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PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

by

Casey M. Henceroth

A Doctoral Project Submitted to  
the College of Education and Human Sciences  
and the School of Education  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

March 2021

This Doctoral Project was approved by:

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## ABSTRACT

Increased parental involvement with children in college has been attributed to rising higher education costs, an increase in technology usage and communication, a generational shift in parenting style with increased closeness and involvement at the primary and secondary education levels, and the growing number of college students whose parents attended college. Some higher education professionals are concerned this increased parental engagement has a negative impact on college student growth and maturity, while others see benefits to students from a developmental standpoint. While there has been increased scholarly attention over the previous two decades about the growing involvement of parents on campus, research is lacking about college student perspectives of parental engagement and the consequences of such involvement.

The purpose of this action research study was to assess student perception of parental engagement in the transition to college on a variety of issues and situations faced by students pursuing higher education. In this quantitative study, a total of 219 incoming, first-year, and second-year students in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University completed a survey about their attitudes and perceptions related to parental engagement with academic activities, university personnel, and non-academic activities. While limited sample size prevented analysis of some student demographics, the data was analyzed to identify trends related to gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation status, definition of parent, living arrangement, perception of engagement prior to starting college, and birth order. There were remarkable trends regarding perception of parental engagement specifically related to gender, first-generation status,

living arrangements, and birth order. While the scope of research on the perception of parental engagement in the transition to college is somewhat broad and rather limited in conclusions, it invites future research, more parent-specific programming in higher education, and increased attention to the parent-child relationship during the critical life stage of the transition to adulthood.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I am thankful for the many peers and faculty I have met through USM, but one in particular has made a lasting impact on me personally and professionally. I am extremely grateful to Shana Palla for her partnership and support since our initial class in the very first semester of the program. Her presence, feedback, thoughtfulness, and companionship has sustained me during the highs and lows of the past three years and I am honored to have walked this path with such a great colleague and friend.

## DEDICATION

There are countless people who have supported my academic endeavors over the years, especially in returning to college as a non-traditional student. They have supported me unconditionally in my pursuit of learning and knowledge, provided comic relief and respite when I needed a break from school, sustained me in my most vulnerable moments, and shown understanding for the countless times I missed out on get-togethers and events because I had to prioritize my studies. Words cannot express the depth of my gratitude for family and friends who have encouraged, sacrificed, and inspired me in my higher education journey, especially in completing this final step. As a first-generation student from small-town Appalachia, I am deeply appreciative of the many opportunities and resources afforded to me and will never take my education for granted.

This work is dedicated in memory of my mother, Deborah Dukes Henceroth, whose lifelong example, sacrifice, faith, guidance, and support have shaped who I am both personally and professionally. As the smartest person I have ever known, she taught me a love of learning, strong work ethic, and conscientiousness that is unmatched by any other. I serve as an example of her quick wit, strength, compassion, and resilience, and I would not be as accomplished as I am today without her influence and persistence in pushing me to be my very best. I am indebted to her in immeasurable ways, but especially in her passing on her superior writing skills, her endless pursuit of new challenges and self-improvement, and her ability to function on very little sleep in order to get everything done, all of which have served me well in my many years of graduate school.

My mom died in my second semester of this graduate program, so completing my Doctor of Education degree has been a bittersweet journey in many ways because of how much she was invested in seeing me achieve this level of education. Finishing this work during a time of phenomenal grief has been one of the greatest challenges of my life, but I have persevered largely in part by the desire to make her proud and an ongoing feeling of her presence and encouragement in spirit. In dedicating this to work to her, this is my labor of love to honor her memory.

"Unable are the loved to die, for love is immortality." -Emily Dickinson

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## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

A recent trend in the current generation of college students is the increasing presence and involvement of parents on campus. A recent survey found that 62% of parents of high school seniors reported finishing parts of their children's college applications, according to higher education consulting firm Ruffalo Noel Levitz (Jaschik, 2017). Helping to finish an application could mean anything from giving minor assistance in providing information about family income, socioeconomic status, parental occupation, or education, to being involved to the degree of composing admissions essays or completing a majority of the application in lieu of their student. Parents are generally involved to some degree in helping their children pursue post-secondary education, but for some parents, the involvement does not end once their children matriculate into college.

The increase in research on parenting and the transition to college is indicative that parents have become more visible and involved with their child, not only during the college application process, but in their transition to college, and throughout their child's time on campus. Hunt (2008) notes the increase in parental involvement spans broadly from the student recruitment stage to campus housing to relationships with academic advisors and faculty to career services and when a student prepares to graduate. Essentially, there has been a multi-generational culture shift in the connection among students, parents, and institutions (Wartman & Savage, 2008). The nature of the relationship between these entities has evolved from the tenet of *in loco parentis*, where higher education institutions were the principal caretakers of student well-being, to *in*

*consortio cum parentibus*, where institutions foster a partnership with parents to take care of their students (Henning, 2007). This shift not only impacts how higher education institutions integrate parents into special programming and activities with their children, but it can also have a significant impact on fiscal matters and broader university operations, and how a student fares in the transition to college, social and personal relationships, behaviors and decision-making, mental and physical health, and problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

## **Background**

Modern social science research on parental involvement and college student outcomes has introduced the concept of “helicopter parents.” Helicopter parenting is viewed as high levels of parental involvement, low autonomy granting to children, and high levels of emotional responsiveness from parents to their children (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). While there is not yet a surplus of research about helicopter parenting and its impact on college students (Lowe & Dotterer, 2017; Sax & Wartman, 2008), more studies are starting to emerge about how overly involved parenting can lead to excessive participation in their children’s lives, particularly in areas such as academics, relationships, autonomy, self-efficacy (Joyce, 2014) and overall development (Taub, 2008). Some research even proposes parental overinvolvement may lead to entitlement in some children and has shown that the greater levels of parental involvement outside the home are positively correlated with less engagement in school and academics and less independence by the child (Cornell, 2014; Givertz & Segrin, 2014). A potential explanation is that these students neither have a need or an opportunity to develop

independence or engagement at school, due to the high level of parental involvement and minimal-to-no autonomy afforded to the student. While this may be less of an issue for a child at the secondary education level, it can cause more problems at the higher education level, where students are typically expected to perform certain tasks and functions on their own as a signal of meeting key developmental markers in the transition to adulthood.

Increased parental involvement has also been attributed to rising college costs (resulting in some parents feeling entitled to increased involvement because they are providing financial support to their child), an increase in technology usage and communication (resulting in greater levels of awareness and involvement in students' everyday activities), a greater societal focus on parenting (resulting in high levels of parent-child involvement becoming the societal norm), and a growing number of college students whose parents also attended college (parents are familiar with college expectations and higher education bureaucracies and are overly willing to engage with the institution) (Harper et al., 2012; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Shoup et al., 2009). There continues to be more research about the "hows" and "whys" of parental involvement with college students, but research is somewhat ambiguous about the consequences of such involvement.

While there are many factors that should be considered in examining parental involvement during the transition to college, including but not limited to socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, cultural norms, parental education level, the student's mental, physical, and academic abilities, the student's mental, emotional, and physical health, and

other remarkable experiences or identities, it is increasingly clear that the overall surge in parental involvement is changing our institutions of higher education. The current generation of college students have more complex needs and relationships than previous generations, so as academic requirements, student life activities, and campus learning and living spaces have evolved with time, related institutional business practices and involvement with student families must also evolve.

### **Statement of Problem**

While many college faculty, staff, and administrators have slowly been adapting to the generational shift in students needing more developmental and academic structure and support, they may find themselves at odds with parents who are involved in multiple facets of their child's college experience. With the increase of parental involvement in a child's transition to college, parents now interact with faculty, staff, and administrators at unprecedented levels. This undoubtedly has impacted how a university interfaces with students and has redefined the "college experience" overall. This modern conceptualization of the college experience may be both helpful and detrimental in some ways for college students, as it dichotomizes parental engagement as over-engagement or under-engagement. Too little parental engagement in the transition to college may lead to feelings of isolation and abandonment for students, while too much parental involvement in the transition to college may inhibit personal growth and development that is typically expected to occur in the transition to adulthood.

### **Purpose of Study**

The focus of this study is to identify information and trends in student perception

of parental engagement as it relates to how parents interact with student academic activities, non-academic activities, and how parents interface with university personnel. We know that parents are more engaged in the transition to college, but what is more unclear is how students perceive that level of engagement and how that impacts them as a student navigating college. As higher education professionals, a better understanding of how students view their parents can inform our interactions and programming with students moving forward. It is common for parents to be involved in orientation and other related campus events when their child is preparing to matriculate into college, but current orientation activities involving parents tend to be student-centric, transactional, and focused on informing parents of the numerous changes, programming, and resources their child will encounter on campus. Should higher education institutions be considering how to incorporate parents into more activities and programming in an effort to better integrate them into their child's higher education experience? It is imperative to examine how students perceive and understand parental involvement during their transition to college to identify behaviors and actions that students find to be helpful and nurturing in their young adult development and success as a college student. Conversely, it is just as important to identify behaviors that students may find as an impediment to their growth and success in the campus community.

## CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

Much research has been done regarding the needs of traditionally-aged college students in their first year of college, especially regarding orientation programs, mental health needs, residence life, academic supports, and psychosocial issues. Human development scholars would summarize this as part of the transition to adulthood, noting key developmental aspects that accompany this unique phase of life. Not only are college students transitioning to adulthood, but many are also transitioning to a new level of academic rigor, a new school community with new rules and living spaces, and a new level of autonomy and independence not previously experienced. As many college students tend to be excited about transitioning to adulthood and college, many parents can experience this developmental phase quite differently than their children.

There has been a remarkable increase in the visibility of parents on campus over the last couple decades, generally in the form of accompanying their child to meetings or appointments, emailing professors on their child's behalf, or being more involved in their child's "day-to-day" than in previous generations. Higher education professionals have also noted an overall increase in parental involvement in decision-making, schedule management, coping mechanisms, communication, and connectedness with their child (Shoup et al., 2009). Research on parental involvement with college students is still relatively new, with the majority of the literature published within the past 15 years. It addresses a variety of topics such as parental engagement and the impact on mental health, decision-making, academic functioning and performance, emerging adulthood, peer attachment, substance use, engagement in high risk behaviors, sense of entitlement,

family communication, overall emotional and psychological adjustment, engagement with university personnel and resources, self-efficacy and autonomy, and coping skills.

### **Emerging Adulthood**

While the developmental periods of adolescence and young adulthood are more universally defined, the transition from adolescence to young adulthood may be considered its own distinct developmental phase as well (Lowe & Dotterer, 2017). Arnett (2006) notes that college students specifically encounter a unique developmental period in which they are neither adolescents nor young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. In emerging adulthood, individuals have greater independence from social roles and expectations and are primarily focused on identity exploration and managing feelings of uncertainty and instability. It is also in this phase where individuals encounter a number of new stressors, events, and relationships. As students typically transition to college and adulthood simultaneously, their relationship with their parents generally evolves, and the consequences of such change can impact attachment, prosocial behaviors, belief and value systems, and emotional regulation (McGinley, 2018). Given the multitude of stressors in navigating the college environment, perception of parental engagement can play a significant role in emerging adulthood.

Most of the research related to college students in emerging adulthood focuses on more conventional developmental markers of this unique phase, but Setterstein (2012) specified three modern hallmarks of emerging adulthood: a) the need to manage uncertainty and the unknown, b) the need for ongoing flexibility in self-definitions, and c) the need for interdependence. Where research has traditionally associated young

adulthood with the goal or achievement of independence, emerging adulthood provides a framework that grants young adults more time for self-exploration, growth, and opportunities for interdependence in their relationships, most notably with their parents. As the parent-child relationship typically changes in the transition to college, the framework of emerging adulthood may help students recognize they have more time for self exploration and dependence on their parents when they feel they need it. Similarly, it may also normalize parents' feelings of not quite being ready for their child to be independent and present the opportunity for a more gradual transition in the interdependence and eventually independence in the parent-child relationship.

### **Parenting Styles & Helicopter Parenting**

The study of parenting styles has been a fixture in human development research for many decades, beginning with Diana Baumrind's (1971) groundbreaking research categorizing three types of parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) and Segrin et al. (2012) propose that helicopter parenting is not its own distinct parenting style, but rather a unique combination of some of Baumrind's basic dimensions of parenting. These dimensions include differing levels of support shown to a child, varying levels of control (behavioral and/or psychological), and autonomy. This perhaps may be part of the reason that helicopter parenting has no universal definition.

“Helicopter parent” is a term frequently associated with highly engaged parents in adolescence and young adulthood, referring to parents who hover over their children. Coined by Cline & Fay (1990) over 30 years ago, “helicopter parent” did not appear in

the literature related to college students and higher education until the 2000s (van Ingen et al., 2015; VonBergen & Bressler, 2017). In more dated helicopter parenting literature, the concept was most frequently associated with a pattern of parenting that included high levels of warmth and support, high levels of control, and low levels of autonomy granting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). While it is most commonly associated with parents who exhibit very high levels of engagement with their child, other terms associated with high levels of parental engagement and intervention include overparenting, overindulgent parenting, intrusive parenting, snowplow parents, velcro parents, bulldozer parents, lawnmower parents, concierge parents, paramedic parents, safety patrol parents, hovercraft parents, or hummingbird parents (Graves, 2007; Hamilton, 2016; LeMonye & Buchanan, 2011; Somers & Settle, 2010; VonBergen & Bressler, 2017). Many of these terms are associated with negative traits or behaviors, but as more research has started to emerge about the impact of helicopter parenting on college students, some studies have portrayed certain dimensions of helicopter parenting that may produce favorable results in their college-aged children (Fingerman et al, 2012; Hoover, 2008; Luebbe et al., 2018; Padilla-Walker et al., 2019; Shoup et al., 2009).

With the increased recognition of the concept of helicopter parenting, what defines it varies widely across the literature. Pautler (2017) and Cui et al. (2019) argue that a lack of universal definition and understanding has led to numerous parental variables and scales used in research studies, which in turn makes interpretation and comparison a difficult task. While helicopter parenting in the media is generally portrayed negatively with undesirable consequences, the scholarly literature on helicopter

parenting is generally more varied and complex. Due to the vagueness of the definition of helicopter parenting, in addition to the nuanced perspectives on the topic in scholarly work, the net result is a broad body of literature of which a vast spectrum of themes emerge.

Some scholars define helicopter parenting related to emotional support, behavioral control, and autonomy granting (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012), while others define it as related to external behaviors that parents exhibit with their children (Shoup et al., 2009). Some consider helicopter parenting as removing barriers and obstacles for their children (Segrin et al., 2012), providing tangible assistance (Fingerman et al., 2012; Segrin et al., 2012), or parents exhibiting psychological control over their children (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; LeMoyné & Buchanan, 2011; Schiffrin et al., 2014). Additionally, many studies combined two or more variables for their definition of helicopter parenting, further supporting the idea that a universal definition may not be feasible. While themes of support, engagement, and control are consistent across the helicopter parenting literature, the lack of a consistent definition creates an extremely broad understanding of how it truly impacts students in the transition to college.

Parental support, level of involvement, control, and granting autonomy can strongly influence the transition to college and adulthood and provides the foundation for the concept of helicopter parenting. Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) note that helicopter parenting typically represents parenting that is high on support, high on control, and low on autonomy-granting. Generally speaking, helicopter parenting implies

that parents are more involved with their children than what is considered to be developmentally appropriate for children in late adolescence (Kouros et al., 2017). This translates to higher-than-average levels of support and nurturing, psychological and behavioral control, and the inability to promote autonomy and independence in the transition to college. Additionally, some helicopter parenting research has implied that parental warmth is synonymous with support, creating the impression that all helicopter parents have warm interactions with their children (Luebbe et al., 2018), but Nelson et al. (2015) caution that helicopter parenting is not inherently “warm” and that the presence of warmth in the parent-child relationship likely influences whether or not helicopter parenting leads to maladjustment in the transition to college and adulthood. Many studies even show a negative correlation between helicopter parenting and parental warmth (Luebbe et al., 2018).

### **Academic Outcomes**

With the increased presence of parents on campus, whether directly or indirectly, some of the literature related to parental engagement in the transition to college focuses on the impact of parental engagement on academic outcomes. While much of the research acknowledges the interplay between academics and psychosocial and emotional development that co-occurs during the transition to college, scholars are recognizing that parental engagement can specifically impact academic outcomes. The literature covers a variety of related topics such as student academic decision-making (Luebbe et al., 2018), general attitudes about school (Shoup et al, 2009), personal accountability (Cornell 2014; Schiffrin & Liss, 2017), academic performance (Harper et al., 2012; Shoup et al., 2009),

motivation (Schiffirin & Liss, 2017), burnout (Love et al., 2020), engagement (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012), self-efficacy (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Darlow et al., 2017), student rapport with faculty and instructors (Kody Frey & Tatum, 2016), and communication in the academic environment (Miller-Ott, 2016).

The research is mixed about the degree that parental engagement positively or negatively impacts academic outcomes in the transition to college. Miller-Ott (2016) cautions that high levels of parental engagement may be correlated with lower numbers of students communicating with their professors, possibly because they perceive their parents will speak for them. Schiffirin and Liss (2017) suggest that helicopter parenting is correlated with maladaptive academic motivation that can negatively impact academic achievement. Cornell (2014) stated that students with helicopter parents may be more prone to academic entitlement and lack accountability for academic performance. Luebbe et al. (2018) found a positive correlation with helicopter parents and poor academic functioning related to things like time management or class activities or assignments, and Love et al. (2020) found that helicopter parenting can increase the likelihood of feelings of being overwhelmed with school and emotionally drained.

Conversely, Shoup et al. (2009) found that students with highly involved parents did well in many domains, including higher levels of engagement, learning activities, self-reported academic gains, and overall satisfaction. Other studies noted that while there may be minor unremarkable gains related to academics, or negative gains in some research, some authors found college students responded most favorably to information seeking behaviors by their parents (Luebbe et al., 2018). Students reported more positive

results socio-emotionally and academically when their parents would ask them questions in an effort to show a genuine interest in their activities and interests.

### **Autonomy and Well-Being**

Research on parenting styles is generally focused on both short and long-term effects of traits and behaviors associated with various parenting interventions. Much of the research on the helicopter parenting of children transitioning to adulthood and college is related to psychological adjustment, autonomy, and emotional well-being, especially since a key developmental marker for young adults during this stage is increased independence and developing an identity separate from the parental relationship (Kouros et al., 2017). Some research specifically focuses on related topics such as social competence and prosocial behaviors (Moilanen & Manuel, 2019), anxiety and depression (Cui et al., 2019; LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Schiffrin et al., 2013), peer attachment (McGinley, 2018; van Ingen et al., 2015), self-efficacy (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2013; Reed et al., 2016), life satisfaction (Schiffrin et al., 2019; Segrin et al., 2013), and interpersonal sensitivity (Scharf et al., 2017). Helicopter parents, or highly engaged parents, while generally well-intentioned in the name of being helpful and providing guidance to their child, may actually foster dependence rather than independence, which may be counterproductive to the college developmental experience. Too much involvement by parents, no matter how well-intentioned, may be perceived as control, lacking trust, or condescension, which may lead to poorer psychosocial and emotional outcomes. Conversely, some students respond favorably to highly engaged

parents, as higher levels of parental support may translate to higher levels of confidence, self-esteem, and academic performance for the student.

More recent research related to autonomy and well-being differentiates different types of helicopter parenting, with some forms producing more favorable results than others. Nelson et al. (2015) discovered that helicopter parenting behaviors in the absence of parental warmth in the parent-child relationship produced lower levels of well-being and psychosocial adjustment that is critical in the transition to college. In parents who exhibited helicopter parenting behaviors in addition to exhibiting parental warmth, higher levels of well-being and psychosocial adjustment were reported. Luebbe and colleagues (2016) also noted that parents who specifically limited autonomy for their children were perceived as more controlling and less caring by their children. In the same study, helicopter parents who regularly exhibited information seeking in their relationships with their children were perceived as more caring and less controlling. Additionally, multiple studies (Buchanan & LeMoynes, 2020; Romm et al., 2019; Schiffrin et al., 2019; Schiffrin & Liss, 2017) drew attention to gender differences in perceptions of helicopter parenting, noting that males and females may desire different levels of autonomy, may perceive emotional and psychosocial well-being differently, and also may have different perceptions of helicopter parenting behaviors based on the gender of the parent (Love et al., 2019; Love et al., 2020).

### **Self Determination Theory**

One of the more common theoretical explanations related to helicopter and engaged parenting and the key developmental needs in young adulthood is self-

determination theory. Self-determination theory can be a helpful framework when exploring how highly engaged parenting can influence a college student and how they perceive parental level of engagement as they transition to college and adulthood (Darlow et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Kouros et al., 2017; Paulter, 2017). The theory proposes that human beings have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008). These needs are essential to psychological well-being, quality of life, overall functioning, and personal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy refers to an individual's sense of agency and whether or not they feel free to make their own decisions. Competence relates to self-efficacy and the feeling of confidence in one's own abilities and accomplishments. Relatedness refers to the need to feel connected and close to others. Deci and Ryan (2000) propose that satisfying these basic needs results in greater life-satisfaction, overall well-being, and intrinsic motivation.

Based on the aforementioned three primary dimensions of helicopter parenting, self-determination in the transition to college is likely jeopardized by not feeling a sense of competence and autonomy during this key developmental life stage. Schiffrin et al. (2014) argue that not only can helicopter parenting behaviors diminish a child's sense of autonomy and competence, but they can also undermine the overall parent-child relationship. If parents are regularly intervening regarding school work and assignments, removing barriers, or helping to complete tasks for their college-aged students, this may create a sense of self-doubt and a feeling of inadequacy in their children. If parents are consistently intervening about key decisions in the transition to college, like decisions related to social relationships, living arrangements, co-curricular involvement, major and

course selection, and other academic activities, their students may not feel empowered to make their own decisions or that their parents do not have confidence they are able to make good decisions on their own. Ultimately, these deficits can impact well-being and intrinsic motivation, both of which Greene et al. (2019) note are intimately related to student success in college.

## CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of incoming and current first and second-year students in relation to their parents' engagement in their transition to college. This included perceptions about parental engagement in personal and social relationships; non-academic activities; well-being and autonomy; academic activities, decisions, records, and performance; and their parents' level of engagement with university faculty, staff, and administrators. The study consisted of a quantitative internet-based survey designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do incoming first-year, current first-year, and second-year college students perceive parental engagement with their academic decisions, records, and performance during the transition to college?
2. How do incoming first-year, current first-year, and second-year college students perceive parental engagement with faculty, academic support staff, and university administrators during the transition to college?
3. How do incoming first-year, current first-year, and second-year college students perceive parental engagement with their personal and social relationships, non-academic activities, well-being, and autonomy during the transition to college?

### **Research Design**

This study used a quantitative research design that utilized internet-based questionnaires administered through Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a secure hosting site used for administering online surveys and compiling and analyzing data. Users can create and distribute surveys, record data and perform analysis all within the online Qualtrics

platform. The University of Southern Mississippi provides free access to Qualtrics to anyone in the campus community upon request.

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reveal the perceptions of influence and engagement of parents on the transition to college to incoming new first-year students (Appendix E), and first-year and second-year students (Appendix B). This design was chosen since the research objective was to obtain current, one-time information (Ruel et al., 2016). Convenience sampling was used due to the researcher's role as Director of Student Services and Academic Advising and proximity to access the contact information of all incoming, first-year, and second-year students. Purposive sampling, a type of convenience sampling, was chosen in order to include a particular subset of participants, based on specific, common characteristics within the group of students surveyed and their specialized knowledge about the research objective (Ruel et al., 2016).

### **Instrument**

To address the research questions, two different surveys were designed to gather information through a series of Likert-scale questions. Both surveys mirrored each other, with Likert-scale questions being in present tense in the survey for current students (first-year and second-year students) and the other having Likert-scale questions in future tense in the survey for incoming new first-year students. Each survey had 40 Likert-scale questions and 10 demographic multiple-choice questions. Skip logic was used to ensure that all participants were at least 18 years of age, traditionally-aged college students (graduating from high school no more than three years ago), and students in the College

of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University.

### **Timeline**

The survey instrument was developed in the fall of 2019 and revisions were made based on feedback from faculty reviewers and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi's Research Support Center. Due to the research involving human subjects, the researcher submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in February 2020 (Appendix A). The researcher received IRB approval on March 3, 2020. The survey for current first-year and second-year students was activated near the end of spring semester. It opened on April 9, 2020 and closed on May 14, 2020, for a total data collection period of five weeks. The survey sent to incoming new first-year students was activated at the beginning of orientation during the summer. It opened on June 18, 2020 and closed on August 20, 2020, for a total data collection period of nine weeks.

### **Participants**

The population used for this study included incoming new first-year students and current first-year and second-year students in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University. First and second-year students were defined as currently enrolled students having fewer than 60 credit hours completed, who graduated from high school and matriculated into college within the previous three years, and who did not previously live independently prior to starting college. Incoming new first-year students were defined as students graduating from high school in the previous three years, who were not previously enrolled in college following their graduation from high school, and who did not previously live independently prior to starting college.

Participants were recruited via email sent out from the College of Education and Human Ecology's undergraduate student services central office email address. Two different emails with similar messaging were sent, with specific language targeted toward incoming new first-year students (Appendix F) and toward current first-year and second-year students (Appendix C). The recruitment email included information about the nature and goals of the research, who was being recruited to participate, and how participant opinions may shape future initiatives and programming in the college for undergraduate students. The email also included the estimated time to complete the survey, IRB approval information, the commitment to the anonymity of participants, researcher contact information, Amazon gift card incentive information, and a link to the Qualtrics survey.

Students were sent a reminder email approximately two weeks before the close of each survey. Students interested in participating clicked the link in the recruitment email and were directed to the survey via the secure Qualtrics website. Prior to starting the survey, students were presented with an informed consent statement, which addressed the study in more detail, risks involved, voluntary participation, and confidentiality and anonymity. Two different informed consent statements with similar messaging were used with specific language targeted toward incoming new first-year students (Appendix G) and toward current first-year and second-year students (Appendix D). The informed consent statement made participants aware that by clicking "next" on the survey, completing the survey in its entirety, and clicking "submit" at the conclusion of the survey they were agreeing to participate in the study and gave permission for their

anonymous and confidential data to be used in the research.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data were collected via an anonymous online questionnaire in Qualtrics accessed by incoming, first-year, and second-year students. No personally identifying data was collected in order to maintain the confidentiality of the survey participants, but participants were given the option to voluntarily provide their email address if they wanted to be entered into a drawing for an Amazon gift card. Data from first-year and second-year students were collected over a period of five weeks and data from incoming students were collected over a period of nine weeks. At the conclusion of the data collection period, the number of completed surveys and response counts were recorded. For first-year and second-year students, 129 surveys were started and 99 were completed, for a completion rate of 76.7%. For incoming students, 160 surveys were started and 120 were completed, for a completion rate of 75%. The researcher computed summary statistics via Qualtrics and Microsoft Excel and used Google Data Studio for more detailed statistical analysis.

### **Assumptions/Limitations**

Survey-based data collection created a set of assumptions and limitations that must be considered in the analysis of data and results. Assumptions for this study include:

1. All respondents answered the questionnaire honestly.
2. All respondents willingly engaged in self-reflection about their relationship(s) with their parents resulting in thoughtful answers on the questionnaire.

3. All respondents answered survey questions based on their *actual* perception(s) of engagement with their parents, not a perception of parental engagement that is more or less desirable to the participant or depicts the engagement of their parents in a more or less favorable light.
4. The content in the questionnaire items are an appropriate measure of the research questions.

## CHAPTER IV - DATA & FINDINGS

This chapter will present the data findings and analysis derived from the online Qualtrics survey. Student demographic information is highlighted and analyzed and followed by findings and trends in the data. The findings and analysis incorporate a general tabulation and cross tabulation focusing on themes related to demographics and respondent perceptions of parental engagement with student academics, parental engagement directly with university personnel, and parental engagement with student non-academic activities, including social and personal relationships, personal well-being, and autonomy. Diagrams are also used throughout the analysis to present reader-friendly visuals for key data points in the research.

### **Participant Demographics**

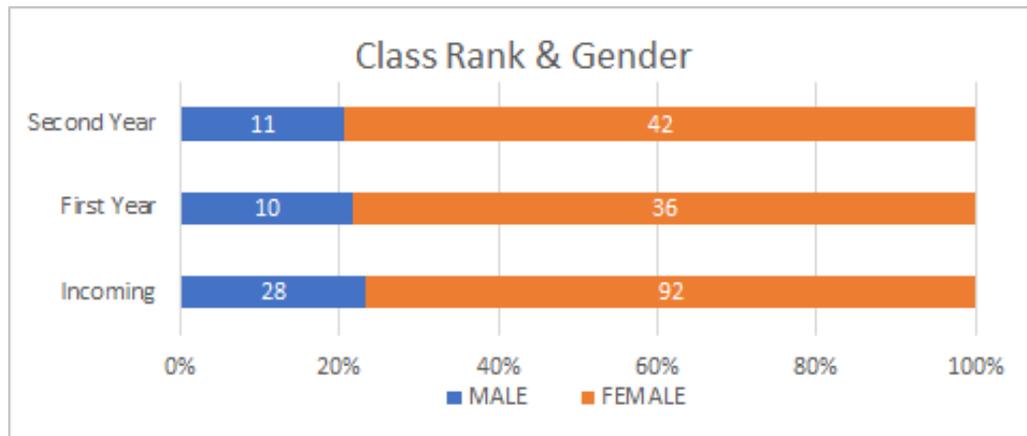
For the survey sent to first-year and second-year students, a total of 129 responses were received from the targeted 771 potential respondents. This constitutes a 16.7% response rate for the survey. Of the 129 respondents, 99 students finished the questionnaire in its entirety, for a 76.7% completion rate. Of the 99 completed surveys, 46 were completed by first-year students and 53 were completed by second-year students. For the survey sent to incoming first-year students, a total of 160 responses were received from the targeted 242 potential respondents. This constitutes a 66% response rate for the survey. Of the 160 respondents, 120 students finished the questionnaire in its entirety, for a 75% completion rate. Only completed surveys were included in the data analysis and responses from both surveys were analyzed using the embedded tools in Qualtrics and Microsoft Excel.

## Class Rank and Gender

A total of 219 students participated in the Qualtrics survey. Approximately 22% identified as male and 78% identified as female. A total of 53 second-year students completed the survey, with a gender breakdown of 21% male and 79% female. A total of 46 first-year students completed the survey, with a gender breakdown of 22% male and 78% female. A total of 120 incoming students completed the survey, with a gender breakdown of 23% male and 77% female. No students across class ranks identified as non-binary or transgender and none selected the “other” option or preferred not to answer.

**Figure 1**

*Visual Representation of Student Class Rank & Gender*



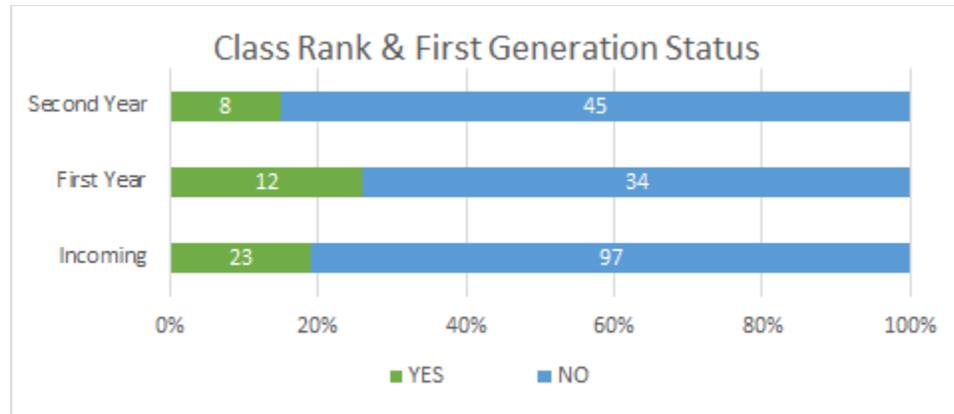
## Class Rank & First Generation Status

Of the 219 total student participants, 20% of them identified as first-generation students. In this survey, a first-generation student is defined as neither parent having earned a four-year degree, regardless if they attended four-year institutions or completed two-year associate degrees. Of the 120 incoming students, 23 students, or 19%, identified

as first-generation. Of the 46 first-year students, 12 students, or 26%, identified as first-generation. Of the 53 second-year students, 8 students, or 15% identified as first-generation.

**Figure 2**

*Visual Representation of Student Class Rank & First Generation Status*

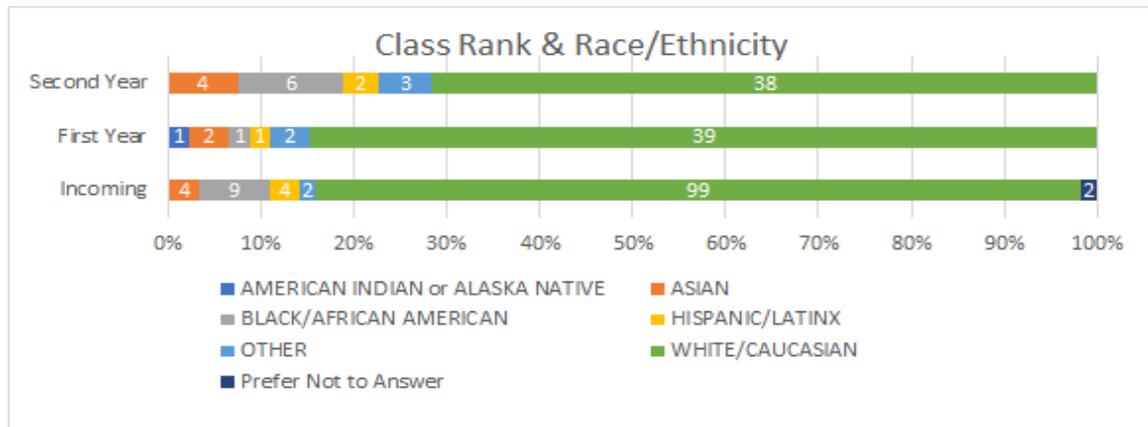


**Class Rank & Race/Ethnicity**

Of the total 219 student participants, White/Caucasian students comprised 80% (n=176) of all participants, followed by Black/African American students at 7% (n=16), Asian students at 4.5% (n=10), Hispanic/Latinx (n=7) and Other (n=7) at 3%, and American Indian/Alaska Native (n=1) and those students who preferred not to answer (n=2) at <1%. There was a greater amount of diversity in second-year students compared to incoming students, with a difference of over 10% between incoming White/Caucasian students (82.5%) and White/Caucasian second-year students (71.6%). Non-White incoming students made up 17.5% of their cohort, while non-White second-year students made up 28.3% of their cohort.

**Figure 3**

*Visual Representation of Student Class Rank & Race/Ethnicity*

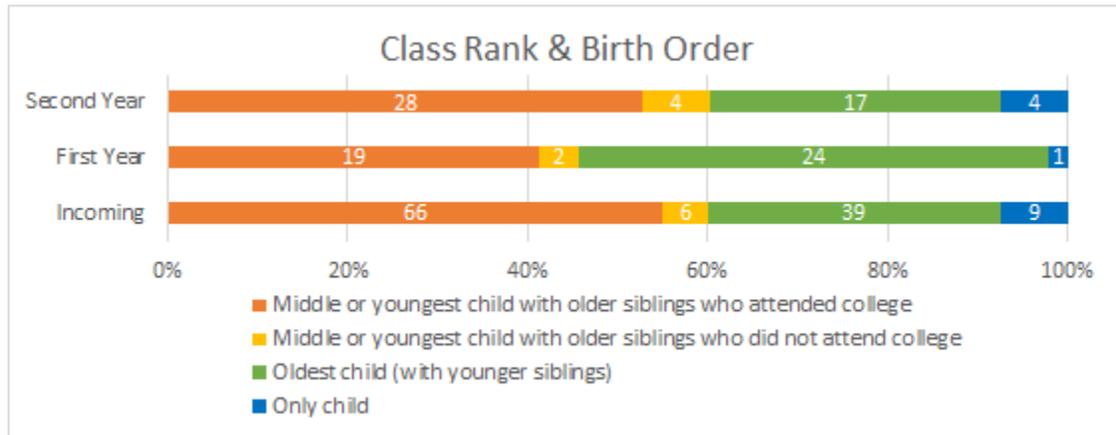


### **Class Rank & Birth Order**

Of the 219 student participants, more than half (51.5%) identified as the middle or youngest child having older siblings who attended college. Nearly 37% of students identified themselves as the oldest child, 6% identified as the only child, and 5.4% identified as middle children having older siblings who did not attend college. Those students who identified as the middle or youngest child with older siblings who went to college likely witnessed their parents have some experience with the transition to college with their older siblings. Conversely, the 48.5% of students in other birth order categories were the first in their household to give their parents such an experience. For first-year students, those who identified as the middle or youngest child having older siblings who did not attend college, the only child, or the oldest child were in the majority of their first-year cohort at nearly 59%. This means that almost 6 out of 10 first-year students were coming from homes in which they were the first child their parent(s) were sending off to college.

**Figure 4**

*Visual Representation of Student Class Rank & Birth Order*



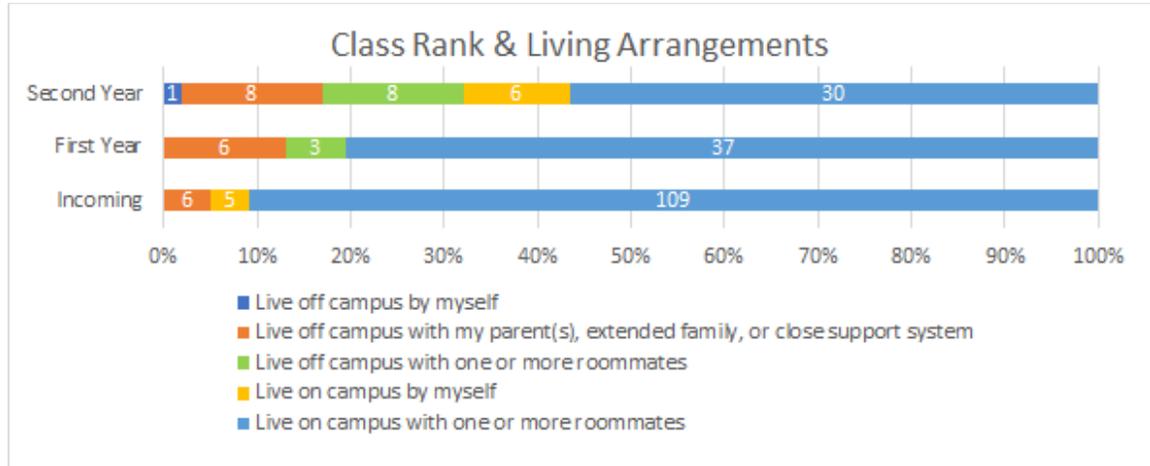
### **Class Rank & Living Arrangements**

Of the 219 student participants, over 80% claimed they were living on campus with roommates. A little more than 9% stated they were living off campus with parent(s), extended family, or close support system, 5% claimed they were living on campus by themselves, 5% stated they were living off campus with roommates, and less than 1% stated they were living off campus by themselves. First-year and second-year students at Ohio State who are enrolled full-time are required to live on campus, with some exceptions (The Ohio State University, 2020c). There is typically a decline in second-year students living on campus, as many of these students seek exemption from this rule due to moving into a sanctioned scholarship or academic residential community, a social fraternity or sorority chapter house, or due to space limitations in the residence halls. A total of 91% of the incoming student cohort stated they were living on campus with roommates, compared to 80.5% for first-year students and 56.6% of second-year

students. Additionally, there is also an increase of students living off campus with family, with 5% of incoming students citing living with family, compared to 13% of first-year students and 15% of second-year students.

**Figure 5**

*Visual Representation of Student Class Rank & Living Arrangements*

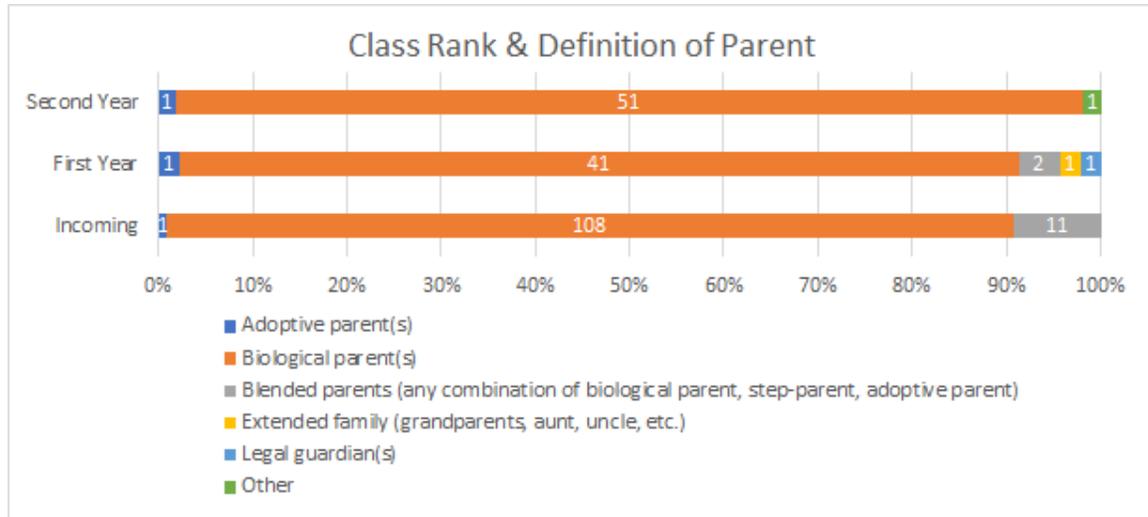


**Class Rank & Definition of Parent**

The term “parent” can vary greatly in meaning across generations, races and cultures, socioeconomic groups, and family circumstances. Students were asked to identify their definition of a parent, based on the person or persons primarily responsible for them in the previous 1-3 years. Of the 219 student participants, over 91% defined parent as their biological parent(s) and nearly 6% defined parent as blended parents, which is any combination of biological, adoptive, or stepparents. Slightly over 1% of all students defined parent as adoptive parent(s), and less than 1% of students selected extended family, legal guardian, or other as their definition of parent. The option of state or county agency was not chosen by any students.

**Figure 6**

*Visual Representation of Student Class Rank & Definition of Parent*

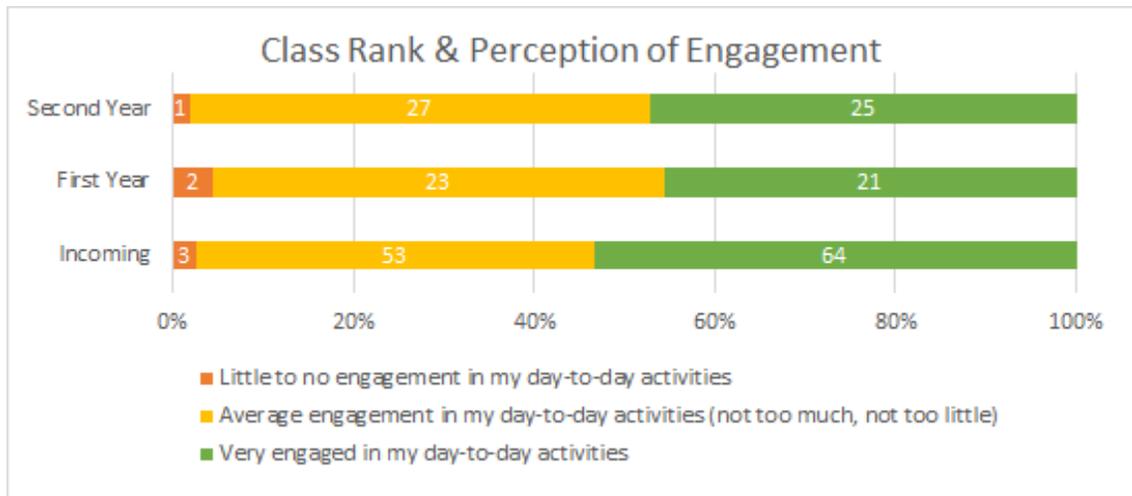


### **Class Rank & Perception of Engagement**

The survey defined the term “parental engagement” as more than the concept of parents meeting the basic needs of their children. Parental engagement is the act of parents being invested in their children with the expectation of reciprocity in the relationship and a shared and ongoing responsibility and commitment to create or ensure positive outcomes. Students were asked to reflect on their parent(s)’ level of engagement in their day-to-day activities 2-4 years before they started college. Of the 219 student participants, only 2.7% perceived their parents to have little to no engagement with their day-to-day activities. In contrast, 47% of students viewed their parents as having an average level of engagement in their day-to-day activities, defined by their perception of “not too much, not too little” engagement. Just over 50% of all students considered their parents to be very engaged in their day-to-day activities.

**Figure 7**

*Visual Representation of Student Class Rank & Perception of Engagement*



Due to small sample sizes in some student demographics, a majority of the descriptive analysis involves comparing data in demographic variables with adequate sample sizes. The focus was mostly on analyzing changes over time (incoming to first-year to second-year students), the differences between males and females, the differences between first-generation and non-first generation students, the differences between middle children with older siblings who attended college and oldest children, and differences between students who perceived their parents as having average engagement with them and those students who perceived their parents to be very engaged. Small sample sizes were found in non-White students, middle children with older siblings with no college experience or only children, students with living arrangements other than living on campus with roommates, students who define parent as anything other than exclusively biological, and students who perceived their parents to have little engagement. The demographics with small sample sizes are generally not included in the

descriptive analysis unless something peculiar stands out in the data. For all other demographic variables, the most remarkable statistics or trends are addressed in the analysis.

The term “parents” was used throughout the Qualtrics survey and is used in the descriptive analysis, but this does not imply that all students who participated in the survey have two or more parents. Students were advised to complete the survey based on how they defined the term “parent,” which could mean one parent, one or both parents in two-parent families, one or all parents in blended families, one or more adoptive parents, or extended family. If the levels of engagement varied greatly between two or more parents, students were advised to complete the survey with consideration to the parent or parents who were the most engaged with them leading up to and during the transition to college.

### **Parental Engagement with Academic Activities**

The first 12 questions in the Qualtrics survey were directly related to student perception of parental involvement with academic activities, such as decisions about major selection or career pathways, access to academic records and email, completing class assignments, and academic performance. Regarding the influence parents may have on students choosing a major, students across all ranks had a fairly consistent distribution of answers ranging from strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Nearly half of students across all ranks answered either disagree or strongly disagree, compared to 29% of students who answered agree or strongly agree. Students across all ranks who identified as first-generation were only slightly less

agreeable about parental influence on their college major, with 24.8% selecting agree or strongly agree, compared to 29.8% of non-first generation students. Additionally, no Black/African American students across all ranks selected agree or strongly agree.

Students were asked if they had a fear of disappointing their parents if they changed their academic or future career plans. Across all ranks and demographic variables, the incoming students consistently answered disagree or strongly disagree at a much higher percentage (67.5%) than first-year (58.6%) or second-year (43.3%) students. This may be related to the fact that incoming students have yet to matriculate and take classes and may be optimistically settled on a major at this early stage of college. The most significant change between incoming students and second-year students related to fear of disappointment were in males and oldest children. Incoming male students answered disagree or strongly disagree at 74.9%, first-year males at 40%, and second-year males at 27.2%. A similar pattern was also found in students who identified as oldest children. Incoming oldest children answered disagree or strongly disagree at 79.4%, first-year oldest children at 58.3%, and second-year oldest children at 29.4%. This data may illustrate that additional pressure or expectations on males or oldest children can impact how they may view or value their parents' approval of academic-related decisions.

A majority of students across all ranks do not desire more independence from their parents related to academic-related decisions and planning toward their degree. Fewer than an average of 15% of all students agreed or strongly agreed about desiring more independence related to academic decisions and planning. Additionally, there appeared to be some difference between students who perceived their parents to be very

engaged versus having an average level of engagement. Of students who agreed or strongly agreed with desiring more independence and who also perceived their parents to have average engagement, the average number of students across all ranks was 8.2%. Of students who agreed or strongly agreed with desiring more independence and who perceived their parents to be very engaged, the average of those students across all ranks was 17.6%. While these are still relatively small percentages, the increase in desire for more independence may be somewhat related to a higher level of engagement from their parents.

When asked about perceptions of parental expectations to have access to academic records, with the rationale that parents can help the student make the best decisions about academics and progress, the primary trend seen across most student demographics involved a decrease in parental engagement with academic records over time. A total of 39.1% of incoming students either agreed or strongly agreed their parents expected to have access to their academic records, compared to 28.2% of first-year students, and 18.7% second-year students. The decrease over time was also present when examining gender, but there was a remarkable difference in the averages between males and females. Females across all ranks that agreed or strongly agreed that their parents expected to have access to their academic records totaled 24.5%, while males across all ranks that agreed or strongly agreed that their parents expected to have access to their academic records totaled 43.3%. This may illustrate that some parents base their view of their child's ability to maintain their academic record on gender.

Students were asked about their parents' desire to be involved in decisions related to registering for classes and making progress toward their degree. Overall, for students who agreed or strongly agreed their parents wanted to be involved, there is a perception that parents desire less involvement over time. Incoming students who agreed or strongly agreed were at 35.7%, first-year students at 30.3%, and second-year students at 24.4%. Two key demographic trends were also present related to gender and first-generation student status. Aligning with the overall trend, females perceived their parents' desire to be involved decline over time, from 36.0% (incoming students), to 24.9% (first-year students) to 16.6% (second-year students). However, males perceived their parents' desire to be involved actually *increase* over time, from 32.1% for incoming students, 50% for first-year students, to 54.4% for second-year students. Again, this may be evidence that parents base their child's ability to make good decisions related to registering for classes and making degree progress on gender. Lastly, the average percentage of first-generation students across all ranks who answered agree or strongly agree was 15%. In contrast, non-first generation students who answered in the same manner were 35.3%. It is likely that non-first generation students, who have one or more parents who have earned a four-year degree, have parents who want to be more involved in academic processes and decisions based on their parent's experience in college.

A majority of students across all ranks disagree or strongly disagree that they feel pressure from their parents to be involved in academic decisions, even if their parents help pay for college. An average of 57.7% of all students do not feel pressure, regardless of who pays the tuition. However, there were some remarkable differences between

males and females and first-generation status and non-first generation students. An average of 62.8% of females disagreed or strongly disagreed with feeling pressure from their parents for more involvement, even if they helped pay for college. In contrast, only an average of 41.7% of males answered the question in the same manner. This supports the idea that some parents may base their level of engagement by the gender of their child. Additionally, an average of 74.6% of first-generation students disagreed or strongly disagreed with feeling pressure from their parents for more involvement, even if they helped pay for college. An average of only 51.1% of non-first generation students answered in the same manner. It is likely that since non-first generation students have parents who are college graduates, their parents desire a greater level of involvement with academic decisions to share in the experience.

Nearly 57% of students across all ranks disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would give their parents their university password to all their school-related accounts, if they felt pressure from their parents for password information. Conversely, nearly 20% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed that they would disclose their password information to their parents if they felt pressure to do so. This means that 1 in 5 students may have parents who access their email, course registration system, Canvas course learning platform, financial account, and other University password-protected services at any given time. Another remarkable finding was that males may be more indecisive about disclosing password information as a result of coercion from their parents once they enter college. For incoming students, males and females who selected “neither agree nor disagree” in disclosing their password after feeling pressure from their

parents was 10.7% and 14.1% of the time, respectively. Once entering college, first-year and second-year females who selected neither agree nor disagree averaged 13.8%, while first-year and second-year males who answered in the same manner averaged 38.1%.

When asked about *voluntarily* giving their password to their parents for school-related accounts, nearly 37% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed. This is nearly twice the average number of students in the previous question who agreed or strongly agreed they would give their parents their password only with parental coercion, so nearly 2 out of 5 students may have parents who can readily access their University accounts. There was also a remarkable difference between males and females; the female average across all ranks who would voluntarily give their parents their password was 33.3%, compared to the male average of 50.3%. Additionally, an average of 15.8% of first-generation students across all ranks would voluntarily give their parents their password, compared to an average of 42.2% of non-first generation students across all ranks.

Students were asked if their parents had ever volunteered to complete class assignments for them. Students across all ranks disproportionately said their parents had never engaged with them in that manner. Across all ranks, no student answered “strongly agree”; 78.3% of students answered “strongly disagree,” and nearly 18% of students answered “disagree” (for a total average of 95.9%). The only remarkable demographic trend was that 100% of first generation students across all three ranks disagreed or strongly disagreed that their parents had or would volunteer to help them with a class assignment. Only 3.3% of incoming students, 0% of first year-students, and 3.7% of

second-year students admitted to assistance with completing class assignments from their parents.

Students were asked if they were hypothetically struggling with an assignment in a course if they thought their parents would be okay with helping them by completing the assignment on their behalf. A total of 14.9% of incoming students, 19.4% of first-year students, and 18.7% of second-year students said they agreed or strongly agreed that they thought their parents would complete assignments for them if they asked them to. Additionally, there was a notable difference between oldest children and middle children with older siblings who attended college. Middle children with older siblings who attended college agreed or strongly agreed on average 23.1% of the time that they thought their parents would complete an assignment for them if asked. Oldest children agreed or strongly agreed on average only 12.3% of the time. Only children and middle children with older siblings who did not attend college were not included in the birth order comparison because they were not comparably represented in the survey.

Overall, a majority of students report they have not felt pressured to include their parents on their FERPA release. Only 14.1% of incoming students, 21.6% of first-year students, and 14.0% of second-year students agree or strongly agree that they have felt pressured to include their parents on the FERPA release. While the number of Black/African American students and Hispanic/Latinx students was minimal compared to White/Caucasian students, it was noteworthy that only 1 Black student out of a total of 16 and only 1 Hispanic student out of a total of 6 answered either agree or strongly agree. Additionally, for students across all ranks who lived at home with their parents, extended

family, or close support system (n=20), none of them felt pressured to include their parents on their FERPA release. Parents or family who may have students living at home with them may not feel the need to push for FERPA access since there is likely a higher level of engagement due to the proximity with the student.

A majority of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that their parents are more involved in academic and school-related decisions than they want them to be. Only 5.8% of incoming students, 15.2% of first-year students, and 9.3% of second-year students agreed or strongly agreed that their parents were more involved than they wanted them to be. There were no key demographic descriptors, other than a minor increase in agreement in males versus females. Almost 9% of females agreed or strongly agreed across all ranks, while 15% of males answered in the same way.

### **Parental Engagement with University Personnel**

Students were asked if they agreed or disagreed that their parents expressed a desire or willingness to accompany them to meetings with academic advisors, professors, or other university staff member, via in-person or virtual means. A total of 16.6% of incoming students, 6.4% of first-year students, and 22.5% of second-year students agreed or strongly agreed their parents had expressed a desire or willingness to accompany them to meetings with university personnel. There was minimal variance between males and females answering agree or strongly agree, with an average of 14.6% of females across all ranks compared to 18.3% of males across all ranks. The most notable statistic was related to perception of engagement. Nearly 11% of students who perceived their parents to have average levels of engagement answered agree or strongly agree. In contrast,

nearly 21% of students who perceived their parents to be very engaged answered agree or strongly agree. Lastly, students choosing “strongly disagree” more than doubled from incoming students (17.8%) to second-year students (36.3%), possibly inferring that parents are less concerned or want less involvement over time, once their child enters college and shows they are able to navigate meetings with university personnel on their own.

Less than 7% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents have expressed a willingness to call or email a professor on the student’s behalf. There were incremental differences based on gender, first-generation status, perception of engagement, or birth order, but the common theme across all of these demographics was that students who chose “strongly disagree” increased as students had more college experience. Overall, inclusive of all variables, 51.1% of incoming students, 58.3% of first-year students, and 64.2% of second-year students strongly disagreed their parents had expressed their willingness to contact anyone from the university on the student’s behalf.

An average of 10.2% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed they would not be surprised if they found out their parents contacted their academic advisor, professor, or other university staff member without their knowledge. When grouped by gender, the percentage of females who answered in the same manner remained relatively constant over time, averaging 7.7%. The percentage of males answering in the same manner increased with more college experience, with 7.1% of incoming students, 20% of first-year students, and 27.1% of second-year students agreeing or strongly agreeing they

would not be surprised if their parents contacted a university official. The male average across all ranks was 18%, more than a 10% increase from the female average.

When asked if they felt pressure to involve their parents, directly or indirectly, in discussions or emails with their academic advisors and/or professors, a large majority of students said they did not. Less than 5% of students across all ranks, all who identified as White/Caucasian, agreed or strongly agreed they felt pressured by their parents to involve them in communication with university personnel. There were also remarkable differences in the percentages between females and males answering “disagree and strongly disagree” and “neither agree nor disagree.” Females answering disagree and strongly disagree averaged 89.1% across all ranks, while males answering in the same manner averaged 75.5% across all ranks. Females were also more decisive than males, with 6.3% females answering “neither agree nor disagree” across all ranks. Nearly 24% of males, on the other hand, answered “neither agree nor disagree” across all ranks.

Students were asked if they would feel comfortable with their parents logging into their email and emailing faculty or other university staff member under their name, regardless of circumstance. Less than 6% of students across all ranks answered agree or strongly agree and the percentage of all students who answered strongly disagree increased with having more college experience. The average number of females across all ranks answering agree or strongly agree was 2.6%, compared to males across all ranks answering in the same manner at 8.7%. Females again were more decisive than males, with 9.5% of females answering “neither agree nor disagree” across all ranks. Almost 21% of males across all ranks answered “neither agree nor disagree.” Students across all

ranks who perceived their parents to have average levels of engagement were slightly more agreeable to their parents emailing on their behalf regardless of circumstance at 5.9%, compared to students who perceived their parents to have high levels of engagement at 2.0%

Similar to the previous question, students were asked if they would feel comfortable with their parents logging into their email and emailing faculty or other university staff member under their name, but only if they were in a vulnerable situation, like at risk of failing a course, not getting into their major of choice, or getting placed on probation. Students were slightly more agreeable, at an average of 7.3% across all ranks, with females averaging 6.6% and males averaging 10.5%. Similar to the previous question, the percentage of students across all ranks who chose strongly disagree increased with more college experience and females were more decisive than males. Approximately 6% of females across all ranks answered “neither agree nor disagree,” while almost 18% of males answered in the same manner. Students who perceived average levels of engagement from their parents were again slightly more agreeable, with an average of 9.6%, compared to those students with very engaged parents at 5.4%. Lastly, students across all ranks who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system were more agreeable to their parents emailing under their name in a vulnerable situation, with 15.2% answering agree or strongly agree, compared to 6.4% of students across all ranks and all other living arrangements answering in the same manner.

Students were asked if they wanted parental involvement with academic advisors and professors on the basis of sometimes feeling uncertain about handling matters on their own. Of students across all ranks, an average of 7.1% answered agree or strongly agree. The difference between females and males across ranks was minimal, with averages of 6.5% and 9.3% respectively. Females were more decisive than males, only answering “neither agree nor disagree” an average of 13.2% across all ranks, while males averaged 29.2% across all ranks. Students who cited average levels of engagement from their parents were again more agreeable to parental involvement with university personnel, at an average across all ranks of 9.9%, compared to their peers with very engaged parents, at an average across all ranks of 3.1%. Again, there was a noteworthy difference between students who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system and students in all other living arrangements. Students in all other living arrangements across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed with parental involvement with university personnel at 5.2%, while students across all ranks living off campus with family, extended family, or close support system agreed or strongly agreed at 24.9%.

Students were generally more agreeable when asked if they would feel comfortable if they learned their parents had reached out to their academic advisor, professor, or other university official on their behalf, as long as they were *included* in the conversation. Across all ranks, an average of 22.2% of students agreed or strongly agreed with feeling comfortable, as long as they were included. Females who agreed or strongly agreed across all ranks averaged 20.4%, while males across all ranks who answered in the same manner averaged 25.7%. Following a previous theme, females were more decisive

than males, answering “neither agree nor disagree” an average of 16.4% across all ranks, while males answering in the same manner averaged more than twice of females, at 35.8%. Relatedly, female strong disagreement increased over time from 23.9% of incoming students to 40.4% of second-year students. For males, their percentage of strong disagreement decreased over time, from 32.1% for incoming students to 9% for second-year students. Additionally, students across all ranks who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system were more agreeable to their parents reaching out to university personnel as long as they were included, with 41.6% answering agree or strongly agree, compared to 20.3% of students across all ranks and all other living arrangements answering in the same manner.

Similar to the previous question, students were asked if they would feel comfortable if their parents reached out to their academic advisor, professor, or other university official on their behalf, *without* their knowledge. Across all ranks, an average of 4.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed, with females and males averaging 3.1% and 9.3% respectively. For both males and females, the level of agreeability increased consistently over time with more college experience. Females again were more decisive, only answering “neither agree nor disagree” at an average of 3.6%, compared to males at 14.7%. There was an even greater disparity over time between males and females who strongly disagreed. Female strong disagreement increased consistently over time from 73.9% of incoming students to 80.9% of second-year students. For males, their percentage of strong disagreement decreased consistently over time, from 60.7% for incoming students to 18.1% for second-year students.

No Black/African American or Hispanic/Latinx students answered agree or strongly agree, with 88% (n=23) of this cohort of students answering disagree or strongly disagree. Students who cited average levels of parental engagement were again more agreeable to their parents reaching out to university personnel without their knowledge, at an average across all ranks of 6.9%, compared to their peers with very engaged parents, at an average across all ranks of 1.9%. Once again, students across all ranks who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system were more agreeable to their parents reaching out to university personnel, even without their knowledge, with 9.7% answering agree or strongly agree, compared to 3.5% of students across all ranks and all other living arrangements answering in the same manner. Additionally, there was a remarkable difference between middle children with older siblings who attended college and oldest children across all ranks. Middle children with older college-educated siblings agreed or strongly agreed at an average of 8.7%, compared to 0% of oldest children. No oldest children answered agree or strongly agree, with 97% (n=77) of this cohort of students answering disagree or strongly disagree.

About half of incoming students agree their parents have expressed a desire to know more about their professors, academic advisors, or other support staff they have contact with at the university, although the agreeability appears to decrease over time with more college experience. Incoming students agreed or strongly agreed at 43.2%, first-year students at 17.3%, and second-year students at 11.2%. By gender, the differences were incremental but both declined remarkably over time. Students with parents with both average and high levels of engagement also saw a decline in

agreeability over time. Students having parents with average levels of engagement went from 47% for incoming students to 3.7% for second-year students, while students having highly engaged parents went from 42% for incoming students to 20% for second-year students.

### **Parental Engagement with Non-Academic Activities**

Nearly 42% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed they should talk about their mental health needs with their parents before reaching out to their academic advisor, university counselor, residence hall staff, or other university staff member. Across all ranks, females were more agreeable than males, choosing agree or strongly agree 45.6% of the time, compared to males at 28.8%. Males across all ranks were more indecisive, choosing “neither disagree nor agree” at 48.2%, compared to females at 24.9%. Students who cited high levels of engagement from their parents were more agreeable to discussing mental health needs with their parents before university personnel at 50.8%, compared to their peers with parents with average levels of engagement at 33.5%. Non-first generation students across all ranks were slightly more likely than their first-generation peers to reach out to their parents first for their mental health needs, but the remarkable difference was those students who strongly disagreed with their parents being their first point of contact for their mental health needs. Non-first generation students who chose strongly disagree were consistent over time, averaging 24.8% across ranks. Incoming first-generation students answered strongly agree at 21.7%, first-year students at 33.2%, and second-year students at 75%, generating an average of 43.3% across all ranks.

Approximately 13% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed that their parents have shown concern about their ability to advocate for themselves in college, with the highest percentage coming from the first-year cohort. Males across all ranks were more agreeable, with males averaging 17.9% and females averaging 11.5%. Males continue to be more indecisive, with 30.7% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” and 16.6% of females answering in the same manner. Students with very engaged parents answered agree or strongly agree 15.5% of the time, compared to their peers with average levels of engagement at 9.1%. Like the previous question, first-generation students across all ranks were more inclined to strongly disagree that their parents have shown any concerns about their ability to advocate for themselves. Nearly 51% of these students strongly disagreed, compared to non-first generation students at 33.5%. An average of nearly 18% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents have shown concern about their ability to make decisions on their own. Males across all ranks answered agree or strongly agree at an average of 22.5%, while 16% of females across all ranks answered in the same manner. Males across all ranks continue to be more indecisive, answering “neither agree nor disagree” 29.5% of the time, compared to females at 8.2%. First-generation students across all ranks answered agree or strongly agree at an average of 20.9%, compared to their non-first generation peers at 16.1%. Similar to the previous question, there was a greater difference in first-generation status with students who answered strongly disagree. First-generation students across all ranks strongly disagreed with an average of 46.4%, compared to non-first generation students at

34.9%. Perception of parental engagement between parents who are very engaged and parents who exhibit average engagement was nominal at a difference of <2%.

Nearly 58% of all students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents contact them four or more times weekly via text, call, social media, or online messaging service to “check in.” Females who agreed or strongly agreed remained consistent over time and averaged 60.5% across all ranks. Males who agreed or strongly agreed declined over time and averaged 45.9% across all ranks. More first-generation students agreed that their parents “checked in” four or more times weekly at 66.2% across all ranks, compared to 55.7% of non-first generation students. The most remarkable difference was in perception of parental engagement. Students who perceived average levels of engagement with their parents agreed or strongly agreed an average of 41.7% across all ranks, compared to their peers with highly engaged parents at an average of 74.9%.

An average of 27.7% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed that their parents get anxious and worried if they do not respond to a message from their parents within 2-4 hours. Males and females across all ranks agreeing or strongly agreeing showed practically no difference, at 27.8% and 27.6% respectively. Males continued to be more indecisive, with 26.2% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” and 19.3% of females answering in the same manner. There was less than a 3% difference in the average percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with students with very engaged parents (28.9%) versus those with parents with average levels of engagement (26%), but it is notable that those with parents with average engagement decreased nearly 25% over time. The most noteworthy difference was in the first-generation demographic.

First-generation students agreed or strongly agreed their parents would get worried and anxious if they did not respond within 2-4 hours were an average of 39.4% across all ranks, compared to their non-first generation peers at an average of 25.4%.

Across all ranks, nearly 24% of students agreed or strongly agreed their parents routinely ask questions about their “college life” because their parents do not think they will share this information with them at their own will. Males who agreed or strongly agreed remained consistent over time, averaging 39.1% across all ranks, but females who answered in the same manner declined more than 10% over time, averaging 23%. Males across all ranks continued to be more indecisive, answering “neither agree nor disagree” 35% of the time, compared to females at 14.9%. Students who cited average levels of parental engagement were again more agreeable to reporting their parents getting anxious or worried, at an average across all ranks of 27.3%, compared to their peers with very engaged parents, at an average across all ranks of 19.9%. First-generation students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed at 28.3%, compared to non-first generation students at 22.1%. Interestingly, students across all ranks who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system were more agreeable to their parents asking them questions about “college life,” with 29.1% answering agree or strongly agree, compared to 26.9% of students across all ranks and all other living arrangements answering in the same manner. The key difference between students in each living arrangement is that for students who lived with parents/family, their agreeability to parents asking questions increased over time, while agreeability in students with other living arrangements decreased over time.

An average of 14.8% of students agreed or strongly agreed their parents have expressed a desire to know about key due dates for assignments, exams, and/or papers in their classes. There was a sizable difference between males and females, with 43.3% of males across all ranks agreeing or strongly agreeing and 16% of females who agreed or strongly agreed. Males were more indecisive again, with 38.1% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” and 12.1% of females answering in the same manner. First-generation students agreed or strongly agreed their parents want to know about key dates in their courses, with 23.8% across all ranks, compared to their non-first generation peers at 12.5%. There was a noteworthy difference between middle children with older siblings who attended college and oldest children across all ranks. Middle children with older college-educated siblings agreed or strongly agreed at 10.9% and agreeability decreased over time. Nearly 25% of oldest children answered in the same manner and agreeability increased over time. Additionally, no Asian student across all ranks (n=10) agreed or strongly agreed their parents expressed a desire to know key dates in their courses.

Only 13% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents had struggled in giving them more independence since starting college. This percentage decreases over time, with incoming students at 16.6%, first-year students at 15.2%, and second-year students at 7.4%. There was only an incremental difference between males and females across ranks, with 14% and 12.6% respectively. Males again are more indecisive, answering “neither agree nor disagree” 43.1% of the time, compared to females at 10.4%. Students with highly engaged parents were more agreeable with their parents struggling to give them independence, at an average across all ranks of 16%,

compared to their peers with parents with average levels of engagement at 11.6%. The most remarkable difference was with first-generation students across all ranks, who agreed or strongly agreed at 23.0%, compared to their non-first generation peers at 9.8%.

For students across all ranks, 30.1% agreed or strongly agreed they worried about hurting their parents' feelings if they expressed a desire to be more independent. Across all ranks, females who agreed or strongly agreed remained consistent over time at nearly 32%, but males who answered in the same manner declined almost 20% over time, averaging 19.1%. Males across all ranks continued to be more indecisive, answering "neither agree nor disagree" 29.1% of the time, compared to females at 8.6%. There was only a 4.1% difference between the average percentages between students with highly engaged parents (28.8%) versus parents with average engagement (32.9%). Most noteworthy were first-generation students, who averaged 41.8% across all ranks in agreeing or strongly agreeing with worrying about hurting their parents' feelings, compared to an average of non-first generation students at 24.1%.

Students were asked if they worried they might hurt their relationship with their parents if they did not regularly keep their parents informed of important happenings in their life (like notable extra-curricular activities, personal relationships, or academic achievements). Nearly 27% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed they worried about hurting their relationship with their parents unless they kept them informed, although this percentage declined over time. Both males and females' level of agreeability declined over time, with males at 19.1% and females at 28.7%. Males across all ranks continued to be more indecisive, answering "neither agree nor disagree" 33.4%

of the time, compared to females at 23.6%. First-generation students across all ranks answered agree or strongly agree at 29.5%, compared to their non-first generation peers at 25.6%. Students across all ranks with living arrangements *other* than with parents, family, or close support were more agreeable that they were worried about hurting their relationship with their parents if they did not keep them informed, with 27.7% answering agree or strongly agree, compared to 19.4% of students across all ranks who live with parents, family, or close support system in the same manner. The most remarkable difference was between middle children with older siblings who attended college and oldest children across all ranks. Middle children with older college-educated siblings agreed or strongly agreed at 19.5% compared to oldest children who answered in the same manner at 33.9%.

Nearly half (average of 45.3%) of students across all ranks agree or strongly agree they worry about failing their parents and not living up to their parents' expectations. Males and females across all ranks, averaged nearly the same, at 44.1% and 45.9% respectively, with females being more agreeable over time. Again, males were more indecisive, with 30.1% choosing "neither agree nor disagree" and 16.4% of females answering in the same manner. Students with highly engaged parents agreed or strongly agreed at 42.5% versus those with parents with average engagement at 47.6%, and both groups increased their agreeability over time. The greatest differences were in first-generation status and birth order. Across all ranks, middle children with older college-educated siblings agreed or strongly agreed at 42.5%, compared to 54.6% of oldest

children. First-generation students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed at 54.8%, compared to non-first generation students at 42.6%.

Only 11.9% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents tried to monitor and/or manage their time. Males and females across all ranks agreeing or strongly agreeing showed minimal difference, at 10.4% and 12.2% respectively. Males continued to be more indecisive, with nearly 26% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” and 16.2% of females answering in the same manner. There was less than a 3% difference in the average percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed their parents try to monitor or manage their time with students with very engaged parents (13.9%) versus those with parents with average levels of engagement (11.6%), but it is notable that those with parents with average engagement decreased nearly 19% over time. Middle children with older college-educated siblings across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed at an average of 9.4% compared to oldest children who answered in the same manner at 15.3%. The most remarkable differences were in first-generation status and primary living arrangements. First-generation students agreed or strongly agreed their parents try to monitor or manage their time, with 21% across all ranks, compared to their non-first generation peers at 9.2%. Students across all ranks who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system were more agreeable, with 26.3% answering agree or strongly agree, compared to 9.4% of students in all other living environments answering in the same manner.

Nearly 28% of students across all ranks agree or strongly agree they struggle with making decisions or engaging in activities they know their parents might not support.

Across all ranks, males were more agreeable, averaging 33.1% and females averaging 25.9%. Males continued to be more indecisive, with 26.2% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” and 25.2% of females answering in the same manner. This was by far the smallest margin between males and females regarding indecisiveness across the entire survey. There were not significant differences found in the averages across all ranks between first-generation (30.8%) and non-first generation students (25%), students living with parents, family, or close supports (29.1%) and students in all other living arrangements (27%), students with parents with average engagement (27.5%) and those with highly engaged parents (28.9%), and middle children with older siblings who went to college (29.4%) and oldest children (29.4%).

Only a small average percentage (6%) of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents have an influence on the friendships they choose while in college. Agreeability increased over time, with incoming students agreeing or strongly agreeing at 2.5%, first-year students at 4.3%, and second-year students at 11.2%. Females across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed an average of 5.8%, while males answering in the same manner averaged 4.1%. Males were more indecisive, with 21.6% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” compared to 4.3% of females answering in the same manner. There were minimal differences found in the averages across all ranks between first-generation (5.6%) and non-first generation students (6.2%), students with parents with average engagement (5.3%) and those with highly engaged parents (3.5%), and middle children with older siblings who went to college (8.9%) and oldest children (5.7%). The most remarkable difference was in living arrangement, with students living with parents,

family, or other close support agreeing or strongly agreeing their parents have an influence on their friendships at 29.1%, compared to students in all other forms of living arrangements at 11.7%. Additionally, no Asian students (n=10) or students who identified being a part of a blended family (n=13) answered agree or strongly agree.

Similar to the previous question, a greater average percentage of students across ranks (12.8%) agreed or strongly agreed their parents have an influence on the romantic relationships they choose while in college. Females across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed at 15%, while males who answered in the same way averaged 4.1%. Males were only slightly more indecisive, at 25.3% across ranks compared to females at 23.1%. Differences were small in the averages across all ranks between first generation (8.5%) and non-first generation students (13.6%) and middle children with older siblings who went to college (8.9%) and oldest children (5.7%). The greatest differences between demographic data when students considered romantic relationships versus friendships were in living arrangements and parental engagement. Students across all ranks who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system were more agreeable, with 24.9% answering agree or strongly agree, compared to 11.1% of their peers in other living arrangements answering in the same manner. Students across all ranks with highly engaged parents agreed or strongly agreed at 9.5% versus those with parents with average engagement at 16.9%. Additionally, no Black/African American students (n=16) and no Hispanic/Latinx students (n=7) answered agree or strongly agree.

Nearly 19% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents want them to come home and/or spend time with them on weeknights, weekends, or

breaks in the semester more than they actually want to. However, the agreeability declines over time, with incoming students agreeing or strongly agreeing at 24.1%, first-year students at 19.5%, and second-year students at 13.2%. There was a <5% difference in the averages of males and females who answered agree or strongly agree, with males across all ranks averaging 22.2% and females averaging 18%. Males continue to be more indecisive, with 19.3% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” and 13.5% of females answering in the same manner. There were minimal differences in the percentages between students with parents with average engagement (18.2%) and those with highly engaged parents (19.7%), and middle children with older siblings who went to college (21%) and oldest children (18.5%). There was nearly a 7% difference between the average percentages of students across all ranks who live with their parents, family, or other support (24.9%) and students in all other living environments (18.2%). There was over a 14% difference between the average percentages of students across all ranks who are first generation (29.6%) and non-first generation students (15.4%).

An average of 8.4% of students across all ranks agreed or strongly agreed their parents have an influence on the extra-curricular activities they choose at college. Males were slightly more agreeable, averaging 10.2% across all ranks, compared to females averaging 8%. Again, males are more indecisive, with an average of 39.4% choosing “neither agree nor disagree” and 12.8% of females answering in the same manner. There were minimal differences in the percentages between students with parents with average engagement (6.6%) and those with highly engaged parents (9.4%), and middle children with older siblings who went to college (10.6%) and oldest children (9.5%). Students

across all ranks who live off campus with their parents, extended family, or close support system were more agreeable, with 16.6% across all ranks agreeing or strongly agreeing their parents have an influence on their extra-curriculars, compared to 7.6% of their peers in other living environments answering in the same manner. First-generation students were more agreeable, at 12.6% across all ranks, compared to non-first generation students at 6.8% across all ranks. Additionally, no Hispanic/Latinx students (n=7) answered agree or strongly agree.

Almost half (44%) of students across all ranks agree or strongly agree their parents believe they should be their child's "go to" when something goes wrong. In the average percentages across all ranks, there was only a difference of 0.1% between males and females who answered agree or strongly agree (44.4% and 44.3%, respectively). Males were again more indecisive, with 36.5% choosing "neither agree nor disagree" compared to 24.3% of females answering in the same manner. There were only incremental differences in the average percentages across all ranks between students with parents with average engagement (46%) and those with highly engaged parents (44.5%) and the average percentages of students who live with their parents, family, or close supports (44.4%) and students in all other living environments (44.7%). There was almost a 6% difference between middle children with older siblings who went to college (40.7%) and oldest children (46.3%). The greatest difference was found with first-generation students, who agreed or strongly agreed their parents believe they should be their "go to," averaging 56.1% across all ranks compared to their non-first generation peers at an average of 40.2%.

## CHAPTER V - DISCUSSION & LIMITATIONS

### **Demographics**

#### *Gender*

Of all incoming students, 23% (n=28) were male and 77% (n=92) were female. For first-year students, 22% (n=10) were male and 78% (n=36) were female. For second-year students, 21% (n=11) were male and 79% (n=42) were female. Overall, males comprised 22% of survey participants and females comprised 78%. The male/female ratio for the respondents in this survey does not mirror the male/female ratio at the University, which is 49/51% (The Ohio State University, 2020b). Since nearly four out of every five participants were female, the data likely does not fully reflect the differences in engagement with parents between males and females. Females have stereotypically been associated with more emotional closeness and engagement with their parents than males, but as more research emerges about gender specific needs in the transition to adulthood, established gender stereotypes may be more generational and not necessarily apply to today's college students (Fingerman et al., 2020). It would be ideal to have a greater balance in the male/female ratio in the sample size in order to explore gender specific needs and combat stereotypes of students and their relationships with their parents based on gender.

In comparing the data related to gender, males ranked higher than females in all categories. Related to parental engagement with academic decisions, records, and performance, males perceived higher levels of concern/engagement in 10 out of 12 questions, at an average of 11.28% more than females. Most remarkably, males were nearly 20% more agreeable than females in wanting more independence about academic

decisions than their parents will allow (survey question #3), that their parents want to be involved in decisions related to registration and progress toward degree (survey question #5), and that they feel pressure to involve their parents in academic matters because their parents pay for college (survey question #6).

Males also perceived higher levels of engagement from their parents related to parental involvement with faculty, academic support staff, and other university officials in 8 of 10 questions, at an average of over 5% more than females. Males ranked higher in feeling comfortable with their parents logging into their email and emailing a university official under their name (survey question #18), in wanting parental involvement with university staff due to feeling uncertain about their ability to handle matters on their own (survey question #19), feeling comfortable if their parents reached out to a university official as long as they were involved in the conversation (survey question #20), and feeling comfortable with their parents reaching out to a university official without their knowledge (survey question #21). For all four of these questions, agreeability increases over time, which means the further into the transition to college males are, the more parental engagement they welcome as it relates to how they interface with university personnel.

There was a greater balance between males and females related to perception of parental engagement with personal and social relationships, non-academic activities, well-being, and autonomy. Males perceived higher levels of engagement in 10 of 18 related questions by an average of 7% over females. In the remaining eight questions where females were more agreeable about engagement, they averaged 8% over males.

Both males and females worry about hurting their relationship with their parents if they do not keep them informed of important happenings or events in their lives (survey question #32), but this decreases over time for both genders. The data also shows that parents pressure their children to come home less over time for both genders (survey question #38), which may illustrate that parents also go through a period of transition and become more comfortable with the absence of their child away at college. The most remarkable statistic with the greatest difference between the genders was about time management, autonomy, and personal responsibility. Specifically, males were nearly 28% more agreeable that their parents have expressed a desire to know about key due dates for assignments and other related activities (survey question #29).

The most remarkable data across the entire survey was related to gender and indecisiveness. In 39 of the survey's total of 40 questions, males answered "neither agree nor disagree" over females. Related to parental engagement with academic activities, males were more indecisive than females by 12%. Related to parental engagement with university personnel, males were more indecisive than females by 14%. Related to parental engagement with non-academic activities, males were more indecisive than females by 16%. In 10 of the 40 survey questions, males answering "neither agree nor disagree" steadily increased over time. It may be that males are more indecisive than females in answering questions about how their parents engage with college-related activities, but it also may be that males have greater difficulty in assessing or discussing their personal lives, relationships, or emotions. Higher education professionals should be

sensitive to gender differences in a student's ability or willingness to discuss such matters.

### ***Race/Ethnicity***

The survey produced a small sample size of non-White students; therefore, the data from non-White students is not likely representative of students from minority communities and their perception of their parents' engagement in the transition to college. Incoming minority students were 17.5% of responses, first-year minority students were 15.3% of responses, and second-year students were 28.4% of responses. In all, the total percentage of minority students represented in the survey was 19.7%. For comparison, the University's minority enrollment in 2018-2019 was 21% (The Ohio State University, 2019), minority enrollment in 2019-2020 was 22.4% (The Ohio State University, 2020b), and minority enrollment in the fall of 2020 was 23.9% (The Ohio State University, n.d.). The survey minority representation does not reflect the minority representation of the University student body over the last three years. In addition, data was not analyzed specific to each non-White race included in the demographics, as those figures were also smaller than that of the University. While it is important to note the data from students from minority communities, there is not enough to draw conclusions or insights about minority students and their perceptions of parental engagement in the transition to college. Future research should consider cultural differences in parenting practices and family structure and those influences on parental engagement in the transition to college.

### *Living Arrangements*

While there were five living arrangement options on the survey (living on campus by myself, living on campus with roommates, living off campus by myself, living off campus with roommates, and living off campus with parents or family), only two options provided any remarkable data. For analysis, the data was divided in two options: students who live with their parents, family, or other close support system and students in all “other” living arrangements. Students who lived off campus with parents or family comprised a total of nearly 10% (n=20) of participants and students in all other living arrangements were the remaining 90% (n=199). Given the familial context in the perception of parental engagement in the transition to college, future research should include more substantial data from students who live with their parents or family members. It may also be worthwhile to examine any changes in perceptions of parental engagement in the transition to college for those students who either start as a commuter student and eventually transition onto campus after their first or second semester, or those students who start college by living on campus and then transition to either living independently, with roommates, or living at home with parents or family after their first semester.

In comparing the data related to living arrangements, students who lived at home with parents, family or other close support system generally perceived their parents to be more engaged in the transition to college than students who had “other” living arrangements. Of the 40 survey questions, students who lived with parents or family were more agreeable about their perception of parental engagement in 24 questions. A majority

of these questions were in relation to parental engagement with faculty, staff, and university officials and with social relationships, non-academic activities, well-being and autonomy. All but one of the 24 questions averaged between 8-11% of an increase in agreeability over the answers of “other” students. More notably, students who lived with their parents or family were at least 21% more agreeable to the notion of their parents reaching out to an academic advisor, professor, or other university official on the student’s behalf as long as they were involved in the conversation (survey question #20). While scholarly data is scarce about parental engagement and student living arrangements in the transition to college, both Hong and Cui (2019) and Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2013) cited a positive correlation between helicopter parenting and students who lived in the family home while attending college.

Conversely, students with “other” living arrangements were more agreeable about their perception of parental engagement related to academic decisions, records, and performance by an average of 10%. Notably, the students who had “other” living arrangements averaged over 25% more agreeability in voluntarily giving their parents their university password and approve of their parents accessing their student records and email at any time (survey question #8). Interestingly enough, there was only one question that showed evidence of each group trending in opposite directions. When asked about their parent(s) getting anxious and worried if they don't respond to a message within 2-4 hours (survey question #27), students who lived with their parents or family increased their agreeability over time, while students who did not live with their parents or family (“other”) decreased their agreeability over time.

### ***First Generation***

Of all incoming students, 19% (n=23) were first-generation students. First-year first generation students comprised 26% (n=12) of all first-year students, and second-year first generation students accounted for 17% (n=8) of all second-year students. The percentages of first-generation students in this survey are similar to the percentage of Ohio State's first-generation students of the incoming class in the fall of 2019, which was 19.2% (The Ohio State University, 2020a). While the percentages are comparable, it would be ideal to have a greater sample size of first-generation students, given the parental engagement focus of the study. Since parents have played a greater role in the transition to college over time (Sax & Wartman, 2010), future research should consider the differences in perception of different types of engagement in students with college educated parents compared to those who are first-generation college students. With a greater number of adults who have obtained a college degree (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019), a longitudinal study would be the ideal vehicle to analyze the role of parental educational level and how it influences engagement with their college-bound children over time.

In comparing the data related to first-generation status, of the 40 survey questions, students who identified as first-generation were more agreeable about their perception of parental engagement in 24 questions. However, non-first generation students perceived higher levels of engagement with their parents when it came to engagement specifically related to academic decisions, records, and performance. Non-first generation students were nearly 9% more agreeable about parental engagement related to academics than

their counterparts, except regarding changing their academic plans or goals. There was <1% difference in agreeability in both first-generation and non-first generation students in concern over disappointing their parents if their changed career goals (survey question #2). Additionally, non-first generation students exhibited 3% more agreeability over their first-generation peers that they would give their parents their university password if they felt pressured by their parents to do so (survey question #7). Interestingly, the percentage jumps to over 26% agreeability of non-first generation students who would voluntarily give their parents their university password and approve of them accessing their university-related accounts at any time (survey question #8). Lastly, both first-generation and non-first generation students showed decreases in agreeability over time of their parents wanting to be involved in decisions related to registering for classes and degree progress (survey question #5), which may be an indication of parents promoting greater levels of autonomy as a student becomes more experienced in making academic-related decisions.

First-generation students perceived higher levels of engagement than non-first generation students in all but one question related to parental engagement with faculty, academic support staff, and university officials by nearly an average of 3%. The exception was that non-first generation students wanted their parents to be more involved with academic advisors and/or professors because they sometimes feel uncertain in their ability to handle some matters on their own (survey question #19). Overall, in 7 of 10 questions related to parental engagement with university officials, first-generation students' perception of engagement decreased over time. Again, this may reflect initial

engagement with first-generation student parents in the first stages of the transition to college, but they may reduce engagement with university officials because they perceive their child does not require as much of their presence/guidance or they may possibly feel their scope of engagement should be limited because of their level of education or higher education experience.

First-generation students perceived higher levels of parental engagement in 14 of 18 questions related to their personal and social relationships, non-academic activities, well-being, and autonomy by an average of nearly 11% compared to their non-first generation peers. However, non-first generation students were approximately 5% more agreeable that their parents had a greater influence on their friendships and romantic relationships (survey questions #36 and #37 respectively). Non-first generation students also were nearly 2% more agreeable that their parents had shown concern about their ability to advocate for themselves at college (survey question #24). This may be related to the aforementioned feeling of uncertainty about their ability to handle certain matters on their own.

### ***Definition of Parent***

The survey produced minimal variation in students who define parent(s) as anything other than biological (less than 10% of all respondents); therefore, the data was not analyzed because is not likely representative of students who define their parents as a blended parents, adoptive parents, extended family, legal guardians, state or county agency, or other. Incoming students who defined their parents as anything other than biological were 10%, first-year students who defined their parents in the same manner

were 10%, and second-year students who defined their parents similarly were 3%. In all, the total percentage of students who define their parents as anything other than biological in the survey was 8%. This was surprising considering the census data on marital and familial status which shows the remarriage and cohabitation rates have steadily increased (Geiger & Livingston, 2019). While students were prompted to consider multiple options for their parental definition, they may have chosen “biological parent” with a specific biological parent in mind, even if they were technically from a blended or extended family or had a legal guardian. Future research on parental engagement in the transition to college should highlight and explore the multiple dimensions and definitions of parent and how that may shape the perceptions of engagement when students are transitioning to college.

### ***Perception of Engagement***

Students were asked to reflect on their relationship with their parents one to three years prior to college, in terms of how engaged they perceived their parents to be with their daily lives. Students chose from “very engaged in my day-to-day activities,” “average engagement in my day-to-day activities,” and “little to no engagement in my day-to-day activities.” Fewer than 3% of all respondents answered “little to no engagement” (n=6), so this data was excluded from analysis. This question above all others provided the most balance in response. Both “very engaged” (n=110) and “average engagement” (n=103) ranged anywhere from 46% to 54% across all ranks. While this demographic question was based on perception (versus an identity or fact), it would be interesting to pursue a larger sample size of students who perceive little to no engagement

from their parents. Since the transition to college is generally strongly associated with parental or family support, it would be beneficial to explore the unique needs of students who do not have a strong parental or familial support system.

Students who perceived their parents as very engaged were more agreeable about their parents' engagement with their academic decisions, records, and performance, by an average of over 5% compared to their peers who perceived their parents engagement as average. Students with very engaged parents ranked higher in 8 out of 12 questions, with those parents very engaged in multiple aspects of their child's academic life.

Interestingly, students who perceived their parents as having average engagement appear to see their parent's engagement with academic decisions, records, and performance as a stressor. In the few related questions of which they were more agreeable than those with very engaged parents, they worried more about disappointing their parents if they change their academic plans or goals (survey question #2), felt pressure to include their parents in academic matters because their parents pay for college (survey question #6), and proclaim that their parents are more involved than they want them to be (survey question #12).

Students who perceived their parents as very engaged were also more agreeable in terms of their parents engaging with faculty, staff, or other university officials by almost 5% over their peers who identified with average engagement. Students with very engaged parents specifically ranked notably higher than their peers in the fact that their parents have outwardly expressed a desire to accompany them to meetings with university faculty or staff (survey question #13) and that their parents had verbalized that they wanted to

know more about the personnel the student is interfacing with at the university (survey question #22). While those with very engaged parents were nearly 8% more agreeable about their parents expressing a desire to know more details about university personnel, both students with very engaged parents and average engaged parents perceived this type of engagement decreasing over time.

In questions related to parental engagement with personal and social relationships, non-academic activities, wellness, and autonomy, students with very engaged parents and students with average engaged parents were mostly comparable with two exceptions. Students with very engaged parents were nearly 18% more agreeable about believing they should discuss their mental health needs first with their parents (survey question #23) and were almost 34% more agreeable that their parents initiate contact four or more times with them weekly (survey question #26). The latter question produced the greatest difference between the comparison of any student demographic across the entire survey.

### ***Birth Order***

While there were four birth order options on the survey (only child, oldest child with younger siblings, middle or youngest child with older siblings who attended college, and middle or youngest child with older siblings who did not attend college), only two options provided any remarkable data. Across all ranks, only children were only 6% of all respondents (n=14), middle or youngest children with older siblings who did not attend college were 5% (n=12), middle or youngest children with older siblings who attended college were 51.5% (n=113), and oldest children were 37.5% (n=80). Analysis focused

on data from oldest children and middle or youngest children with older siblings who attended college.

Some human development and sociology research supports the notion that birth order may influence educational attainment (Steelman et al., 2002), social relationships (Salmon et al., 2016), and autonomy and independence (Wray-Lake et al., 2010), but there is not enough data to draw any substantial conclusions related to birth order in this survey. Children without siblings and middle or youngest children with older siblings who did not attend college likely experience varying degrees of parental engagement, which would have probable influence on their transition to college and adulthood. Future research should capture more data related to only children and middle or youngest children who have older siblings with no college experience. Both subsets of students would likely have unique needs in the transition to college as a result of the engagement, or lack thereof, from their parents prior to starting college. In addition, it would also be worthwhile to compare birth order data to first generation status data, especially as it relates to likenesses or differences in those students who are the first in their family and/or generation to attend college.

Related to engagement with academic decisions, records, and performance, both oldest children and middle or youngest children with college educated older siblings have little variance in levels of agreeability and present no remarkable trends in the data. Both groups of students show that the fear of disappointing their parents if they change their academic goals or plans (survey question #2) declines over time. Middle or youngest children with older college educated siblings were more agreeable in 7 out of 10

questions related to parental engagement with faculty, staff, or other university officials, by an average of nearly 5% over their peers who are oldest children. It may be that lower levels of autonomy sometimes associated with being the middle or youngest child may lead to more engagement from parents to help their children navigate new relationships with university personnel in their transition to college. Additionally, agreeability related to parents expressing a desire to know more about university personnel (survey question #22) subsided over time in both cohorts of students. Oldest children were far more agreeable than their counterparts related to parental engagement with personal and social relationships, non-academic activities, well-being, and autonomy, ranking higher in 15 out of 18 questions by an average of nearly 7%. It may be inferred that oldest children may be more worried or concerned about pleasing their parents or being successful outside of the classroom compared to their middle or youngest child with older college educated sibling peers.

## **Research Questions**

### ***Parental Engagement with Academic Activities***

Across all demographic variables, the most notable trends related to perception of parental engagement with academic decisions, records, and performance were related to gender and first-generation status. Males were more agreeable than females in over 80% of all questions related to parental engagement with their academic activities. Within those questions, males averaged nearly 12% more agreeability than females. This may be an indicator that males struggle more with independence and autonomy related to academics. It could also indicate that gender (and associated stereotypes) may dictate the

way a parent perceives their child's ability to make good, sound decisions related to academics and parents may think they need to be more involved as a result. Research supports that gender differences in autonomy start emerging in late adolescence (Fleming, 2005), in addition to gender role identity (Lin & Billingham, 2014), so this may influence how both students and their parents engage with each other in late adolescence, especially during the transition to college.

Non-first generation students were more agreeable than first-generation students in over 80% of all questions related to parental engagement with academic activities by an average of nearly 10%. In some regard, this is not surprising considering non-first generation students have at least one parent who graduated from college. The college educated parent is likely viewed as a consultant and resource, so as the student is acclimating to a new academic environment, it makes sense for them to have strong levels of engagement with their parents related to academic decisions, records, and performance. Conversely, first-generation students may not have those types of resources and knowledge readily available to them, so the transition to college for first-generation students may be particularly difficult and anxiety-provoking (Evans et al., 2020). Higher education professionals must be cognizant of the differences in circumstances and resources between first-generation and non-first generation students to ensure that both cohorts of students are getting their unique needs met.

### ***Parental Engagement with University Personnel***

Across all demographic variables, the most notable trends related to perception of parental engagement with faculty, academic support staff, and university officials were

related to gender, first-generation status, living arrangements, and birth order. Males were more agreeable than females in over 80% of all questions related to parental engagement with university personnel by an average of nearly 6%. Similar to the aforementioned discussion around gender differences and identities emerging in late adolescence, parents of males may have a greater desire for more engagement with university personnel because they may subscribe to gender-based stereotypes that their sons lack ability or understanding of how to appropriately or adequately engage with their professors or academic advisors or they fear their sons will not take college seriously. While this certainly would not be the case for all parents, higher education professionals should consider gender differences not only in college students as they are developing their own gender identity, but also in consideration of how their parents have influenced their child's perception of gender and the subsequent consequences of such behavioral and cognitive conditioning.

Students who identified as first-generation were more agreeable than their counterparts in 90% of questions related to perception of parental engagement with university personnel, but by a smaller margin of an average of 3% over non-first generation students. Compared to parental engagement with academic activities, it may be that parents of first-generation students are less engaged with college academic decisions, records, and performance because they lack experience or knowledge about academic activities at the higher education level. However, they likely do have experience in interacting with adults and authority figures in the education system. It may be that parents of first-generation students are more engaged with their children in this

regard because they feel more comfortable in an advocacy role than that of a consultant. Higher education professionals would benefit from future research that more closely examines the differences in engagement of parents both with and without a college degree and the ways that may impact their child's college experience.

Students who lived with their parents, extended family, or other support network were more agreeable than students in all other living situations in 70% of the questions related to parental engagement with university personnel by an average of nearly 12%. This is likely related to the increased frequency of communication and interaction between students and their parents because students are living at home. These parents may outwardly express a willingness to engage with a professor or advisor somewhat out of convenience, as they may be hearing more of the day-to-day issues with their child who is living at home. Parents with children who do not live at home may not hear as much about day-to-day matters because their communication and interaction with their child is more restricted by space and proximity.

Middle or youngest children with older siblings who have attended college were more agreeable than oldest children in 70% of questions related to parental engagement with university personnel by an average of nearly 5%. Students with older siblings who have attended college have parents with prior experience in engaging with a child transitioning to college. These parents may express a greater willingness to engage with university professors or advisors because they may have had these types of interactions in the past or possibly because they just have a greater understanding of higher education as a result of their older child(ren) attending college. It is likely that parents who are sending

their oldest child off to college may be more ambivalent about engaging with university personnel due to lack of experience or knowledge they perceive may be needed for these types of interactions.

### ***Parental Engagement with Non-Academic Activities***

Across all demographic variables, the most notable trends related to perception of parental engagement with non-academic activities, like personal and social relationships, well-being, and autonomy, were related to first-generation status, living arrangements, and birth order. First-generation students were more agreeable than non-first generation students in nearly 80% of all questions related to parental engagement with non-academic activities by an average of nearly 11%. It may be that higher levels of engagement from the parents of first-generation students is about things they can relate to. While they may not be as familiar or have knowledge of the ins and outs of higher education, they can more easily identify with their child's psychological well-being, their personal relationships, and certain aspects of their everyday life. It also may be that parents of first-generation students have higher levels of engagement in non-academic activities as a means of learning more about the higher education experience. While they may not be as engaged with academic activities, parents of first-generation students may be more curious about the social and experiential components of higher education and, therefore, show more outward engagement to their child as a result.

Students who lived with their parents, extended family, or other support network were more agreeable than students in all other living situations in over 70% of the questions related to parental engagement with non-academic activities by an average of

9%. Similar to the previous engagement category, this may be related to the increased communication and interaction between students and their parents because students are living at home. These parents are likely more engaged in both academic and non-academic activities due to the frequency of contact with their children.

Oldest children were more agreeable than middle or youngest children with older siblings who have attended college in over 80% of questions related to parental engagement with non-academic activities by an average of nearly 7%. Similar to parents of first-generation students, parents with their eldest child going to college have likely experienced numerous “firsts” with that child. Even if parents are college educated and have at least some working knowledge of higher education, sending a first born child to college is a brand new experience for parents. They are witnessing a transition to adulthood, independence, and autonomy for their child, but parents are also experiencing their own transition of changes in family relationships and dynamics. Once they have the experience of sending their oldest child to college, then parents generally rely on that knowledge and experience when their younger children seek post-secondary education. While this type of parental engagement was not low with later-born students, parents likely adjust their levels of this type of engagement once they see how their oldest children adjusted in the transition to college. While birth order is not a demographic that is widely talked about in higher education, it should be taken into consideration for those who work on the front lines with students, especially as it relates to parental engagement and support. Knowing and understanding more about siblings and birth order may help inform dialogue and support exchanges between staff and students.

## **Limitations**

### ***Sample Size***

The limited sample size of the study likely does not appropriately represent all undergraduates in the College of Education and Human Ecology (approximately 3,100 students) or at The Ohio State University (approximately 53,500 students) (The Ohio State University, 2020a). The small sample size limits survey reliability and results in non-response bias. As shown by the lack of data produced for certain demographics of students, the analysis is not inclusive of non-White students, non-binary or transgender students, students who primarily identify with non-biological parents, and students who are only children or had older siblings that did not attend college.

### ***Transfer Students***

The study includes mostly students who started their freshman year at Ohio State, but also likely includes students who transferred during or following their freshman year. Unlike their counterparts who have attended only one school, transfer students have different challenges and experiences in navigating college that likely impacts or has been impacted by the parent-child relationship. Transfer students have unique needs and challenges that might influence parental engagement and must be taken into consideration in their transition to college (Mintz, 2020).

### ***Family Composition***

Students were asked to identify how they defined the word parent, based on who was primarily responsible for them in the one to three years prior to starting college. They were also asked to keep this person or persons in mind as they completed the survey

when answering questions about parental engagement. In answering the demographic question about the definition of parent, students may have narrowly defined their answer based on the prompt in order to answer the remaining survey. As a result, a student's family composition is not taken into consideration in data analysis. While how a student defines a parent is a personal choice, the full parental support system should be noted when collecting data related to family relationships. When entering college, a student coming from a home where their parents are still together may have different perceptions or experiences with parental engagement than a student coming from a single parent home or a student coming from multiple homes with multiple parents, where their biological parents have split up and remarried or partnered with others. The family composition demographic should be specifically included when investigating parental engagement in the transition to college.

### ***Socioeconomic Status***

This study did not address the socioeconomic status of students and their families, but this demographic can have a significant impact on a student's transition to college and/or their parents' ability or willingness to engage in the transition. Differences in socioeconomic status and its impact on educational achievement and family and social relationships generally starts before college, but can have a lasting impact well into adulthood (Crosnoe & Muller, 2014). Research also supports higher rates of attrition in higher education related to lower socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity, first generation status, and socialization (Mompremier, 2009). Students coming from lower socioeconomic means have additional barriers in the transition to college and higher

education professionals must assist these students with extra support and resources in an effort to help these students be successful.

### ***COVID-19***

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in the state of Ohio in March 2020, a month before the survey was available to first and second-year students, and almost three months before the survey was available to incoming first-year students. The effects of the pandemic have been felt across the landscape of higher education, but particularly with students. In a study commissioned by Course Hero and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) in the fall of 2020 to examine the effects of the pandemic on college students, results showed that students reported increased mental health needs, less time engaging in self-care, sleep disruption, more time engaged in social media, and more time committed to academic activities (College Pulse, 2020). Other research has shown students also have difficulty concentrating, decreased social interactions, decreased motivation, increased concerns about academic performance, interference with employment or internship, and increased time to graduation (Aucejo et al., 2020; Browning et al., 2021; Son et al., 2020). With the general impact that COVID-19 has had on college students in the spring and summer of 2020, it likely impacted how students view parental engagement in their transition to college and created bias in the survey results.

### ***Campus Emergency***

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a majority of higher education institutions vacated their campuses in the middle of spring semester 2020, including The Ohio State

University. Not only did this involve students who lived on campus to be forced out of their residence halls rather abruptly, but students also had to quickly adapt to an online learning platform to complete their classes for the semester. In addition to dealing with the aforementioned emotional, psychological, and cognitive stressors related to COVID, the campus emergency shutdown created remarkable logistical stressors for students. The most common logistically-related challenges included concerns about quality of online teaching and learning, student performance, learning new technologies, adapting to alternate grading schemes, and accessibility to internet access off campus (Smalley, 2020). First and second-year students were likely influenced by these abrupt changes at the time they took the survey, which in turn creates bias in the data. While incoming students did not encounter the same type of abrupt consequences directly related to the campus shutdown, they were facing significant uncertainties at the time they completed the survey. At the time of survey submission for incoming students, the University was still undecided on whether campus would be open for in-person classes and residence life. This likely influenced their perception of engagement with their parents, especially if it meant that their intended residence on campus would now be shifted to living with their parents if the campus remained closed at the start of the 2020 academic year.

### ***Racial Injustices***

In the aftermath of the tragic death of George Floyd in May 2020, civil unrest was present on college campuses across the nation, including Ohio State. Many students became engaged in activism on campus or in their local communities as a response to feeling fearful, helpless, and angry about police brutality and the senseless killing of

Floyd (The Learning Network, 2020). These actions amplified a greater message to institutions of higher education of the need to address systemic racism on campus. Questions arose about access and equity issues for Black students and students of color, in addition to addressing safety concerns and practices on campus, with some calls for schools to cut ties with local and campus police (Whitford & Burke, 2020). While first- and second-year students had already completed the survey prior to these events, incoming first-year students took the survey at the time and in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's death, watching higher education activism unfold before them. These events presumably influenced how incoming students viewed entering college, their sense of security on campus, and their relationship(s) with their support system, including their parents. As a result, survey responses about parental engagement in the transition to college from incoming first-year students are likely more biased due to the intense focus of racism and hate crimes on college campuses across the nation.

### ***Recommendations***

The data illustrate that while there are many variables that can influence the perception of parental engagement, there may be trends in some demographics that should be noted by higher education professionals working with students during their transition to college. Gender, first generation status, living arrangements, and birth order may all play a role in perception of parental engagement and how students interact with their parents during the first two years of college. As the needs of both students and parents evolve over time, awareness of the factors that influence the parent-child relationship will be imperative for higher education professionals in order to help

students be successful in their transition to college and ultimately retain them until graduation.

While this scope of research on the perception of parental engagement in the transition to college is somewhat broad and rather limited in conclusions, it invites future research, more integrative and parent-specific programming in higher education, and increased attention to the parent-child relationship during the critical life stage of the transition to adulthood. As such, larger sample sizes and a longitudinal, mixed method data collection approach would provide better data over a period of time, from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. Subsequent research should consider more exploration of the definition of parent and family composition prior to entering college, since these two dimensions have changed greatly over time. Additionally, while the data was nominal for non-White students in this study, future research should focus on cultural differences in non-White families and how culture influences the parent-child relationship, in both adolescence and the transition to college. Along these same lines, cultural differences should also be examined in both domestic and international students and their relationships with their parents. Lastly, as colleges and university modify their student life, residence hall, and academic practices in a post-pandemic world, future research should specifically examine ways that COVID-19 not only has impacted the parent-child relationship in adolescence, but how it influences engagement and decision-making between students and their parents in the transition to college and adulthood.

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## APPENDIX A- IRB Approval Letter

Office of  
Research Integrity



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### NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-20-24

PROJECT TITLE: Parental Engagement and the Transition to College

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Educational Research and Admin

RESEARCHER(S): Casey Henceroth, Holly Foster

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: March 3, 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Sacco".

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.  
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX B - Survey for First/Second Year Students

Demographic Info:

1. I am at least 18 years of age:
  - A. YES
  - B. NO (skip logic, survey concludes)
  
2. I am a \_\_\_\_\_ student in the College of Education and Human Ecology at Ohio State:
  - A. FIRST YEAR (Freshman)
  - B. SECOND YEAR (Sophomore)
  - B. NEITHER FIRST OR SECOND YEAR (skip logic, survey concludes)
  
3. I consider myself to be a traditionally-aged college student (graduating from high school no more than 3 years ago) and have not previously lived on my own before starting college.
  - A. YES
  - B. NO (skip logic, survey concludes)
  
4. I identify my gender as (choose one):
  - A. Female
  - B. Male
  - C. Non-binary
  - D. Transgender
  - E. Other
  - F. Prefer not to answer
  
5. I identify my race or ethnicity as (select all that apply):
  - A. Black/African American
  - B. White/Caucasian
  - C. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - D. Hispanic/Latinx
  - E. Asian
  - F. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - G. Other
  - H. Prefer not to answer

6. As a student, my primary living arrangements are:
- A. Live on campus by myself
  - B. Live on campus with one or more roommates
  - C. Live off campus by myself
  - D. Live off campus with one or more roommates
  - E. Live off campus with my parent(s), extended family, or close support system
7. I identify as a first generation college student (you are considered a first-generation student if *neither parent earned a four-year degree*, regardless if your parents attended four-year institutions or completed two-year associate degrees).
- A. YES
  - B. NO
8. For this questionnaire, the word parent(s) is used, but this terminology or definition can be different for some students. How do you define the person or persons who were primarily responsible for you in the last 1-3 years? (Please keep in mind your answer to this question as you complete the rest of the questionnaire.)
- A. Biological parent(s)
  - B. Blended parents (any *combination* of biological parent, step-parent, adoptive parent)
  - C. Adoptive parent(s)
  - D. Extended family (grandparents, aunt, uncle, etc.)
  - E. Legal guardians
  - F. State or county agency
  - G. Other
9. Thinking about parental engagement, this is defined by *more* than your parents ensuring you have your basic needs met. Engagement is the act of being invested in something or someone with the expectation of getting something in return. Parental engagement is not transactional, but rather reciprocal, and indicates a shared and ongoing responsibility and commitment to help create positive outcomes for their children. Thinking about the 2-4 years prior to college, how would you describe your parent(s)?
- A. Very engaged in my day-to-day activities
  - B. Average engagement in my day-to-day activities (not too much, not too little)
  - C. Little to no engagement in my day-to-day activities

10. Sometimes birth order can play a role in how involved your parent(s) are in the transition to college. Please select from the following that best describes you:

- A. Only child
- B. Oldest child (with younger siblings)
- C. Middle or youngest child with older siblings who attended college
- D. Middle or youngest child with older siblings who did not attend college

Please note that the term “Parent(s)” in the questionnaire below:

- A. Uses *your* definition of the word in Question #7 above
- B. Can mean one or both parents for those in two-parent families
- C. Can mean one or all parents in blended families

If the levels of engagement vary significantly between parents, please complete the questionnaire to the best of your ability with consideration to the parent or parents who have been the most engaged with you in your transition to college.

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?*

The following scale, in this exact order, will be used for all questions:

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neither 4=agree 5=strongly agree

1. My parent(s) will have or have had an influence in the major I choose for college.
2. I am afraid of disappointing my parent(s) if I change my academic plans or goals (e.g. change major, change career path, being tentative or undecided about academic plans, etc.).
3. I would like more independence in academic-related decisions and planning toward my degree than my parent(s) currently allow.
4. My parent(s) expect to have access to my academic records because they can help me make the best decisions about my academics and progress toward graduation.
5. My parent(s) want to be involved in decisions related to registering for classes and progress toward degree (time-to-graduation issues).
6. I feel or have felt pressure to involve my parent(s) in academic planning decisions and/or share my academic records with my parent(s) because they help pay for college.
7. If I felt pressure from my parent(s), I would give them my university password, knowing they could access my buckeyelink and school email account at any time.
8. I have voluntarily given my parent(s) my university password and approve of them accessing my buckeyelink and school email account at any time.
9. My parent(s) have volunteered to complete class assignments (homework, papers, projects, take-home exams, etc.) for me.

10. If I was struggling with an assignment or in a particular course, I think my parent(s) would be ok with helping out and completing assignments for me if I asked them to.
11. I feel or have felt pressured to include my parent(s) on my FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) release. (By law, no one has access to your official academic record unless you authorize them via FERPA release.)
12. My parent(s) are more involved in academic and school-related decisions than I want them to be.
13. My parent(s) have expressed a willingness or desire to accompany me to any meetings I have with an academic advisor, a professor, administrator, or other university staff member, via in-person or through virtual means.
14. My parent(s) have expressed a willingness to call or email a professor on my behalf.
15. It would not surprise me if I found out my parent(s) contacted my academic advisor, professor, administrator, or other university staff member without my knowledge.
16. I feel pressure to involve my parent(s) in discussions or emails (either directly or indirectly) with my academic advisors and/or professors.
17. I would feel comfortable with my parent(s) logging into my email and emailing faculty or staff under my name (emailing as if it were you sending the email), regardless of circumstance.
18. I would feel comfortable with my parent(s) logging into my email and emailing faculty or staff under my name (emailing as if it were you sending the email) if I were in a vulnerable situation (e.g. poor grade on an assignment, at risk of failing a course, not getting into major of choice, getting placed on probation).
19. I want my parent(s) to be involved with my academic advisors and/or professors because I sometimes feel uncertain in my ability to handle some matters on my own.
20. I would feel comfortable if my parent(s) reached out to my academic advisor, my professor, or other university official on my behalf as long as I was involved in the conversation.
21. I would feel comfortable if my parent(s) reached out to my academic advisor, my professor, or other university official on my behalf, *without* my knowledge.
22. My parents have expressed a desire to know more about my professors, academic advisors, or other support staff I have contact with at the university.
23. I believe I should talk about my mental health needs with my parent(s) before reaching out to an academic advisor, university counselor, residence hall staff, or other university staff member.
24. My parent(s) show or have shown concern about my ability to advocate for myself at college.
25. My parent(s) show or have shown concern about my ability to make decisions on my own.
26. My parent(s) initiate contact with me 4+ times weekly via text, call, social media, or some form of web messaging service to “check in”.

27. My parent(s) get anxious and worried if I don't respond to a message from them within 2-4 hours.
28. My parent(s) routinely ask questions about my "college life" because they don't think I will share this information with them at my own will.
29. My parent(s) have expressed a desire to know about key due dates for assignments, exams, and/or papers in my classes.
30. Since starting college, my parents have struggled in giving me more independence.
31. I worry about hurting my parent(s)' feelings if I expressed a desire to be more independent.
32. I worry that it might hurt my relationship with my parent(s) if I don't keep them regularly informed of important happenings in my life, including things like my academic performance, extra-curricular activities, and/or personal relationships.
33. I worry about failing my parent(s) and not living up to their expectations.
34. I feel like my parent(s) try to monitor and manage how I spend my time.
35. I struggle with making decisions or engaging in activities that I know my parent(s) might not support.
36. My parent(s) have an influence on the friendships I choose while in college.
37. My parent(s) have an influence on the romantic relationships I choose while in college.
38. My parent(s) want me to come home and/or spend time with them on weeknights, weekends, or breaks in the semester more than I actually want to.
39. My parent(s) have an influence on the extra-curricular activities I choose at college.
40. My parent(s) believe they should *always* be my "go to" when something goes wrong.

If you do not wish to enter the drawing for the Amazon gift card, skip the information below and click SUBMIT at the bottom of this page.

If you have completed this survey in its entirety, you are eligible to enter your email address into a drawing for one of five (5) Amazon gift cards. You may use the BACK button if you wish to ensure the completion of all questions. If you wish to enter the drawing, please enter your email address below.

Email address for Amazon gift card drawing:

Winners will be chosen at random in early September 2020 and the giftcards will be distributed via email.

## APPENDIX C - Recruitment Email for First/Second Year Students

Emailed to: All current first and second year students in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University

Subject: Survey Request for Research: Family Impact on Transition to College

Greetings, EHE Undergrads!

As the Director of Student Services and Academic Advising in the College of Education and Human Ecology (EHE) at Ohio State, I am writing to ask you to consider participating in research I'm conducting to get your perceptions of the role your parent(s) have played in your transition to college. I'm sending this invitation out to all first year, second year, and incoming first year students in the College of EHE in the hopes of learning your impressions of how your parents have influenced your relationships, decisions, academics, and interactions on campus.

This research is related to a project I am working on as a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM). Ultimately, I hope to use the data to create new programming in the future for incoming EHE students and their parents, so your feedback will make an impact! The survey is completely voluntary and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Students who complete the survey in its entirety have the option of submitting their email address at the end of the survey to enter a drawing for one of five (5) \$25 Amazon gift cards. Winners of the gift cards will be randomly drawn in early September 2020.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I value your insights as I continually seek to improve the student experience in higher education.

Click here to take the survey: [embedded link here](#)

Please note this research study has been approved by USM's Institutional Review Board, Protocol #20-24. Questions or concerns? Please contact the principal investigator for this study, Casey Henceroth, at [casey.henceroth@usm.edu](mailto:casey.henceroth@usm.edu).

## APPENDIX D - Informed Consent for First/Second Year Students

Dear Potential Participant,

You are being asked to consider participating in a study because you have been identified as a first or second year student in The College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University. The purpose of this project is to survey current first and second year students and incoming first year students to assess their perceptions about parental engagement in relation to their transition to college. Data from the survey will be used to inform future programming for students. While the survey is completely voluntary and anonymous, students who complete the survey in its entirety have the option of submitting their email address into a drawing for one of five (5) \$25 Amazon gift cards. Winners of the gift cards will be randomly drawn in early September 2020.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire consisting of questions related to demographic information, your perceptions of how your parents influence certain aspects of your life, and your perceptions of how involved or not involved your parents are with your academic activities and interactions with university personnel. Please note that for purposes of this survey, the term parent is broadly defined and not limited to a biological relationship.

The study is a mobile-friendly, online questionnaire and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to decline or discontinue participation at any point without concern of penalty, prejudice, or any other negative consequence. There are minimal psychological risks involved with participation in this study and benefits may include assessment of your personal and academic needs for the future. No personally identifying information will be collected and all data will remain completely anonymous and confidential. Data will be aggregated and analyzed for purposes of completing a project to meet the capstone requirements in the Doctor of Education Higher Education Administration program at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM).

Upon completion of the project, all questionnaire data will be destroyed. This research is being conducted by doctoral student Casey Henceroth under the supervision of Dr. Holly Foster at USM. For inquiries or questions regarding the study, please contact Casey at [casey.henceroth@usm.edu](mailto:casey.henceroth@usm.edu). This project has been reviewed by USM's Institutional

Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, or by calling (601) 266-5997.

By completing and submitting the following questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in the study and give permission for your anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described above. If you do not wish to participate, please close out of this browser window. If you wish to participate, please click on “next” below. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Casey Henceroth

## APPENDIX E - Survey for Incoming Students

### Demographic Info:

1. I am at least 18 years of age:
  - A. YES
  - B. NO (skip logic, survey concludes)
  
2. I am an incoming first-year student in the College of Education and Human Ecology at Ohio State:
  - A. TRUE
  - B. FALSE (skip logic, survey concludes)
  
3. I consider myself to be a traditionally-aged college student (graduating from high school no more than 3 years ago) and have not previously lived on my own before starting college.
  - A. YES
  - B. NO (skip logic, survey concludes)
  
4. I identify my gender as (choose one):
  - A. Female
  - B. Male
  - C. Non-binary
  - D. Transgender
  - E. Other
  - F. Prefer not to answer
  
5. I identify my race or ethnicity as (select all that apply):
  - A. Black/African American
  - B. White/Caucasian
  - C. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - D. Hispanic/Latinx
  - E. Asian
  - F. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - G. Other
  - H. Prefer not to answer

6. As a student, I am planning for my primary living arrangements to be:
- A. Live on campus by myself
  - B. Live on campus with one or more roommates
  - C. Live off campus by myself
  - D. Live off campus with one or more roommates
  - E. Live off campus with my parent(s), extended family, or close support system
7. I identify as a first generation college student (you are considered a first-generation student if *neither parent earned a four-year degree*, regardless if your parents attended four-year institutions or completed two-year associate degrees).
- A. YES
  - B. NO
8. For this questionnaire, the word parent(s) is used, but this terminology or definition can be different for some students. How do you define the person or persons who were primarily responsible for you in the last 1-3 years? (Please keep in mind your answer to this question as you complete the rest of the questionnaire.)
- A. Biological parent(s)
  - B. Blended parents (any *combination* of biological parent, step-parent, adoptive parent)
  - C. Adoptive parent(s)
  - D. Extended family (grandparents, aunt, uncle, etc.)
  - E. Legal guardians
  - F. State or county agency
  - G. Other
9. Thinking about parental engagement, this is defined by *more* than your parents ensuring you have your basic needs met. Engagement is the act of being invested in something or someone with the expectation of getting something in return. Parental engagement is not transactional, but rather reciprocal, and indicates a shared and ongoing responsibility and commitment to help create positive outcomes for their children. Thinking about the 1-3 years prior to college, how would you describe your parent(s)?
- A. Very engaged in my day-to-day activities
  - B. Average engagement in my day-to-day activities (not too much, not too little)
  - C. Little to no engagement in my day-to-day activities

10. Sometimes birth order can play a role in how involved your parent(s) are in the transition to college. Please select from the following that best describes you:

- A. Only child
- B. Oldest child (with younger siblings)
- C. Middle or youngest child with older siblings who attended college
- D. Middle or youngest child with older siblings who did not attend college

Please note that the term “Parent(s)” in the questionnaire below:

- A. Uses *your* definition of the word in Question #8 above
- B. Can mean one or both parents for those in two-parent families
- C. Can mean one or all parents in blended families

If the levels of engagement vary significantly between parents, please complete the questionnaire to the best of your ability with consideration to the parent or parents who are the most engaged with you in your transition to college.

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?*

The following scale, in this exact order, will be used for all questions:

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neither 4=agree 5=strongly agree

1. My parent(s) will have or have had an influence in the major I choose for college.
2. I would be afraid of disappointing my parent(s) if I changed my academic plans or goals in the future (e.g. change major, change career path, being tentative or undecided about academic plans after initially declaring a major, etc.).
3. I would like more independence in academic-related decisions and planning toward my degree than I anticipate my parent(s) will allow.
4. My parent(s) expect to have access to my academic records because they can help me make the best decisions about my academics and progress toward graduation.
5. My parent(s) want to be involved in decisions related to registering for classes and progress toward degree (time-to-graduation issues).
6. I feel pressure to involve my parent(s) in academic planning decisions and/or share my academic records with my parent(s) because they help pay for college.
7. If I felt pressure from my parent(s), I would give them my university password, knowing they could access my buckeyelink and school email account at any time.
8. I would voluntarily give my parent(s) my university password and approve of them accessing my buckeyelink and school email account at any time.
9. My parent(s) would volunteer to complete class assignments (homework, papers, projects, take-home exams, etc.) for me.

10. If I was struggling with an assignment or in a particular course, I think my parent(s) would be ok with helping out and completing assignments for me if I asked them to.
11. I feel pressure to include my parent(s) on my FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) release. (By law, no one has access to your official academic record unless you authorize them via FERPA release.)
12. My parent(s) are more involved in academic and school-related decisions than I want them to be.
13. My parent(s) have expressed a willingness or desire to accompany me to any meetings I have with an academic advisor, a professor, administrator, or other university staff member, via in-person or through virtual means.
14. My parent(s) have expressed a willingness to call or email a professor on my behalf.
15. It would not surprise me if I found out my parent(s) contacted my academic advisor, professor, administrator, or other university staff member without my knowledge.
16. I feel pressure (or anticipate feeling pressure) to involve my parent(s) in discussions or emails (either directly or indirectly) with my academic advisors and/or professors.
17. I would feel comfortable with my parent(s) logging into my email and emailing faculty or staff under my name (emailing as if it were you sending the email), regardless of circumstance.
18. I would feel comfortable with my parent(s) logging into my email and emailing faculty or staff under my name (emailing as if it were you sending the email) if I were in a vulnerable situation (e.g. poor grade on an assignment, at risk of failing a course, not getting into major of choice, getting placed on probation).
19. I want my parent(s) to be involved with my academic advisors and/or professors because I sometimes feel uncertain in my ability to handle some matters on my own.
20. I would feel comfortable if my parent(s) reached out to my academic advisor, my professor, or other university official on my behalf as long as I was involved in the conversation.
21. I would feel comfortable if my parent(s) reached out to my academic advisor, my professor, or other university official on my behalf, *without* my knowledge.
22. I anticipate my parents will express a desire to know more about my professors, academic advisors, or other support staff I have contact with at the university.
23. I believe I should talk about my mental health needs with my parent(s) before reaching out to an academic advisor, university counselor, residence hall staff, or other university staff member.
24. My parent(s) show or have shown concern about my ability to advocate for myself at college.
25. My parent(s) show or have shown concern about my ability to make decisions on my own.

26. After the semester begins, I anticipate my parent(s) initiating contact with me 4+ times weekly via text, call, social media, or some form of web messaging service to “check in”.
27. My parent(s) get anxious and worried if I don't respond to a message from them within 2-4 hours.
28. I anticipate my parent(s) routinely asking questions about my “college life” because they don't think I will share this information with them at my own will.
29. I anticipate my parent(s) will want to know about key due dates for assignments, exams, and/or papers in my classes.
30. After the semester begins, I anticipate my parents will struggle in giving me more independence.
31. I worry about hurting my parent(s)' feelings if I expressed a desire to be more independent.
32. I worry that it might hurt my relationship with my parent(s) if I don't keep them regularly informed of important happenings in my life, including things like my academic performance, extra-curricular activities, and/or personal relationships.
33. I worry about failing my parent(s) and not living up to their expectations.
34. After the semester begins, I anticipate my parent(s) trying to monitor and manage how I spend my time.
35. I struggle with making decisions or engaging in activities that I know my parent(s) might not support.
36. My parent(s) will have an influence on the friendships I choose while in college.
37. My parent(s) will have an influence on the romantic relationships I choose while in college.
38. After the semester begins, I anticipate my parent(s) will want me to come home and/or spend time with them on weeknights, weekends, or breaks in the semester more than I actually want to.
39. My parent(s) will have an influence on the extra-curricular activities I choose at college.
40. My parent(s) believe they should *always* be my “go to” when something goes wrong.

If you do not wish to enter the drawing for the Amazon gift card, skip the information below and click SUBMIT at the bottom of this page.

If you have completed this survey in its entirety, you are eligible to enter your email address into a drawing for one of five (5) Amazon gift cards. You may use the BACK button if you wish to ensure the completion of all questions. If you wish to enter the drawing, please enter your email address below.

Email address for Amazon gift card drawing:

Winners will be chosen at random in early September 2020 and the giftcards will be distributed via email.

## APPENDIX F - Recruitment Email for Incoming Students

Emailed to: All incoming first year students in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University

Subject: Survey Request for Research: Family Impact on Transition to College

Greetings, New Buckeyes!

As the Director of Student Services and Academic Advising in the College of Education and Human Ecology (EHE), welcome to Ohio State! I am writing to ask you to consider participating in research I'm conducting to get your perceptions of the role your parent(s) are currently playing in your transition to college. I'm sending this invitation out to all first year, second year, and incoming first year students in the College of EHE in the hopes of learning your impressions of how your parents are influencing (or how you think they *will* influence) your relationships, decisions, academics, and interactions on campus.

This research is related to a project I am working on as a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM). Ultimately, I hope to use the data to create new programming in the future for incoming EHE students and their parents just like you, so your feedback will make an impact! The survey is completely voluntary and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

AMAZON GIFT CARD: Students who complete the survey in its entirety have the option of submitting their email address at the end of the survey to enter a drawing for one of five (5) \$25 Amazon gift cards. Winners of the gift cards will be randomly drawn in early September 2020.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I value your insights as I continually seek to improve the student experience in higher education.

Click here to take the survey: [embedded link here](#)

Please note this research study has been approved by USM's Institutional Review Board, Protocol #20-24. Questions or concerns? Please contact the principal investigator for this study, Casey Henceroth, at [casey.henceroth@usm.edu](mailto:casey.henceroth@usm.edu).

## APPENDIX G - Informed Consent for Incoming Students

Dear Potential Participant,

You are being asked to consider participating in a study because you have been identified as an incoming first year student in The College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University. The purpose of this project is to survey current first and second year students and incoming first year students to assess their perceptions about parental engagement in relation to their transition to college. Data from the survey will be used to inform future academic affairs programming. While the survey is completely voluntary and anonymous, students who complete the survey in its entirety have the option of submitting their email address into a drawing for one of five (5) \$25 Amazon gift cards. Winners of the gift cards will be randomly drawn in early September 2020.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire consisting of questions related to demographic information, your perceptions of how your parents influence certain aspects of your life, and your perceptions of how involved or not involved your parents are with your academic activities and interactions with university personnel. The study is a mobile-friendly, online questionnaire and should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to decline or discontinue participation at any point without concern of penalty, prejudice, or any other negative consequence. There are no risks involved with participation in this study and all data collected will remain completely anonymous. Data will be aggregated and analyzed for purposes of completing a project to meet the capstone requirements in the Doctor of Education Higher Education Administration program at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM).

Upon completion of the project, all questionnaire data will be destroyed. This research is being conducted by doctoral student Casey Henceroth under the supervision of Dr. Holly Foster at USM. For inquiries or questions regarding the study, please contact Casey at [casey.henceroth@usm.edu](mailto:casey.henceroth@usm.edu). This project has been reviewed by USM's Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, or by calling (601) 266-5997.

By completing and submitting the following questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in the study and give permission for your anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described above. If you do not wish to participate, please close out of this browser window. If you wish to participate, please click on “next” below. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Casey Henceroth