken care of them for 18 years!
- Don’t suggest that you know their son/daughter better than they do
  - They need reassurance and not to be felt inept
- Don’t pass them off to another office
  - Check with appropriate office to inquire about the parents’ situation
- Don’t be flip or curt with them!
Do...

- Be responsive
  - Reply professionally

- Provide Constant Communication
  - Updated Web site
  - E-Newsletter
  - University print material/calendar of deadlines
  - Provide copies of policies/resources to parents

- Explain Information
  - Curriculum requirements
  - Financial aid opportunities
  - Health and counseling services available
  - Judicial process
  - Safety and security issues
Giving Advice to Parents (from someone who knows)

Washington State University’s Dean for Freshmen Transition
Karen Levin Coburn
HAVE FAITH IN YOUR PARENTING

- It is important to recognize that college is a huge transition for both student and parent.
- Most important is that the parent realizes while it’s scary to ‘let go,’ they must have faith in their parenting skills and likewise, their child.

"Your kids know the values you’ve instilled in them and they will be taking those values with them to college."

Source: “Senior Journal” citing Karen Levin Coburn (Wash State U in St. Lewis) 2006
DON’T OVERDO COMMUNICATION!

- Enjoy the convenience and pleasure of technology, but don’t overdo it.
- Use cell phones and email, but let your child take the lead in establishing communication patterns.
- Let your child call you – and undoubtedly, they will when they receive their first bad grade or have a fight with their roommate.

“Don’t expect your student to answer every single email.”

Source: “Senior Journal” citing Karen Levin Coburn (Wash State U in St. Lewis) 2006
When you get the inevitable phone call about a disappointing grade, roommate conflict, or doubts about a major, you can act as a coach, not a rescuer.

You can encourage your child to talk to the professor or resident advisor, go to the counseling center, or tutoring center.

“Often the best support parents can give their college-age children is to encourage them to take charge of their own college experience.”

Source: “Senior Journal” citing Karen Levin Coburn (Wash State U in St. Lewis) 2006
The ability to ‘problem-solve’ is one of the key traits that we look for in a highly functioning adult.

Parents must keep this in mind and also realize their child is entering into the adult world.

If parents can help their children learn to solve their own problems, rather than taking care of everything for them, they are giving a great gift.

“Give a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime.”

- Confucius

Source: “Senior Journal” citing Karen Levin Coburn (Wash State U in St. Lewis) 2006
“If we realize that students are going to be attached to their parents, regardless of anything we do or say, then we can involve the parents as partners in helping our students become more successful.”

Source: “Senior Journal” citing Karen Levin Coburn (Wash State U in St. Lewis) 2006

Cartoon Copyright © Mike Flanagan
Parent Management Plan

- Pre-admission communications & materials
- Orientation of parents
- Explanation/Interpretation of FERPA
- Management of parental communications
- On-going communication & updates to parents
  - Websites and Letters
- Family Association
- Friends and Family Weekend
- Establish “division of labor”
  - Encourages parents to be involved in certain areas of college life, and to stay out of other areas

Source: “Millennials Go to College” Neil Howe and William Strauss
Orientation of Parents

- Separate program for students and parents
- Programs such as “Letting Go” and “Parent 101”
- Explanation of the role we want parents to play
  - Parents should act as **coach** rather than **rescuer**
- Providing reassuring info and contact information
- Involving reps from the Family Association
- Explanation of available campus services
  - Tutoring, Counseling, Health Center, Residence Life

Source: “Millennials Go to College” Neil Howe and William Strauss
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

- Establish a college policy and related procedures regarding release of information, judicial information, and release forms
- Explain FERPA regulations and the college’s policies regarding release forms at summer orientation sessions and on website
- On-going education when parents call
- Alcohol and Drug violation notification

Source: “Millennials Go to College” Neil Howe and William Strauss
Parental Calls and E-mails

- Establish a standard response time
- Direct calls/emails to lowest appropriate level first
- Do not guarantee confidentiality
- Request permission to discuss call/email with student
- Tell parent where to direct student for help
- Dealing with legal threats
  - I’ll call the President, my lawyer, the media, Jay Leno
- Avoid responding more quickly to parents than students

Roles: recruitment/advocacy; resource for current parents/liaison to administration; resource development

Involving Parent Association in recruitment and orientation activities as well as Parents’ Weekend

Involve Parent Association rep in key committees

Credibility factor

NC State U offers webcasts throughout the year

Central Wash U offers a calendar of typical student problems

Miami U online newsletters for parents

Sources: “Millennials Go to College” Howe and Strauss
Helicopter Traffic Control

- Calculating Response Time – setting expectations
- Assessing the Problem & Involving the Student
- Role of the President and Institutional Leadership
  - directing to the appropriate response level
- Appropriate response to threats of legal action
- Documentation of all interaction
- Wash U sends series of letters home with campus happenings and typical challenges for students
  - I.e. Midterm Grades
  - Homesickness with cold weather
  - Uncertainty about changing majors

Sources: “Millennials Go to College” Howe and Strauss
ASSESSMENT

- Evaluation of Summer Orientation program by parents
- Focus Groups
- Tracking calls/emails and repetition

Future Trends

- Colleges marketing themselves as “safe” campuses
- A return to modified “in loco parentis”
  - Partnership between college and family
- Legal challenges to FERPA and confidentiality policies
- Students evaluating how they have been parented
- Continuing question of the value of college (cost vs. outcome)


PowerPoint revision and redesign by:
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