The level of communication and interaction between two groups, college administrators and parents of college students, may be changing. In a recent Associated Press article exploring this issue, West Virginia University parent advocate Susan Lantz states that in recent years, parents have become more involved in their students’ college educations, and that “a lot of students want their parents involved, too.”

To find out if this trend is occurring at UC Davis, SARI conducted a QuickSurvey on MyUCDavis during the first week of spring quarter, 2004. The results: most Davis students had parental involvement in their education and liked that arrangement (Chart 1). The poll also showed that of students not satisfied with their parents’ current level of participation, there were more students desiring increased involvement than decreased involvement.

The poll asked students to select the answer that best suited their parents’ current level of involvement, and then to indicate whether they wanted their parents to be more or less involved in their college life. A total of 3187 students completed this survey. Of this group, 1901 (60%) stated that their parents were involved and that the student wanted to maintain the current level of involvement. An additional 661 (21%) said that their parents were not involved and they preferred that it stayed that way. About 13% of the students wanted their parents to become more involved while 5% wanted less involvement.

When the results were examined by gender, several things were found notable. Female students had greater parental involvement than males: 64% vs. 54%, a full 10% difference. Additionally, a greater percentage of female students with uninvolved parents wanted more participation from their parents (9%). On the other hand, more male students wanted their parents to decrease involvement (8%).

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Across ethnicities, Asian and Hispanic students had the lowest level of parental involvement, with values of around 50%; the average was 60%. Hispanics with uninvolved parents had a greater percentage (16%) wanting more participation than did students of other ethnicities. More Asians wanted their parents to be less involved than any other group (10%). African Americans were found to have the highest parental involvement rate (68%).

There are several possible social explanations for these ethnic distribution differences. In recent immigrant families, as is more common among Asians and Hispanics, poor language skills and little familiarity with the procedures used by American colleges could be affecting parental involvement rates. Additionally, the inability of a recent immigrant family to contribute financially to their student’s education may be affecting the degree of involvement.

Another report, *SARI report 310 Davis Students and Family Time*, explores a related subject: that of the level of family obligations carried by Davis students. The number of hours spent performing family obligations, and the nature of the activities reported, depicted a high level of involvement in family life by many Davis students. First-generation college children of immigrants may be carrying more extensive obligations, including language translation and financial contribution.

**Chart 1: Level of Parental Involvement in College Education for All Respondents**

- My parents ARE involved in my college education, but I would like them to be LESS involved. 6%
- My parents ARE involved in my college education, but I would like them to be MORE involved. 5%
- My parents ARE involved in my college education and I would like it to stay that way. 60%
- My parents are NOT involved in my college education, but I would like them to BE involved. 8%
- My parents are NOT involved in my college education and I would like it to stay that way. 21%

*Source: SARI Report 324*