Western and YOU Parent/Family Academy: The Road Leading To and Through College

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The Road Leading To and Through College

School of Communication Professional Project

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Executive Summary

The transition from high school to college is a life-changing experience for both student and family and can cause great distress within the family system. Research shows that pre-college orientation programs are an integral part of reducing uncertainty about the college experience and assist families in preparing for the upcoming transition. For Western Michigan University (WMU) to better support this transition through the parent/family orientation program, this project will evaluate our current session devoted to family transition (*Western and YOU Parent/Family Academy: The Road to and through College*) and retool the 2013 course to better support the needs of our incoming WMU families. This project, supported by relational dialectics and drawing upon qualitative and quantitative methods, will examine situated family transitional experiences through data collected from student focus groups, parent/family focus groups, and two years of orientation program feedback. This data will be used to develop common themes in family relationships and transitional experiences. The objective is to provide an interactive and engaging classroom session that offers support and enables our families to prepare their students and themselves for the transition to college. The intended goals of the course are to encourage student independence and self-reliance; to help parents/families develop a deeper understanding of the college parental role; to enable families to experience a more seamless and positive student and family transition from high school to college; and to improve WMU retention rates.
Traditionally aged college students of today have been raised in an environment of constant parental involvement and their connection with family is strong as they enter college (Savage, 2009). The instant access afforded through ever-advancing technology enhances frequent (weekly, daily, hourly) connectivity with family members who have been consistently encouraged to be involved in every aspect of their child’s academic life throughout pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. Often this engagement results in family members exerting ongoing influence over their child’s decisions and choices into and through the college years (Taylor, 2009), creating both a positive and negative dichotomy from the institutional perspective.

Appropriate parental involvement helps to expand the student’s web of support while encouraging self-reliance (Cutright, 2008). Over-involvement causes the student to rely on parental intervention to “fix” any challenges or problems, leading to inertia and an inability or reluctance to advocate for oneself (Cohen, 2010).

Especially since 2000, higher education institutions have come to the realization that parental involvement is not “going away” during the college years and as a result, parent and family relations offices are becoming an integral part of institutional recruitment and retention initiatives across the country (Savage & Petree, 2011). The primary role of Parent and Family Programs at Western Michigan University (WMU) is to a) provide a liaison into the University to help families and students connect to resources and support services, and b) offer educational resources regarding the differences of parenting a college student compared to parenting a younger student – encouraging the progression from authority figure to coach and mentor (Wolf, Sax, & Harper, 2009). To facilitate the family transition into parenting a college student, WMU continues to seek supportive ways to connect with and provide resources to our prospective and incoming families. We host various events for these families to increase knowledge of our
institution, emphasizing our commitment to student success through our many resources and services. To ensure these services and events are useful to families, it is important to understand how students and families communicate with each other and manage their changing relationship.

**Theoretical Framing: Relational Dialectics**

Communication between parents and adolescents is shaped by relational dialectics, inherent tensions that both parent and child are constantly renegotiating in the context of their relationship (West & Turner, 2001). Relational dialectics theory suggests that relational life is always in process and aptly describes the push and pull of the parent-adolescent relationship and how it must transform. Parents and adolescents battle with their expectations as they learn to balance the adolescent’s growing autonomy while still desiring the connectedness of the former parent-child relationship. The parent watches the adolescent become a young adult, knowing deep down that this is what good parenting is intended to do. At the same time, the parent wants to protect the child from making mistakes and aches for earlier days of sloppy kisses and goodnight hugs. The adolescent pulls away from the family cocoon, wanting liberation from known rules and regulations, while at the same time yearning for the simplicity of being a child without “grown up” obligations. These opposing forces—of the parent being protective, yet wanting to encourage independence and of the adolescent wanting independence, yet needing the connection with the family—create a contradictory duality of constantly shifting emotions that must be negotiated for years (Kidwell, Fischer, Dunham, & Baranowski, 1983) and often intensify during the transition from high school to college. Examining parent/adolescent communication through the lens of these dialectical tensions helps to understand family relationships so that the University can discern how to better assist students and families in this transition. Within the context of relational dialectics, specific communication patterns between
parents and adolescents emerge that need to be recognized and continually renegotiated as the relationship evolves. Exploring adolescence more deeply informs these dynamics.

Adolescents are often in a constant struggle to break free from the perceived confines of the family to experience the freedom to “find” themselves though they also value the security and familiarity of the family environment (Jackson, Bijstra, Oostra, & Bosma, 1998). Most adolescents desire a close, long-lasting relationship with their parents (Noller, 1995) that continues through the college years and beyond, especially if they experience open communication with positive parental support and affirmation (Daily, 2009). Established patterns of family communication also have a direct impact on the adolescent’s ability to easily adapt to new situations outside of the family home and become increasingly important as the adolescent more regularly interacts with the outside world (Orrego & Rodriguez, 2001).

Students and families in the transition from high school to college may find it reassuring to recognize that tension is an inherent part of the transition process and ease the anxieties and frustrations that may surface in the family relationship. The core concepts of relational dialectics; a) contradictions – the constant interplay in relationships that desires both connectedness and distance, b) totality – contradictions are part of the unified whole and cannot be understood in isolation, c) process – communication fluctuates between openness and secretiveness, and d) praxis – recognizing that choices must be made in consideration of opposing needs and values (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996), serve to inform the services we provide to families.

Relational dialectics theory helps to define the tensions and conflicts within the family transition from high school to college: a) autonomy and connectedness – the desire to be independent versus staying connected to family, b) favoritism and impartiality – the desire to be recognized as special versus being treated impartially, c) openness and closedness – the desire
for open communication versus maintaining privacy, d) novelty and predictability – the desire for excitement in the relationship versus maintaining stability, e) instrumentality and affection – the desire for genuine affection versus the advantages provided by the relationship, and f) equality and inequality – the desire to be treated as an equal versus the desire to feel superior to another (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996). Students and families in transition may experience some if not all of these tensions and our increased understanding of their situated family experiences enables us to respond to those needs more effectively.

**WMU’s Orientation Program**

WMU offers a comprehensive orientation program for incoming new students and their families comprised of 12 two-day sessions that take place during the month of June. The program is required for new students and we encourage parents, family members, and guardians to accompany their students to build a shared understanding of WMU’s services and resources (See Appendix A for 2013 orientation schedule). Orientation is an opportunity for students to begin the journey into college. Among many other things, students learn about advising, obtain a BroncoID card, register for fall semester courses, and stay overnight in a residence hall.

Higher education orientation programs across the United States often include parent/family programming focused on institution-specific information, the student-family transition experience, or some combination of both perspectives. This programming has evolved in direct response to the close relationship of today’s students with their families. During WMU’s orientation program, parents and families attend many informational sessions with their students, after which they separate from the students for additional “parent/family only” sessions. Since the early 1990’s, WMU has included a brief orientation session on transitions that has gradually expanded over recent years to the creation of the *Western and YOU Academy – The*
Road Leading To and Through College (hereafter referred to as Academy) in 2011. This session covers broad areas of University resources and services with an anticipated outcome that attendees connect these resources and services to their personal student/family relationships. This experience is intended to lead to a more positive and seamless transition experience as attendees begin to better understand how to respond to the changing relationship with their student.

The objective of this project is to use past Orientation Academy response data, and emergent thematic data from focus groups of current WMU students and current WMU parents to retool the 2013 Academy course to more specifically address the needs of our incoming families in supporting their students in the transition to college. This project plan begins with an overview of the 2011 and 2012 Academy responses, followed by an analysis of themes and issues discovered through the focus group discussions. The focus group information is compared and contrasted to the Academy response data resulting in proposed changes and updates to the existing Academy course content to better prepare families for the transition. The report concludes by providing suggestions for future directions and observations regarding the limitations of the overall project. Additionally, the long-range goal of this project is to provide flexible multi-media resources to help high school families begin to redefine and renegotiate their established family roles and move gradually towards student independence and self-reliance before matriculating into WMU.

2011 and 2012 Orientation Response Data

The Academy orientation session launched in 2011 and was slightly revised for the 2012 orientation program. It is designed to simulate an interactive classroom experience for parents and families, including a syllabus (see Appendix B for 2012 syllabus) and “textbook” (the annual Parent/Family Guide produced by WMU Parent and Family Programs) and uses iClickers to
encourage honest and anonymous responses. The course content weaves many “typical” family transition experiences into specific information about support services offered by WMU. The session serves as a catalyst to explore and consider issues that individual families may be concerned about and/or may encounter in the early months of the transition to college and beyond.

In the initial creation and subsequent revision of the Academy, the course topics were essentially based on two factors: a) services we wanted to make sure our families knew about (financial matters, health center, academic support, counseling, textbook purchases, etc.) and b) pertinent anecdotal examples gleaned from the transitional experiences of former students and families. The primary focus in 2011 and 2012 covered WMU services and resources information. It was important to make the session engaging and interactive because there are several hours of informational sessions prior to the Academy that sometimes cause attendees to feel overwhelmed, confused, anxious, and tired. We pack a lot of information into the hour-and-fifteen minute Academy so the iClicker responses added an interactive component to encourage participation. In 2011, many of the questions focused on the family transition experience, and the course also included questions on comprehension of the Academy content. These questions were excluded from the 2012 session to eliminate redundancies and to give more attention to each family’s consideration of their personal transition expectations and assumptions (See Appendix C for 2011 and 2012 Academy iClicker questions). Collective results are displayed on large screens throughout the course for viewing and comments. The results of the 2011 and 2012 Academy orientation sessions indicated that 56% of the attendees were first-time college parents and 89% had some personal college experience. Subsequent questions interspersed throughout the course as resources were reviewed, encouraged attendees to consider their own student’s
personality, family dynamics, concerns about their student’s college experience, and how their family relationships might change leading into and during college. The primary shared apprehensions included concerns about their student managing academic priorities (58%), time management during the transition (46%), and their own separation from their child (32%). In every session, attendees expressed camaraderie in their shared anxieties and a palpable sense of relief in not being alone in their apprehensions. Attendees conversed with each other during and after the Academy and their interactions continued to be evidenced throughout the remainder of each orientation program. Analyzing the Academy response data provided the foundation to collect qualitative data from current WMU students and family members regarding their situated family experiences with transition.

**Focus Group Findings: Themes and Issues**

To further explore the transition experience from high school to college, focus groups of current students and focus groups of parents/family members of current students, supported by relational dialectics, examined situated family transitional experiences to develop common themes. These themes were then compared to the collated iClicker response data from the 2011 and 2012 Orientation Academy sessions for commonalities and contrasts.

I facilitated three student focus groups in November 2012 to explore the experiences of current WMU students with the transition from high school to college (see Appendix D for student focus group questions). A total of 18 students, ranging from first-year to senior status, participated in the focus groups. The participants included 14 female and four male students, 13 of who came from Michigan and five from out of state. Represented ethnicities included 11 White, four Black, one Hispanic, one Middle Eastern, and one European student. Two focus groups of WMU current parents/guardians were conducted in December 2012 to explore the
family perspective of the transition from high school to college (see Appendix E for
parent/family focus group questions) with a total of five parents participating in the focus groups. Participants included a married Hispanic mother and father, and three White mothers, all from Michigan. The participants also included one dyad – a student focus group participant’s mother took part in a parent/family focus group, providing interesting views from both perspectives. The discussions covered a wide range of experiences from both the student and family viewpoints, but also confirmed basic themes that are common to families experiencing the transition from high school to college. During transcription and analysis of the focus groups, I was struck by how open and comfortable the students were in sharing their experiences throughout each session. In the parent/family discussions, the conversation started at a more superficial level and gradually grew deeper and more personal as the participants became comfortable with each other.

The focus groups were both video and audio-taped and I used the videotapes for a multi-step process of transcription, repeat viewing, and analysis. I first transcribed and viewed the student focus groups to identify and code emerging themes within each discussion and then cross-referenced the themes between the three student discussions. I identified the major themes through forcefulness (noting changes in the intensity of participant comments and responses) and repetition (noting phrases and comments that were mentioned multiple times and consistently discussed). After this process was complete, I identified common themes within each of the two parent/guardian discussions, again using forcefulness and repetition, and cross-referenced the two sessions with each other. I then compared the themes within the student groups to the themes within the parent groups, identifying commonalities and disparities. Finally, I compared the emergent themes to the Academy response data to develop specific recommendations for the
2013 Academy. Throughout this process, I used a grounded theory approach with relational dialectics as the foundation for analysis. The dialectic tensions, especially autonomy and connectedness within family dynamics became clearly evident as the major themes emerged, confirming the challenges of the changing relationship. Through the discussions, both students and parents expressed strong feelings as they sought to navigate through transitional experiences and accept the inevitable change in their relationships with each other.

Interestingly, the predominant themes discussed were very similar in both the student and parent discussions, but student and family perspectives and assumptions varied widely within each topic. Primary topics discussed and deemed important by the participants included; student living situation, academic expectations and time management, family relationships, other relationships, finances, and communication. The meta-theme of autonomy/connectedness – the letting go process in the transition to college by both families and students – encompassed every major theme and underscores the significance of the transition experience and the resulting impact on family relationships.

**Change in Living Situation**

One of the key transition concerns raised by students had to do with adjusting to their on-campus living situation. Students recollected feeling apprehensive about moving into the residence halls, especially if they were moving in “blind” with someone they didn’t know. The need for family connectivity was highlighted as one student stated that “being on my own was scary” and “no one is there to take care of me”. Stories of “the roommate from hell” shared from older siblings and friends played a big part in this apprehension and as happens, several of the students did not initially have good roommate experiences. Two of the students changed rooms and/or halls during their first semester because of roommate problems. Additional anxieties they
expressed included how to go about making friends, how to “fit in” and get connected socially during the first few weeks. Several students struggled with loneliness and a sense of not belonging. Three students seriously considered transferring after the first semester, but decided to stick it out for the rest of freshman year. These students were ultimately happy with their decision to stay and one student gave credit to his Resident Assistant (RA) for supporting him through the first semester transition. He said he would not have stayed at WMU if not for the RA’s support. Many students felt that the RAs are an important aspect of residence hall living and having a great RA is beneficial, while a disengaged RA may prove detrimental in working through roommate and living issues. These relationships with the RAs indicate the desire for openness in the student’s campus relationships, providing a new and growing network of support away from the immediate family.

Parents also expressed concerns about on-campus living, but from a different perspective. Parents were surprised to learn and concerned about many of our residence halls being co-ed by suite and not by floor or hall. All of the parent participants had daughters and felt that young men could potentially be a distraction to academic priorities. This was a lengthy conversation in one of the focus groups very early within the session, emphasizing their reluctance to allow their daughters the autonomy to make their own choices and lack of trust that those choices would be positive. Later in the session, participants disclosed that each of their daughters was in a relationship with young men in their home towns and the parents were not entirely supportive of these relationships. Each had set strict rules on dating during high school and expressed concerns about their daughters’ increased freedom and lack of supervision in the halls that potentially could lead to unintended consequences. One mother talked at length about being well prepared for “the big things to the little things – living with a stranger is a huge thing.” Another talked
about the importance of students learning to work through their conflicts to better prepare them for the “real” world. Over 93% of WMU first-year students live in the residence halls, so based on the student and parent discussions, a greater emphasis in the Academy on day-to-day on-campus living “real life experiences” and how to navigate through various situations would help address student and parent apprehensions and gaps in knowledge. Offering messaging tools during the Academy to address conflicts that students may encounter in their living situations would help parents/families prepare to better support their students through these experiences, while encouraging student independence.

Academics/Time Management

Each of the student focus groups included lengthy discussions about how unprepared they were for the academic rigors of college and how challenging it was to balance their time appropriately. Though they thought they were prepared for independence in making academic decisions, the reality of college found them questioning their ability to handle the increased responsibilities. Comments ranged from “I wish I’d known what I was getting into” to expressing shattered expectations of college life being perfect and finding out that it is simply hard work. Students that excelled in high school were shocked to find that their study skills didn’t “measure up” to college expectations with comments like, “I’m in a huge ocean now where you feel like you have to prove yourself every day…it’s very grueling” and “I wanted to quit and go home.” One student said that she stuck it out for only one reason, “I wanted to be different than I was in high school and show that I could do good in school. I wanted to get better grades and prove that I could do it.” Another out-of-state student shared a family discussion in which his parents told him and his twin sister to shoot for “B’s” because “C’s” will bring you home, a strong reminder that their parents were still very much in control of some of the major
decisions in their lives. Students talked about how they learned to manage their time (many admitted learning the “hard way”) and how important it is to find a way to stay organized. They said they wished they’d realized how different college is from high school, but when asked if they would have listened to advice prior to attending college, they admitted they probably would not have paid attention or really understood. One student shared a personal situation in which her college professor reacted very differently than her teachers in high school would have – she said she had to learn to advocate for herself because the level of “caring” is different in college.

Those students who took the First Year Seminar course found it beneficial in both learning about academic support services and more importantly, having an upper level student instructor as a “go to” person for information and advice, helping to build those new relationships of support away from the family.

The parent discussions focused on academics from a different perspective. Their primary concern was how to encourage their students to develop one-on-one relationships with professors and overcome feelings of intimidation. One student had a very difficult time with one of her instructors in the first semester and her parents wanted to intervene in the situation. “What is my role as a parent when my child’s calling me and saying something about something...that’s the hardest transition because back at [high]school, we have parent-teacher conferences…” Parent frustration centered on the changing role of parents in the college environment, privacy laws, and how to support students in self-advocacy, while still protecting the wellbeing of their own child. “You’re clueless about who’s molding your child…and she doesn’t know the social steps, the graces, whatever, to talk to a professor here.” Parents expressed feelings of being disconnected from the information flow they had become accustomed to in high school and fears about how new college students may misinterpret information from an instructor. One father described it as
“The professor says, ‘I’m here to teach. You don’t want to show up, that’s your business’ emphasizing that students are responsible for their own behavior, but the statement may be misinterpreted as a lack of caring, leading to an assumption of ‘So if I have a real question, why ask him, cuz he doesn’t care.’” This discussion showed that the parents wanted their students to be autonomous in making academic choices and build relationships with people on campus, but were also compelled to step into a situation if and when needed. Parents conveyed confidence in the many academic support services we offer at WMU, as well as the First Year Seminar course, and felt that students need to be continually reminded to take advantage of these services. “It was easy for her, but it taught her a lot about college.” Apprehensions about time management and unstructured schedules were also discussed which mirrors the statistics from the 2011 and 2012 Academy sessions. Recognizing that the change in information access and flow is dramatically different in college, indicates that more detailed information and specific examples would be effective in the Academy to help navigate through this new college environment. It is especially important to emphasize to new college parents that because student information access is very limited when compared to high school, it brings an entirely new aspect to the student/parent relationship. Discussions of self-responsibility and advocacy with students before and continuing through the fall semester (and beyond) may prove beneficial in directly addressing one of the key changing components in the parent/child relationship, emphasizing the need to encourage autonomy while staying connected. These discussions may help to bridge communication tensions during the transition, as well as ease the parental discomfort of not having direct access to student information.
Family Relationships

The parent-adolescent relationship can often be in a state of “push and pull” conflict as children seek increased independence, yet yearn for the security of family. At the same time parents are struggling to “let go”, yet trying to ensure their child is equipped to be self-sufficient. This tension, which often elevates as family communication patterns begin to change, was evidenced in both student and parent discussions, especially as families prepared for college.

Discussion in the student focus groups regarding family relationships was multi-faceted and emphasized the ongoing renegotiation of the student’s relationship with family members. Several of the students talked about how they pushed limits in the summer before college, causing a great deal of conflict within their families. One student stated, “I was a brat!” and another student shared her conversation with her mom, “Mom, I don’t have to come home at a specific time. You aren’t going to be able to tell me in September. There are no chains!” These conversations emphasized the students’ need to break the familial bonds and assert some independence. However once the first semester began, most of the students realized how important their family was to them. When sharing stressful situations, many of the students admitted that they turned to family first and leaned on family for support, advice, and consolation. At least three students shared similar stories in which their family drove many hours to Kalamazoo to spend just a short time visiting because the student was so stressed out and overwhelmed. In each of these situations, the student welcomed the embracing parental support. The majority of the students (both male and female) shared that they cried a lot either right after their family left and/or throughout the first semester. One student stated, “I got really homesick and wanted my mom to take care of me,” underscoring the dialectical tension of autonomy versus connectedness. Many of the students stated how much more they appreciate their families
than they did prior to college and how they enjoy spending time with their families, expressing that relationships are deeper and more meaningful. One student shared that he is now included in conversations about family problems whereas his parents used to hide things from him. Their relationship is now more adult-to-adult; he found this strange and unfamiliar at first, but now appreciates his father in a very different way as both have renegotiated the boundaries of their relationship.

Students talked about how often they went home during the first semester – and many went home quite frequently. There were mixed feelings about whether these home visits helped them emotionally or conversely slowed down their connection to campus life. Some students regretted going home because they missed so many campus weekend activities. Others felt pressure from home to go visit, especially those in romantic relationships. Overall, students wished that their families would come to campus more often and be more actively involved in their college experience. One student stated that she wanted to share her accomplishments with her family – show them so they would be proud of what she was doing here.

Parents also reflected rather ruefully on the summer before college as a time of friction and conflict, but that it seemed to somewhat change once their students were settled into college. Relationships seemed to develop into more of an even exchange as time progressed and both student and parent became more accustomed to the changing relationship. Students would consult their families for advice and support in various situations, conversations became deeper and there was a sense that their students appreciated them more. “My daughter’s been a lot more thankful and considerate…” Parents compared this to their own relationships with their parents and how family relationships have changed with this generation. They also talked about their college student’s increasing closeness with younger siblings, even those that “used to fight like
cats and dogs” and the younger siblings’ desire to connect with the college student. “Look at this joke. I gotta send this to her – she’s gonna love this one.”

The evolving relationship of parent/child communication early in the college years can cause great anxiety and sometimes catches parents/families by surprise. Whether the initial separation causes distress, “So that’s when it hit me…and I had to leave her…she was gone” or later in the transition, specific information in the Academy will better prepare parents/families on how to begin renegotiating the parent/child relationship. By openly acknowledging the growing conflict in the relationship and the potential tensions caused by the push-pull of conflicting emotions and desires, parents/families may feel a sense of relief in knowing that these dialectical tensions are a normal part of the transition process. Through the information offered, they will learn how to maneuver through these relational changes with their student.

Other Relationships

From an overall perspective, students valued their new relationships outside of the family and in many instances, these relationships helped them to make stronger connections to WMU and somewhat shifted their support network to relationships outside of their immediate family. In the parent discussions, there were concerns raised about casual relationships outside of the family, especially romantic relationships and relationships perceived as unhealthy, emphasizing a reluctance to let go.

Students talked about the importance of their relationships with other people on campus, as well as friends “back home”. One out-of-state student really struggled with homesickness during the first semester. Prior to attending WMU, she and her family had developed a close relationship with an Admissions person and because of that continuing friendship, she worked through her transition issues without giving up and dropping out – even though she considered it
many times. Another student talked about how he deliberately cut off contact with his family and friends back home for the first several weeks of school to force himself to connect with people on campus, a strong step toward autonomy. “It seems kind of drastic, but it moves where you’re dependent from to the place you’re at now…it forced me to find those new people to lean on.” There was also discussion about initially falling into the wrong group of friends because students are so eager to fit in. One student who really struggled with the transition talked about how he had to take a step back in the early months and disassociate from his initial core group of friends. He didn’t want to live his life that way and knew he was losing focus on why he was here, underscoring his desire to make good choices independently.

Parents talked about the new relationships their children formed after coming to college and how certain experiences were empowering to their children. One parent described her daughter’s experience with a roommate who had ongoing emotional problems throughout the first semester (unbeknownst to her mom) and her daughter had become the roommate’s primary caretaker. Though the situation caused a great deal of ongoing stress, her daughter was proud of herself for helping her roommate through these challenges and her self-discovery that she possessed life skills and coping mechanisms that were serving her well, showing her increasing maturity to handle situations independently. Parents expressed concerns about boyfriends back home and how they provided a distraction from campus life and involvement. One parent shared concerns about his daughter coming home under the pretense of needing to study and then spending all her time with her boyfriend. Another worried about the boyfriend living in a local apartment and where her daughter was really spending the majority of her time. A third worried that her daughter wasn’t getting involved on campus because her boyfriend would be too jealous if she made new friends and had a good time without him. All acknowledged the challenge of
allowing their children to make their own choices in these circumstances, further highlighting the
tensions of the changing relationship with their children. Acknowledgement that these tensions
are a typical part of the transition process may allow parents to focus more deeply on the change
to an adult-adult relationship without feeling the guilt and anxiety that many times are a part of
the transition.

Finances

Students talked at length about the shock they faced because of their ignorance of
finances and how difficult it was initially to adjust to managing their money. Many didn’t
possess the knowledge or the skills to handle finances independently and the topic of financial
literacy was of much greater significance in the student discussions than in the parent
discussions. Several students indicated they are self-financing their education and talked about
the pressures of earning money, student loans, and balancing priorities. Overall, students felt that
they needed to be much better educated about financial matters before coming into college in
order to become more independent of their families. They talked about student loans – “You
don’t actually see the money, so it doesn’t seem real” – and how easy it is to misspend the loan
money. One student talked about how she continues to struggle with finances, “my dad did all
the work for me. He took care of all of the details and scholarships…I’m still not sure how to pay
my bill…” Many students wished their high schools offered a financial literacy course, but those
who had taken such a course said that it wasn’t offered at the appropriate time to be relevant as
they didn’t remember the information when they needed it. One student said, “I wish I could
have talked with someone who would actually tell me what it was like…Crunching the numbers
was overwhelming. No one was available in high school to give me financial information. I’m a
first generation college student.” Another student prided herself on living like a “broke college
student” even when she has money. She said it has served her well. Most of the students have campus jobs and find it challenging, but necessary to balance work hours with academics and other priorities. One student got involved with a credit card scam and his parents made him work through the steps to resolve the situation. He said this experience taught him volumes more than if they had “fixed” the problem for him and helped build his confidence to handle tough situations.

Parents did not talk about finances at length other than to express general concerns about the cost of college and frustration about their children not really understanding the “hidden” costs that quickly add up. Whereas students focused on the larger financial concerns, parents dwelt on minor annoyances such as a daughter going out for pizza when she has a full meal plan or a student going to Biggby’s and paying for coffee instead of having coffee in the dining hall included in her meal plan, or needing coins for the laundry machines.

The orientation program includes comprehensive sessions on financial aid and billing from the institutional “what to do and how to do it” perspective, but these sessions generally receive poor evaluations from attendees. Understanding all of the complications of financing a college education can be confusing, stressful, and overwhelming. The Academy in past years has touched briefly on the topic of student financial responsibility, but based on the student focus group discussions, this topic should be expanded to include specific tips and detailed information from a practical day-to-day perspective for parents/families to discuss with their students. This “real life” approach to parent/student discussions of finances may help alleviate some of the typical stressors felt by many families that are struggling to cope with the cost of education and also offer encouragement to allow students to participate in financial decisions to become better educated about fiscal responsibility and possible consequences of mismanagement.
Communication and Connections

Both students and parents discussed many facets of communication, from micro to macro outlooks and the importance of getting connected to the WMU community. These conversations indicated some gaps in how our institutional information is perceived and understood, as well as some differences in student and parental expectations.

The majority of student participants expressed ignorance and surprise about the many events WMU offers to incoming students before they come to college. Many students didn’t know about the open houses, Gold Pride events, or opportunities to get more familiar with the campus and they stated that had they known prior to college, these events would have been beneficial. Even though most – if not all – information goes directly to students, students said the electronic and mailed information was too overwhelming to deal with so they would just delete email messages and pile up hard copy information in a corner. Those students who allowed family members to be actively involved prior to college had a better sense of what was going on – because someone else was organizing the information and reminding them of dates and deadlines. Many stated that they wished they had paid more attention to planning and preparation, but it was just too overwhelming so they ignored everything that WMU sent them. One student stated, “If I’m getting a lot of stuff, everything’s important and that’s just too much. I’m gonna put it all up in my desk and that’s where it’s gonna stay.”

Both students and parents stressed the need for personal connections and friendships on campus. Parents talked about the importance of peer and staff mentors and making sure students have information about resources. They felt that structured mentor programs should be considered to help new students assimilate into the community, providing support while learning to be on one’s own. One mother mentioned several times that RAs should organize groups to
attend activities and athletic events. She talked at length about group camaraderie during her college years and how that helped her form a core of lifelong friends. Students talked about wanting topic-specific information from the University and being more receptive to peer-facilitated information than to information delivered by older faculty or staff members. They felt important topics should include peer pressure, sex, alcohol and drug abuse, financial literacy, suicide, managing stress, and general life skills. Several students talked about the value of the Parent and Family Programs office to our family members and the importance of the newsletters I send out that discuss transition and student challenges. One student stated that she knew her mom had called me often during the first semester and that having me to talk with helped to improve their relationship during her transition.

These discussions indicate the necessity to “layer” information to both students and their families throughout the recruitment and enrollment phases. We expect family members to encourage students toward self-reliance and accountability. In many situations, they are better prepared to facilitate and reinforce this transition if they are fully informed of the information that is being disseminated to the students. The Academy content can reinforce the need to strive toward open communication between parents/families and students, while also encouraging the “letting go” process through experiential examples of student/family situations.

**Summary of Findings**

In evaluating the statistical data from the Academy iClicker responses, of which 56% of the attendees were first-time college parents/family members, it is evident that they share a common objective of a strong desire for their students to be successful in college. Many parents/family members also indicated they had apprehensions and concerns about their student’s ability to self-manage and balance the numerous priorities of becoming a successful
college student, based on their past experience and knowledge of their child’s personality. With time and priority management being the over-riding concern, 52% of attendees indicated their commitment to supporting their student – with a “whatever it takes – Git R Done” approach.

The iClicker response questions were initially designed to help WMU better understand the needs of our incoming families and also to affirm institutional assumptions about the information families need to ease the transition and offer their students appropriate support. Overall orientation evaluations from 2011 and 2012 showed that while families expect information about the “nuts and bolts” of departmental information and processes, they also wanted experiential information on the actual transitional experience – how the factual information fits into and assists them personally in renegotiating their family’s relationships.

The focus groups included current students and parents/family members of current students, thus providing a more in-depth understanding of the transition experience, each having personally went through it. Autonomy-connectedness dialectics frame the entire transition experience from both the student perspective and the family perspective as each struggle to understand the new realities of their relationship, environment, and family dynamics. While students had different perceptions of the topics discussed than the parents did, each group talked about their concerns inherent within the themes. Students were concerned about on-campus living from a relational viewpoint of connecting with roommates, avoiding the “roommate from, hell, making friends, and fitting into the campus community. Parents were concerned about appropriate boundaries and maintaining value standards, but still desirous of their children making positive social connections with others – finding that core group of lifelong friends.

Students affirmed the parental concerns expressed through the iClicker responses with regard to managing time and academic priorities. Repeated comments such as “I really didn’t
know what I was getting into” and “I wish someone had told me” permeated throughout the
group discussions and many spoke of the hard work they faced to recover from a low GPA and
poor decisions early in their college careers. Parents also expressed concerns about managing
priorities in the focus groups, although not to the extent as might have been expected based on
concerns noted in the iClicker responses. Parent concerns centered primarily on the influence of
outside relationships and how those relationships might distract their students from being
mindful of their priorities.

Family relationships were a major factor in both student and parent discussions. Both
groups talked about the significant change in student/family relationships as they moved through
the initial transition into college and how expectations and communication evolved. Students
talked about their growing awareness of their parents as “real people” who not only loved them,
but had also sacrificed many things for them – money, time, and sleep were just a few things
mentioned. Parents talked about how their children seemed to appreciate and respect them more
than before. The dialogue and interactions were deeper, more profound, and gradually moving to
an adult-to-adult level. Students openly sought out parental advice and opinions which parents
were only too happy to give.

Other relationships were important to students as well. They expressed the need to be
connected to others on campus, while still maintaining former friendships at home and also the
need to balance the two. Peer mentors were especially valued and helped several students work
through their transition challenges. They talked of the need to push oneself beyond a comfort
level and take advantage of the variety of available opportunities. Parents also expressed the
desire for their children to be comfortable within the campus community, make friends, and have
an active social life. This however was tempered by their concern that their students maintain appropriate focus on academic priorities.

Students talked about the deep need for financial education and how unprepared many of them were to handle their own finances. This is a need that the University has recognized for some time and has attempted to address through the First Year Seminar and an online financial literacy course for incoming students. There are still gaps in reaching the larger student population and also gaps in helping parents to understand financial literacy. The parents who participated in the focus groups did not express great concerns about financial matters, though a significant number of iClicker responses (25%) indicated financial considerations as an overall concern.

WMU has a purposeful and targeted email and hard copy mail communication sequence targeted towards prospective and enrolled students that according to the student discussions, is not effective. They were deluged with information prior to entering WMU and most simply opted to ignore all of it rather than sift through it. Students were not aware of pre-orientation informational events though they felt the events would have helped them get connected with the University. Once students arrived on campus, they felt better informed and able to find information through various sources, most especially their peers. Parents talked of mentor programs and peer support for new students in transition, with regret for how technology (texting, Facebook, email) has replaced personal interactions.

Though every family experiences the transition to college differently, most families encounter some form of conflict as both student and family begin to redefine their relationship. The tension of renegotiating their autonomy and connectedness to each other as the child moves into adulthood can be uncomfortable and stressful. These emergent themes offer a deeper
examination of transition from student and family viewpoints, and affirm the value of collecting family iClicker responses during the Academy. The thematic commonalities offer WMU opportunities to address transition issues more effectively and offer families increasingly useful information that can better support their student’s transition and perhaps somewhat ease transition challenges. Specifically acknowledging the relational tensions that students and families face during transition and offering examples of how to navigate through these challenges would be especially beneficial for families. The Academy offers parents/families an opportunity to “get real” about the tensions inherent in the changing relationships with their student as they move further into adulthood and to consider parental responses to various situations. We can encourage parents/families toward student self-advocacy and appropriate responses while offering assurances that we will work together collaboratively to ensure the well-being of their children.

Revising Western and YOU Parent/Family 2013 Academy

The 2012 Academy outline (see Appendix F) was designed with a loose script of talking points and a Prezi presentation that included the iClicker questions, five video clips of students talking about resources, and parenthood comics intended to be amusing. Even though the Academy covered a wide range of material with interactive components, it still felt like a “talking head” presentation…and late in a very long day after many topic-specific sessions, this was not an ideal environment to relay information to families effectively. Additionally, the time limitation of the one-hour-and-fifteen minute session presented a challenge to cover the plethora of included information. The 2011 and 2012 sessions took place in the Bernhard Center Ballroom so creating a simulated classroom took a bit of imagination for both presenters and attendees. The 2013 Academy will be held in a Sangren Hall amphitheater classroom that will
provide a more realistic and inviting environment for the session. This also offers the opportunity for family members to experience a modern classroom with high-tech equipment in action.

The data collected during this project indicates that parents and families crave the institutional “nuts and bolts” information to be shared within the context of experiential “real life” examples, and appreciate expanded opportunities to explore transition topics within the context of their own family situation. This approach makes each topic relevant and more easily understood in a variety of family situations. To align the Academy with the emergent data, I plan to shift the course focus from a list of WMU services that are helpful in transition to a primary emphasis on the theme of transition within the frame of relational dialectics, with emphasis on autonomy-connectedness. The Academy content will encourage families to consider their own relationships and how they must learn to renegotiate the inherent tensions in communicating with their student. This will lead to a better understanding of how our services and resources can be beneficial and how to access them when needed. Therefore, I propose to make the following changes to the course:

As parents and family members enter the room, the syllabus and a brief list of transition questions to consider will be given to each person to review as they are waiting for the class to begin (See Appendix G for questions). These questions will help attendees to focus their thoughts on their own family transition and provide a relevant framework for the session. A slide show of current WMU family/student photos, inspirational/motivational quotes, and parent-related comics set to music will provide a welcoming and somewhat lighthearted environment. Family members just separated from their students prior to this session so some attendees will be feeling somewhat emotional (especially if they’ve had a tough day with their student). These emotions can range from sadness and tears to anger and frustration to jubilation and a sense of
freedom. Moving the Academy to an actual classroom offers the opportunity to “set the stage” for a more effective introduction to the course, as well as a change of scenery from the previous sessions. In the past, the Academy was one of many sessions in the same meeting room used all day.

As presenter, the introduction will include a humorous, yet realistic snapshot of the differences in my own relationships with my college-aged daughter and soon-to-be college students on which will highlight dialectic tensions within our family. This will serve as an ice-breaker and also provide a sense of authenticity and shared experience. Following the introduction as in previous years, we will briefly review the importance of the course syllabus and how it represents a typical syllabus in a WMU classroom. Families will be reminded that by understanding the importance of a course syllabus, they can help support their students in future WMU courses. Family members received their Parent/Family Guide (http://www.wmich.edu/parents/documents/2013-western-michigan-university-final-WEB.pdf) earlier in the day along with a pen and will be asked to reference the Guide (which includes a section for notes) throughout the Academy. This year, the Guide is divided into six chapters that align with the transition areas typical to entering college and the course will follow the format of the Guide. Each chapter begins with a short article about a specific transition topic and these articles incorporate the major themes that emerged from the focus group data. The titles of the chapters are as follows, along with major themes, and primary data sources (in italics):

1. Embracing Change (the preparation and initial entry into college)

   *Family relationships (both student and parent focus groups)*
   - Consideration of current parent-child relationship and expectations within the context of relational dialectical tensions.
   - How the relationship gradually evolves into an adult-adult relationship – autonomy versus connectedness.
• Encouraging student independence over the summer before college, encouraging self-sufficiency before being on their own.

2. Finding Balance (health and wellness, making good choices, support services)

   *Academics/time management (both student and parent focus groups, iClicker data)*
   - Time management matters – how to discuss this topic and experiment with it over the summer, leading toward personal responsibility for choices.
   - Finding time for play while being mindful of academics, learning to balance decisions.

   *Other relationships (student focus groups)*
   - Making choices that support health and personal safety – student examples.

   *Finances (student focus groups)*
   - Financial literacy – how preparation over the summer can help build independence and better decision-making.

   *Living Situation (student and parent focus groups)*
   - Preparing for the change.
   - Conflict resolution – how to be supportive while encouraging self-advocacy.

3. Making the Grade (academic information, advising, academic resources)

   *Academics/time management (student focus groups)*
   - Emphasis on the differences between college and high school with examples of “I wish I’d known…” from current students.

   *Academics/time management (parent focus groups)*
   - Change in information access and connecting students to instructors. Encouraging good choices that lead to academic success.

   *Communication/connections (parent focus groups, iClicker data)*
   - Supporting student success while addressing anxieties. Directly addressing separation issues of autonomy versus connectedness.
   - Knowledge of resources to support students when things get tough and encouraging parents to allow students to self-access these resources.

4. Staying Connected (connecting on campus while staying connected back home)

   *Communication/connections (parent focus groups, iClicker data)*
   - Encouraging healthy connections on campus to build an expanded support network.
   - Romantic relationships back home and how they can influence transition.

   *Communication/connections (student focus groups)*
   - Campus visits vs. home visits.
5. Looking Ahead (changing relationships, “what if’s”, home visits)

   Communication/connections (parent focus groups, iClicker data)
   - My baby’s growing up – now what?
   - Facing poor choices and troubled situations.
   - Allowing personal responsibility for choices as a learning experience. Autonomy sometimes includes consequences.

6. Resources (contact information, maps, glossary of terms)

   a. Summarize resources in the context of transition and relational tensions.
   b. Close the session with reminders of University support and commitment to student success in partnership with parental support.
   c. Invite families to the Mixer to get to know the WMU community.

Each chapter will be introduced with a brief video clip of a current WMU student sharing a personal transition experience. These experiences will be drawn from the primary themes that emerged from the focus group data that emphasize the tensions in changing relationships. Every clip will be a different student and include diverse experiences and family situations. These clips will be embedded into a Prezi presentation and iClicker questions will continue to be a part of the course with interactive questions interspersed throughout the session. The questions will be revised according to the emergent themes for attendees to more deeply examine personal transition expectations and fears (see Appendix H for 2013 iClicker questions). The worksheet given out at the beginning of the session will also be referenced periodically during the course and family members will be encouraged to discuss transition topics with their student throughout the summer. The 2013 Academy course content will be based primarily on the focus group thematic data, shifting from the former emphasis on what WMU resources are available to why the resources are important in the context of transition and how students and families can use the resources to assist with their personal transition experience. These proposed changes to the course will create a relevant classroom experience for parents and families that specifically
address the transition themes and issues that were discussed in the student and parent focus groups.

Through the proposed revisions, the Academy will directly address the realities of the high school to college transition using relational dialectics as the foundation. The intended outcome of these revisions is that while parents/families may experience ongoing tensions in their relationship with their student, they will have a better understanding of when to step back to encourage self-sufficiency and also at what point they may need to intercede on behalf of their student (especially with serious emotional, mental, or academic difficulties). They will develop strategies for responding to various situations and as these situations occur, be better prepared for the experience as their student becomes more autonomous. The Academy becomes an experiential data-driven platform that provides the foundation for WMU to foster the expansion of in-depth and targeted parent/family programming, not only during the Orientation program, but also earlier in the recruiting and admissions process.

**Assessment**

Participants in WMU’s parent/family orientation program are asked to fill out a general satisfaction survey (Appendix I). The Academy, along with other informational sessions is evaluated on a scale of:

- 5: Extremely satisfied / excellent
- 4: Satisfied / above average
- 3: Neutral / average
- 2: Unsatisfied / below average
- 1: Extremely unsatisfied / poor
- DNA: did not attend

There are also comment boxes for participants to note what was most beneficial about the program and how the program could be improved. These satisfaction surveys will be collated and the comments categorized and analyzed to determine the immediate perceptions of success.
of the Academy. Also, anecdotal comments via email and during events such as Fall Welcome and Family Weekend will be noted and collected.

Additional structured feedback will be requested during the 2013-14 academic year via e-communications sent out through the WMU Family Connection to assess the effectiveness of the content and delivery of the Academy. Targeted surveys will be sent out during the first week of classes in September, just after fall semester mid-term exams, and at the conclusion of the fall semester. Additional surveys will be sent out in January as the spring semester begins, right before spring break, and finally in early May at the conclusion of the academic year. Each of these succinct e-communications will reference the Academy content to assess whether the information proved useful during the academic year and what, if any, were the missing pieces or gaps that we need to address.

These data points, along with internal University feedback regarding the 2013 Academy and the 2013 iClicker response data will be analyzed to revise the 2014 orientation program and specifically the Academy to ensure that we are meeting the changing needs of our students and families.

**Limitations**

There are many factors that must be considered as limitations in this study. The students who participated in the focus groups without exception are high-achieving student leaders. They are active members of the WMU student community and not necessarily representative of our overall student population. In order to verify the themes within these group discussions, it is suggested to host focus groups that include a broader student population, perhaps even including academically dismissed students. The parent/family focus groups were not well-attended and all were in two-parent relationships with daughters. Further discussions with non-traditional
families and families with male students would provide a deeper understanding of transition and situated family experiences. The student groups included more culturally and racially diverse participants than the parent/family groups. More diversity in the family discussions would offer different perspectives that would be valuable in learning more about transition in a broader range of cultural environments. Another population that must be considered is students who do not live on campus and may not have immediate access to services intended to support first-year students living on campus. Local families may also be disconnected from WMU because of perceived familiarity with the University – they think they know about resources but perhaps would have different needs as the parent/family member of a current student.

An ongoing limitation in my work with parents and family members is self-selection. Parents and families choose whether or not to attend orientation and the many other events we offer to prospective, incoming, and current families. They must self-sign up for the informational electronic newsletters offered through my office and may not even be aware that these resources are available. Outreach to first-generation families, economically disadvantaged families, and families of other cultures create an ongoing challenge that we need to find innovative ways to address. This is a critical component of student recruitment and retention.

**Future Directions**

This project provides a starting point to further develop the services and outreach offered through Parent and Family Programs to better meet the needs of WMU families and students as they enter into and progress through the college experience. Some initiatives to consider pursuing in this next year include the following:

- A student focus group participant suggested recruiting family volunteers during orientation to “follow” for a year, to better understand their transition experiences. Creating an easy-to-use mechanism to facilitate this initiative would offer “in the moment” personal experiences at crucial points during the year to better understand the
needs of our families. This would create an opportunity to gather rich data and the
prompts for feedback could be facilitated through currently available electronic resources
within the Parent and Family Programs office. A ‘call for volunteers’ is included in the
Academy transitions worksheet (Appendix G) and also included in the Parent and family
2013 Satisfaction Survey (Appendix I).

- Create a portfolio of critical transition points that emerged from the focus group data to
share with high school families and distribute at appropriate times of the year and/or on
an as-needed basis. This portfolio of short “briefs” would cover various topics, including
student independence, financial literacy, self-advocacy, academic considerations, etc. in
an easy-to-understand and usable format.

- Partner with the local high school counseling offices to bring the portfolio of transition
points to a broader parent/family population early in the high school years – sophomore
and junior years. Providing information about the key points that emerged from the data
before the college search process begins offers families a longer time frame to better
prepare students for the transition to college (Kalamazoo Central’s counseling office has
already expressed an interest in this partnership.)

- Partner with current WMU programs offered in other departments to work more closely
with different populations. These programs include Upward Bound, TRiO, and Alpha
programs and would offer increased opportunities to get transition information to first-
generation and economically disadvantaged families of college-bound students. Lack of
access to these critical populations is a significant limitation in this project and
purposeful connections could better inform the need for different transition outreach
relevant to specific circumstances (for example, print information instead of electronic
information).

- Survey WMU Family Connection members (currently 9,675) to further expand upon and
develop the themes that emerged from the project data. Asking the questions of a larger
and more diverse population may offer additional data that did not emerge from the focus
group discussions. Additionally, it would be beneficial to elicit feedback from these
families about their preferred methods of receiving resources. Especially when
considering the students’ reaction to “information overload” and how they ignored and
avoided dealing with it, it is essential to find effective ways to reach students and
families.

- Based on assessment of the 2013 Academy, expand the 2014 Academy into a more
comprehensive and interactive experience for parents and families. The expanded
program would allow time for small group discussion of case studies, expression of
individual concerns and apprehensions, and offer opportunities for families to build
relationships with each other. This creates a profound experience that establishes a strong
connection with WMU and allows the opportunity to effectively offer University
information about services and resources that will likely be remembered when the need
arises.
The data developed within the scope of this project from the student and parent focus groups, along with the 2011 and 2012 iClicker response data affirms that challenges are an inherent factor in the transition from high school to college for both students and families. From an institutional perspective, WMU can better serve our incoming students and families by intentionally providing transition information and support, thus offering the possibility of a more positive and seamless transition experience. In turn, students and families that experience a positive transition will be better prepared to meet the challenges of college, which will positively impact WMU’s recruitment and retention efforts. Retooling the Western and YOU Academy: The Road to and Through College to meet the transition needs of our families during the Orientation program is a small, yet vital step in launching this mutually beneficial initiative.
References


Appendix A

Orientation 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1: June 3/4</th>
<th>Session 4: June 11/12</th>
<th>Session 7: June 19/20</th>
<th>Session 10: June 27/28</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 2: June 5/6</td>
<td>Session 5: June 12/13</td>
<td>Session 8: June 21/22</td>
<td>Session 11: June 30/7-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 3: June 7/8</td>
<td>Session 6: June 17/18</td>
<td>Session 9: June 25/26</td>
<td>Session 12: July 1/2</td>
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</table>

9:30-11 a.m.: **Check-in for Orientation 2013 in Valley 1 residence halls.**
   - Check-in for Reading test begins at 9:15

10-11:30 a.m.: **Individual Meetings for invited students and families in Valley 1.**
   - TRIO Student Success Program (Recreation Lounge)
   - TRIO: Future Educators Success Program (Recreation Lounge)
   - Lee Honors College Orientation in Valley 1 Dining
   - MLK Academy (sessions 4 and 5) (Residence Hall Classroom)

10-11:40 a.m.: **Lunch in Valley 1 Dining Hall**
   - Showcase: FYE, Financial Aid, Sustainability, Disability Services for Students, Sindecuse, ROTC

11 a.m. – Noon **Groups set up in Bernhard Center Lobby to chat with students and families**
   - Orientation Staff, ROTC, PNC, SALP, Athletics and IMs, Auxiliary

12:05 p.m.: **Programming Round 1 (everyone together) (East Ballroom, set with rounds)**

   12:05: Welcome
   12:10: President Dunn
   12:25: Discover Kalamazoo
   12:30: First-Year Experience Programs
   12:45: Student Activities and Leadership Programs
   12:50: Public Safety
   1:00: Orientation Coordinator
   1:05: Dismiss to Breakout Sessions

1:10-1:45 p.m.: **Programming Session 2 (Academic Colleges) (Students and families attend together)**

   Alpha Students
   College of Arts and Sciences
   College of Aviation
   College of Business
   College of Education and Human Development
   College of Engineering and Applied Sciences
   College of Fine Arts
   College of Health and Human Services
   Exploratory

   213
   208-209
   204
   157
   Sangren 1910 and 1920
   105
   212
   208
   Brown and Gold
2:10-3:20: Programming Session 3 (East Ballroom) (all students and their families together again)

2:10: Residence Life and Dining Services
2:50: PNC

3:20: Students and Families will separate for the remainder of Orientation.
Students report to front lawn
Parents and Families go to Sangren
Financial Matters staff will stay in East Ballroom to answer personal questions.

Day 1 continued

Parent and Family Orientation

Sangren Hall

3:35-4:50 p.m.: “Western and YOU Academy: Transitions: The Road Leading To and Through College”
3:35-4:30: Army ROTC breakout
4:50-6 p.m.: Parent and Family Mixer with the Faculty and staff

Student Orientation

3:30 p.m.: Students meet their groups in front of the Bernhard Center
3:30-6:10 p.m.: Go West With Us

During this interactive portion of Orientation, students will experience on-location presentations from Center for Academic Success Programs, Career and Student Employment Services, Sibley Health Center, Disability Services for Students, Parking Services, and Sustainability. Additionally, students will complete the First-Year Experience Early Alert Survey, learn how to navigate the GoWMU portal, and get their Bronco IDs.

6:15-7 p.m.: Dinner in the Dining Hall
7:20 p.m.: Welcome from Athletics and introduction to Coach Fleck’s “Row The Boat” experience.
7:30-8:45 p.m.: “The Bronco Way”
9 – 10:30 p.m.: Involvement Zone / Open Rec. Time / Reflection time
10:30-11 p.m.: Walk back to the Residence Halls (final group meetings) / free time
11 p.m.: All Students expected to be in their rooms.
Parent and Family Orientation Day 2

Gilmore Theater Complex

8:30 a.m.: Coffee and Conversation
Residence Life, Dining Services, Parent and Family Programs, PNC, Sindecuse, and FYE

9 a.m.: Shari Glaser will welcome guests and introduce the show

9:05 a.m.: “The Bronco Way”

10:20 – 11 a.m.: Orientation Student Leader Panel

Noon: Open Houses at select Academic Colleges.

Student Orientation Day 2

7-8 a.m.: Breakfast in the Dining Hall (Valley 1)

7:45 a.m.: Engineering Students meet outside to catch bus

8 a.m.: All other students meet outside
Health and Human Services students will board the bus.
All others will meet in a group and walk to Advising

8:30-11:30 a.m.: Academic Presentations, Advising, and Course Registration

Noon: Open Houses at select Academic Colleges

Engineering and Applied Sciences: Students will checkout of the residence hall before Advising, and will take their things with them to Parkview. Families meet their students at Parkview and go home from there.

Business: Parents and Families will meet their students at the College of Business on day 2. Their open house will end by 12:30 so students can check out of the residence hall before they close at 1.

Aviation: Will host an open house at the airport. Students will check out of the halls after advising, and meet their families there. They will leave campus and go to Battle Creek.
Appendix B

WESTERN AND YOU: Parent/Family Academy Course Syllabus

Transitions: The road leading to and through college

Instructors: Shari Glaser, Director, Parent and Family Programs and Peggy Grieve, WMU Parent

Office hours: Immediately after class or by appointment
Shari Glaser    Peggy Grieve
2415 Faunce Student Services    peggy.grieve106@gmail.com
(269) 387-4820
shari.glaser@wmich.edu

Course Description: This course offers a hands-on interactive approach to help you support and assist your student through the transition of attending college and beyond. Through a classroom experience, you will learn about everything WMU has available to ensure student success.

Course Objectives:
- Deliver important transitional and resource information through an actual classroom experience.
- Offer an informative overview of college life on WMU’s campus.
- Become familiar with what to expect over the summer months and fall semester so that your student (and you) have a seamless transition into WMU.
- Return home after orientation with a solid understanding of WMU’s role and your continuing role in the success of your student.

Required Text: Orientation 2012 resource guide and i>clicker (provided in class)

Class Schedule: This class will meet for a single session during Parent/Family Orientation. Successful assimilation of course material will continue throughout the college years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Outline</th>
<th>Homework/quizzes/exams</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Transitioning</td>
<td>Homework 35%</td>
<td>August 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Finding Balance</td>
<td>Participation 15%</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Making the Grade</td>
<td>Midterm Exam 25%</td>
<td>Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Staying Connected</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Looking Ahead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Final Exam 25%</td>
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</table>

Attendance and Expectations: Class attendance and participation are vital to success. As a parent or guardian of a college-age student, you are preparing for a different style of parenting in the coming months and years; therefore you are expected to be actively involved in this class. This includes following along with the readings as scheduled, completing assignments on time, using the clickers appropriately, and contributing to class discussions, using knowledge and experience from past situations. Unexcused absences will lower your final grade.

Academic Integrity: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures that pertain to academic misconduct. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submissions, plagiarism, and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will have the opportunity for a

Grading Scale

A: 94-100%
BA: 88-93%
B: 82-87%
CB: 76-81%
C: 70-75%
DC: 65-69%
D: 60-64%
hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

**Accommodations:** WMU is committed to making reasonable efforts to assist individuals with disabilities in their efforts to avail themselves of services and programs offered by the University. To this end, WMU will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with documented qualifying disabilities. However, it is the student's responsibility to request accommodations. If you have a disabling condition that may substantially limit your ability to participate in this class, please contact Disability Services for Students, 2210 Woodlawn Place; (269) 387-2116 for additional information and assistance.
Appendix C

2011-2012 Academy iClicker Questions
(Bolded questions used both years)

Question #1: 1,926 responses
Press A if this is your first or only student starting college. 56%
Press B if this is your LAST student starting college. 30%
Press C if this is a middle student – you’ve been through this before and still have kids at home. 14%

Question #2: 1,841 responses
Press A: I graduated from college (associate, bachelor or advanced degree). 63%
Press B: I have taken some college or post-high school courses. 24%
Press C: I have never attended college. 11%
Press D: I’m currently taking or planning to take classes. 02%
Why should my kid have all the fun?

Question #3: Students will receive a comprehensive course syllabus for each class. 792 responses
True
False

Question #4: Class attendance is ALWAYS required at WMU.
True
False

Question #5: Living Arrangements
Press A: My student will be living on campus in a residence hall
Press B: My student will be commuting from the family home
Press C: My student will be living in an off-campus apartment
Press D: My student hasn’t made living arrangements yet.

Question #6: What is the biggest transition issue you anticipate your student will have? 1,762 responses
A. Making friends 13%
B. Money management/financial 12%
C. Academic “new world” 25%
D. Time management/making good choices 46%
E. Staying healthy 04%
Question #7: What will be the biggest transition issue for you and your family?  
1793 responses

A. Separation/missing your student  32%
B. Staying connected  11%
C. Relationship changes when student comes home  10%
D. Financial  25%
E. Being supportive while letting go  22%

Question #8: Students shouldn’t plan ahead during the semester. A “go with the flow” approach will work just fine.

True
False

Question #9: If your student has a mental or emotional health problem, he or she must go off-campus for help.

True
False

Question #10: WMU encourages you to set your student free. Drop ‘em off and let ‘em go.

True
False

Question #11: The medical professionals at Sindecuse Health Center must have your permission to treat your student.

True
False

Question #12: What will most impact your student’s academic success? 1662 responses

A. Time management  58%
B. Initiative/self-starter  25%
C. Staying healthy and balanced  06%
D. Getting involved/making friends  08%
E. Financial management  03%

Question #13: How will you support your student’s academic success? 1668 responses

A. Lots of cheery, encouraging text/email messages  31%
B. Reminders of support services, time management, “Git R Done” messages  52%
C. Wake-up calls  02%
D. Threats/Bribes  05%
E. He or she is on their own – sink or swim  10%
Question #14: Knowing yourself, how will you respond if your student is not successful this first semester or year at WMU?
   A. Understanding/acceptance
   B. Anger/Blame/Frustration
   C. Disappointment
   D. Depends on situation
   E. Not sure

Question #15: Knowing your student, how do you think he or she will react to difficulties in college?  1377 responses
   A. “It’s no big deal – I’m a college student”  13%
   B. Sense of failure/disappointment  33%
   C. Determined to do better next semester  34%
   D. “It’s not MY fault.” Blames someone else.  15%
   E. Give me a “do-over!”  05%

Question #16: I have will complete access to my student’s financial and academic information.
   True
   False

Question #17: My student will benefit most by coming home every weekend.
   True
   False

Question #18: If I sense something is not quite right with my student, it’s best not to contact anyone at WMU with my concerns. It’ll blow over.
   True
   False

Question #19: My student will not be able to contact instructors outside the classroom.
   True
   False
Appendix D

WMU Student Focus Group

**Purpose:** Explore current WMU student perceptions of their personal and family experience transitioning from high school to college and what resources could or would have assisted in the transition experience.

**Focus Group Questions**

1. As you reflect on your first few months in college, how prepared were you to handle being on your own?
   
   a. Did you look to your family for guidance?
   
   b. Did you look to your family for support?

2. During high school, at what point did you start to think about being ready for the change from high school to college
   
   a. And what that might mean for you personally…
   
   b. What, if any, were your fears and apprehensions in the months prior to college?

3. What feelings did you have about leaving your family?
   
   a. As college loomed closer (i.e., senior year), how did your relationship with your family change?

4. What did your family do to help you prepare for being on your own in college?
   
   a. What kind of resources helped you and your family prepare for the transition?

5. What resources would have helped you and your family to prepare for the transition?
   
   a. Where should those resources be available?
   
   b. How would you have preferred to access the resources?

6. If you could do it over again, would you want your family to do anything differently and if so, what?

Summarize the key points of the discussion.
7. Is there anything you’d like to add that would help us to better understand the transition experience from high school to college?

Follow up question if time permits:

What were the biggest transition issues in those first few months of college?
Appendix E

WMU Parent/Family Focus Group

Purpose: Explore current WMU parent and family perceptions of their family transition experience and their WMU student’s transition from high school student to college and what resources could or would have assisted in the transition experience.

Focus Group Questions

1. As you reflect on your child’s first few months in college, how prepared was he or she to handle living on his or her own?
   a. Did your child look to you for guidance?
   b. Did your child look to you for support?

2. What were the biggest transition issues in those first few months?

3. What specific steps did you take to help your child prepare for the transition to being independent in college?
   a. What resources did you use to help you in your preparation?
   b. Where did you look for resources to help you prepare for the transition?

4. What resources would have helped you and your child to prepare him or her for the transition?
   a. Where should those resources be available?
   b. How would you have preferred to access the resources?

5. How did facing the transition to college impact your relationship with your child?

6. If you could do it over again, would you do anything differently and if so, what would you do?

Summarize the key points of the discussion.

7. Is there anything you’d like to add that would help us to better understand the family transition experience from high school to college?

Additional questions if time permits:
During high school, at what point did you start to think about your child living on his or her own?

What, if any, were your fears and apprehensions in the months prior to college?

As college loomed closer (i.e., senior year), how did your preparation efforts change?
Appendix F

Western and You Parent/Family Academy 2012
Transitions: The road to college and beyond

(# Cartoon) Welcome and Introductions
• Please silence your cell phones
• Our class will run for 1 hour and 15 minutes and we will end on time

(# Clicker) Clicker instructions:
• You will have about 30 seconds to respond to each question
• Please turn them off and leave them on the tables after class
• Let’s practice and get to know each other

Who are we?
# Clicker Question #1
Press A if this is your first or only student starting college.
Press B if this is your LAST student starting college.
Press C if this is a middle student – you’ve been through this before and still have kids at home.

Response Comments

# Clicker Question #2
Press A: I graduated from college (associate, bachelor or advanced degree).
Press B: I have taken some college or post-high school courses.
Press C: I have never attended college.
Press D: I’m currently taking or planning to take classes. Why should my kid have all the fun?

Response Comments

(# Cartoon) Proactive vs. reactive

This is a genuine classroom experience during which we will review a lot of information about WMU in the context of your student’s upcoming transition to college. Our primary focus is to help your students learn to be proactive vs. reactive as they become a college student.

We hope to bring you more tools that will help you support your student in the fall. You will have a better understanding of what a WMU classroom is all about; learning about what resources are available right here on campus, and how we work together to promote student success.

Your orientation experience today will be a little different than your student’s experience, but equally important. Academic vs. social transition. You will learn about resources they will need in college, while they are likely more concerned at this point about assimilating into their new life as a college student.

All of this may be overwhelming, but you will survive and even thrive. You raised your child to get to this point, so be proud of him/her, let them go and trust that they will be fine. Keep communication open and take advantage of all the services available if they need them. We wrote each of our kids a letter telling them how proud we were of them and offering little tidbits of advice & wisdom. Just don't get too preachy!
It’s okay to mourn a little. Let all that emotion out after you drop them off, then figure out what new possibilities exist for you now. Still like my husband, go back to school or hobbies, spend time with other family members, etc.

Textbook Overview (Calendar, contact information, maps, pages for taking notes).

Reminder that there is a pen in the tote bag.

(# Syllabus overview) Let’s start off with the syllabus. Every WMU syllabus includes specific information and typically, instructors will hand it out on the first day of class and review it in detail. Consider this a contract between the student and the instructor.

- Instructors and contact information
- Office hours
- Course description
- Textbook(s)
- Class schedule and outline of topics to be covered
- Grading scale / how grades are factored
- Attendance and expectations
- Academic integrity
- Accommodations

Every student is responsible for understanding the syllabus and course expectations.

# Student Video Clip-Syllabus

# Chapter Overview

# Clicker Question

Living Arrangements
- Press A: My student will be living on campus in a residence hall
- Press B: My student will be commuting from the family home
- Press C: My student will be living in an off-campus apartment
- Press D: My student hasn’t made living arrangements yet.

Living arrangements: My kids all found living in the dorms for at least the first 2 years to be the best way to meet people, get involved and make friends. They liked not having the extra responsibility/transportation issues of having apt. and having to buy/prepare own food.

Reminder: Encourage students living off campus to make campus connections

(# Quote) Chapter 1: Transitioning

# WMU’s role in the life of your student
- Partnership – student-WMU-family
- Change in relationship – from parent to child to adult-adult
- (# Cartoon) Student development and personal responsibility

# First Year Support
• Life on campus
• FYE support programs – *no need to go into detail – just a reminder*
• Transitions and independence
• We’re here to help

# Money Matters – Requires a candid conversation with your student (pg. 38)
• Discuss over the summer
• Mutually agreeable budget
• PNC bank in Bronco Mall – ATM locations on campus
• Prefer a credit union? – 2 ATMs available on each side of campus

# Bronco card options
  - Bookstore Bucks
  - Dining Dollars
  - Laundry Bucks

# WMU Bookstore
• Stores
  # Textbook options – Rental and # purchase

# Money Matters – part 2
• Bronco Express – located in the Bernhard Center
• One-stop shop – billing, financial aid, registration questions, etc.
• 2012-13 Tuition
• First Bill
• Payment plans and options

# Transportation
• Yes – it really is uphill both ways to the Valleys
• Ride the bus for free – on campus (all WMU campuses) and throughout Kalamazoo
• Parking permits – parking on campus is not necessarily “door to door”
• Bikes, roller blades, scooters are all great options during nice weather
• Amtrak station – consider the Student Advantage Card

# Clicker Questions:

What is the biggest transition issue you anticipate your student will have?
  A. Making friends
  B. Money management/financial
  C. Academic “new world”
  D. Time management/making good choices
  E. Staying healthy

What will be the biggest transition issue for you and your family?
  A. Separation/missing your student
  B. Staying connected
  C. Relationship changes when student comes home
  D. Financial
  E. Being supportive while letting go
# Chapter 2: Finding Balance

- Mind, Body, Spirit

- Biggest stumbling block is time management
  - Academics is a full-time job
  - Planner is a must

# Student Video Clip – Time Management

- Involvement outside the classroom – Pursuing your passion
  - Organizations
  - Campus jobs
  - Volunteer opportunities
  - Support resources – LBGT, multicultural affairs

# Classes and homework are the biggest things, but find time to find activities, sports or clubs and pursue your interests. Everything in moderation when it comes to partying; be careful, don't drink much.

# Health and Wellness

- Sindecuse – fully licensed – fully equipped
  - Pharmacy, immediate care, diagnostic, physical therapy, insurance
  - Sindecuse Video
  - Meningitis immunization recommendation

Keep up with any medications you need. Sindecuse was very helpful in helping my son fill and maintain his ADD prescriptions. Let your child handle these responsibilities, but it’s okay to check in occasionally and ask if they are taking their meds, or if everything is going okay.

- Counseling Services
  - Fully licensed – specialize in working with college students
  - Confidential and Free
  - You know your student better than we do and you will likely sense if something isn’t quite right – Let us know – we can help

- Student Rec Center – work out that stress and keep active

- Get involved (Top 10 Bucket List)

- # Campus Safety – a shared responsibility
  - This is a community of 25,000 people
  - If you see something, say something
  - Good choices - alcohol
  - Mindful behavior
  - Awareness
  - Program emergency numbers into cell phones
    - Safe ride program (269) 387-RIDE (7433)
    - DSK- (269) 345-0DSK (0375)
# Student Video – Involvement

# Mid-term Exam – Table Discussion

Share concerns you have about students and alcohol.

List suggestions about how we can partner together to support our students in making good choices.

(# Cartoon) during Mid-term discussion

Report out suggestions
Talk about alcohol.edu

(# Quote) Chapter 3: Making the Grade

(# Cartoon) Academic expectations – it's a full time job

- 30 Matters

# Tips for academic success

- Go to class
- Find and USE the library
- Study and review course content weekly
- Schedule social and play time
- Get to know the instructors
- Seek help!!
- Know the last day to withdraw – WMU has an extremely generous policy - Nov. 5 for fall semester. This date is on your calendar

(# Cartoon)

- Use the library, not only for resources, but to study. Alex & Austin both found out-of-the-way places there to study without the distractions of their rooms/friends.
- Don’t under-estimate the amount of time your assignments will take. Use the time between classes to study and work on projects - don’t leave all for the evenings. If chemistry problems are due at midnight, don’t wait until 8 to start them!
- Go to class!
- Get to know instructors; go to office hours.
- Get help - earlier the better. Don’t be stubborn

# Big difference between high school and college

- Lifestyle habits are self-directed
- Academic outcomes are the student’s responsibility
- Less time in the classroom with higher expectations
- Students advocate for themselves.

# FERPA
Authorized User Access – what it does and doesn’t do
GoWMU

Academic Advising and Support Services

- Tutoring /study groups
- CASP (free)
  - Academic Resource Center

# Student Video Clip – Supplemental Instruction

- The Writing Center (free)

# Student Video Clip – Writing Center

Advising – THE most important thing

Every semester

- # Additional support services
  - Associate VP for student affairs
  - Student Conduct
  - Disability Services for Students
  - Case manager
  - Ombudsman

Clicker Questions:

# What will most impact your student’s academic success

A. Time management
B. Initiative/self-starter
C. Staying healthy and balanced
D. Getting involved/making friends
E. Financial management

# How will you support your student’s academic success

A. Lots of cheery, encouraging text/email messages
B. Reminders of support services, time management, “Git R Done” messages
C. Wake-up calls
D. Threats/Bribes
E. He or she is on their own – sink or swim

(# Quote) Chapter 4: Staying Connected

- Communication – critical to discuss over the summer
  - How and how often
# Student Video Clip – Family Support

#: Let your student decide how often to communicate with you, talk about it ahead. Megan called every night the first week, then was fine. Friend’s son would call every Sunday night at 9. My boys would frequently call as they were walking between classes. Be flexible - let them know they can call any time of day or night if they need you, but it’s okay to put limits on calls if you can’t talk during work. Texts are great!

- # Supporting your student - what’s appropriate and what’s not? (smother mother)
  - Encouraging your student to advocate for him or herself
  - WMU Family Connection – YOUR connection to WMU
    - Emergency situations
  - What to do when things go wrong
    - How to connect your student with support services

# Common Read participation

- # Campus Visits
  - Great way to stay connected – may be more beneficial to your student in the first semester then him or her coming home
  - Family Weekends
  - Lots to do in Kalamazoo – YOUR Bucket List – back of parent/family tab
  - Concierge Card discount program

Visit campus and take them out to dinner occasionally.

(# Quote) Looking Ahead

- Home Visits
  - What to expect
  - Acceptance, understanding, and love
  - What to talk about ahead of time

# So what if the first semester doesn’t go so well...

Consider how you will react

- Perspective
- Learning from failure
- Believe in your student
- Second Chances

# Clicker Question:

1. Knowing your student, how do you think he or she will react to difficulties in college?
   - “It’s no big deal – I’m a college student”
   - Sense of failure/disappointment
   - Is determined to do better next semester
   - “It’s not MY fault.” Blames someone else.
   - Give me a “do-over!”

# These years will fly by
• Remember how fast those high school years went?
• Think long-range – internships, study abroad, career preparation
• Don’t miss out on things to do – Bucket List

# Graduation: Final recognition of accomplishments

(# Quote) Reminders

  o Mixer – Bistro3
    ▪ Location of Financial Aid and Billing
  o Day Two – “The Bronco Way” show and Student Panel
  o Local restaurants for dinner
  o Union entertainment (when applicable)

Thank you for attending the Western and You Academy!

THE END!
Appendix G

Western and YOU Parent/Family Academy: The Road To and Through College
Considering Transition...

Here you are. You’ve just said goodbye to your student and may be feeling conflicting emotions about this whole college experience. I invite you to take a few minutes before our course begins and consider these questions within the context of your own family. Our time together this afternoon may help you find answers and support as you think about your family’s transition to college and beyond.

How are you feeling at this moment about your student beginning college?

- Excited
- Happy
- Proud
- Scared
- Worried
- Nervous
- Overwhelmed
- Other: ________________________

What is your biggest concern about sending your student to college?

____________________________________________________________________________________________

Do you feel equipped to help your student with this challenge?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

Have you discussed this situation with your student?                   ____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Yet

Do you plan to talk with your student before September?          ____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure

Do you feel your student is able to handle this challenge independently?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure

Has your student shared fears or concerns with you about leaving for college? ____ Yes ____ No

Were you able to help your student work through these concerns? __ Yes __ No __ Not Sure

Have you looked into resources at WMU to help support you and your student?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Yet

WMU Parent and Family Programs supports students and families in the transition to college. We are seeking family volunteers to follow during the freshman year to better understand your transition experiences. If you are interested in participating in this study, please provide your email address to Shari Glaser before you leave today. You will be asked to complete a brief summary about your “in the moment” personal experiences at crucial points during this next year. Your experiences will help us serve our students and families more effectively and we appreciate your participation.
Appendix H

Western and YOU 2013 iClicker Questions

Question #1:
Press A if this is your first or only student starting college.
Press B if this is your LAST student starting college.
Press C if this is a middle student – you’ve been through this before and still have kids at home.

Question #2:
Press A: I graduated from college
   (associate, bachelor or advanced degree).
Press B: I have taken some college or post-high school courses.
Press C: I have never attended college.
Press D: I’m currently taking or planning to take classes.
Why should my kid have all the fun?

Question #4: Have you discussed the transition from high school to college with your student?
   Press A: Yes
   Press B: No
   Press C: Not yet, but I am planning to this summer.

Question #5: Is your student prepared to handle a budget and financial matters?
   A: Absolutely! I have an accountant in the making.
   B: There may be some slip ups, but my student has a good sense of money management principles
   C: I am helping my student work towards financial literacy.
   D: I will be handling all of my student’s financial matters during college.
   E: I haven’t even thought about this yet!

Question #6: What is the biggest transition issue you anticipate your student will have?
   A. Making friends
   B. Money management/financial
   C. Academic “new world”
   D. Time management/making good choices
   E. Staying healthy
Question #7: What will be the biggest transition issue for you and your family?
   A. Separation/missing your student
   B. Staying connected
   C. Relationship changes when student comes home
   D. Financial
   E. Being supportive while letting go

Question #8: What will most impact your student’s academic success?
   A. Time management
   B. Initiative/self-starter
   C. Staying healthy and balanced
   D. Getting involved/making friends
   E. Financial management

Question #9: How will you support your student’s academic success?
   A. Lots of cheery, encouraging text/email messages
   B. Reminders of support services, time management, “Git R Done” messages
   C. Wake-up calls
   D. Threats/Bribes
   E. He or she is on their own – sink or swim

Question #10: Knowing your student, how do you think he or she will react to difficulties in college?
   A. “It’s no big deal – I’m a college student”
   B. Sense of failure/disappointment and determined to do better next semester
   C. “It’s not MY fault.” Blames someone else.
   D. Give me a “do-over!”
   E. Gives up and moves onto something else
Appendix I

Parent and Family Orientation 2013
Satisfaction Survey

Please circle the session you attended:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>June 3/4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 12</td>
<td>July 1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For questions 1-10, please rate using the scale below: (circle your responses)

1: Extremely Unsatisfied / Poor
2: Unsatisfied / Below Average
3: Neutral / Average
4: Satisfied / Above Average
5: Extremely Satisfied / Excellent

DNA: Did Not Attend

1. Pre-Orientation Communication
2. Staff Friendliness/Service
3. Arrival and Check-In
4. Programming Round I (Welcome, FYE, Activities, Safety)
5. Residence Life/Dining Services Presentation
6. Financial Matters Presentation
7. Parent and Family Academy
8. Faculty Mixer
10. Student Leader Q&A Panel

12. Which Academic College presentation did you attend (Programming Session 2) Please Circle:

Arts and Sciences  Education  Health/Human Services
Aviation           Engineering Exploratory Advising
Business           Fine Arts   Alpha Presentation

Please rate using the same scale as above

DNA

Did Parent and Family Orientation meet all of your needs?  YES  NO (if no, please explain on back)

As a result of attending Orientation, do you feel better prepared to assist your student in making a successful transition from high school to college?  YES  NO
What did you find most beneficial at Parent/Family Orientation?

How could we improve Parent and Family Orientation?

If you are interested in participating in a research study about student and family transition from high school to college, please provide your name and email address. We will be in contact with you during your student’s first year at WMU.

Name: _________________________________________

Email: _________________________________________

_____ I’m Not Interested