Re-thinking the enigma of the "HELICOPTER PARENT"

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Academic Advising & Transfer Network
Conference
October 18, 2013
You know parents are the same
No matter time nor place
They don't understand that us kids
Are going to make some mistakes
So to you other kids all across the land
There's no need to argue
Parents just don't understand

Will Smith - PARENTS JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND (1988)
Introduction

- Defining terms: the "helicopter parent" of the "millennial student"
- Current research on the impact of this relationship on student success & retention
- Cultural perspectives in educational success and the family
- Impact of negative labeling vs. strengths-based perspectives
- Developing a new paradigm of the "village" approach to supporting student success that includes families
- Think Tank Exercise
Academic advising may be viewed as a tributary source to the ‘auwai which carries our students throughout the academy. We are among many who may help and contribute to their pathway by supporting the completion of their successful educational and personal journey. In this ‘auwai, each person who benefits along this route is a shareholder and has kuleana (responsibility) for the next person and for maintaining the well-being of this system.

You give, you get and you are responsible.

Do you remember last year’s theme?

...the analogy of the ‘auwai
Revisiting the labels

**Helicopter parent**: A negative portrayal of a "hovering" parent that interferes with student learning and development.

**Snowplow parent**: A more severe version of a parent interferer who tries to clear away obstacles for their children in an effort to ensure their success.

**Bulldozer parent**: As implied, is an extreme interventionist in his or her child's life especially at school.
Millennial Student

Defined as:
- Born after 1981
- The most racially & ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history.
- This generation was wanted & they feel individually and collectively *special* as a result.
- Motivated, goal-oriented, assertive and confident. They want to make a difference.
- Team oriented
- More focused on high achievement than personal development.
What does the current research reveal in the intersection of the "Helicopter Parent", the "Millennial Student" and academic success?
key results:

• most college students have regular contact with family members; most report family members were supportive

• higher levels of engagement & self-reported gains in college

• no evidence that high parental involvement is problematic for students.

• Did not increase gpa of students, overall

2007 NSSE data consisting of 4,532 1st yr. & 4,642 senior yr. students from 24 selected institutions

Shoup, Gonyeah & Kuh's 2009 research paper on *Helicopter Parents: Examining the Impact of Highly Involved Parents on Student Engagement & Educational Outcomes*
Family involvement can have impacting and clear linkages to academic choices and decisions for students.

Educational aspirations are influenced by family perceptions, values, support, and experiences.

For many cultures, it is simply not appropriate to disconnect one's educational decisions from the family system and worldview.

Diverse perspectives, e.g., individualistic vs. collective values, strengths, gains, & resulting consequences can influence a student's relationship to higher education & career choices.
Labeling theory posits that negative labels creates deviance from the viewpoint of the one who is judging -- it is not inherent to a particular behavior. Deficit perspective. Think about the labels used in academic advising...and how it can bias your perceptions and ability to work (or not work) well with students and/or family members...

Strengths-based approaches refute negative labels & focus on assets, potential, resiliency, creative solutions, resources, and a sense of community/membership. Decisions include the voices of all stakeholders.
## Examples of Negative labeling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Helicopter, Snowplow and Bulldozer parent</td>
<td>A parent who is overly involved / intervenes in the life of his or her child.</td>
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<td>Foreclosure student</td>
<td>A student whose certainty of commitment to a major &amp; career may mask an illusory and unsatisfactory state of identity development.</td>
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<td>Intrusive Advising</td>
<td>An action-oriented approach to involving and motivating students to seek help when needed.</td>
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<td>Helicopter Advisor</td>
<td><em>Can you guess?</em></td>
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Current Family Services
In the UH System

- What services and resources are you aware of for family members & parents of students?
- How easy is it to locate resources and services for family members & parents?
- Are these resources kept updated & current?
- Are they free and accessible to all?
- Have you tried using any of them?
References & Resources

NACADA Clearinghouse:
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse.aspx

Nat’l Survey of Student Engagement:
http://nsse.iub.edu/

Imagine yourself to be a family member/parent of a new student to the University of Hawaiʻi system:

- What would you want to see in terms of:
  - Activities that include family members?
  - Types of access to information?
  - Access to contacting informational sources?

- As a parent, if you lived on a neighbor island, or the mainland, or another country, or never attended college or completed a college education...what add'l services would you like to see/need?

** What kinds of service training do we need as advisors who may interact with family members? **
Think Tank discussion points:

- Hawaii Community College implemented a Parent Orientation (free of charge)
- UH-WO ‘Ohana Orientation is strictly for Parents/Family: includes presentation on advising/a student discussion panel/ campus security/ student services ~ held before the beginning of the semester. (Also, free of charge)
- As an advisor, I think I would benefit from more training on this paradigm shift and how to create integrative ways to work w/the families of our students.
- We need strategies to help students communicate with parents/family regarding their academic experiences.
- I think I’m a “hang glider” parent ~ watchful from a distance and can swoop in when needed. Maybe that’s a more positive role for family members! (group agreement on this!)
- We need to find strategies to help educate parents/family on appropriate ways to engage with their student, with campus services & staff, etc. Find “teaching moments” to help shape workable and more positive engagement towards student success.
- Provide “transition” trainings for families (on-site; and/or via other types of media tools).
- Several members voiced concerns that their campus websites had nothing welcoming or focused for families of students.
- It was suggested that the UH System website should have a site for ‘ohana/families of students. Could also be linked with campus sites that focus on families/‘ohana events, etc.