



2025

# **FAMILY SURVEY:** **What 32,423 college parents** **told us they need**

The most comprehensive study of college family sentiments to date, with survey data from over 30k families across 81 colleges



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	<b>3</b>
Parent-to-student communication trends .....	<b>4</b>
College-to-parent communication preferences .....	<b>6</b>
Satisfaction with the college experience and communication .....	<b>9</b>
Desire for more opportunities for involvement .....	<b>11</b>
Financial aid and paying for college .....	<b>13</b>
About the survey participants .....	<b>16</b>
About the report sponsor .....	<b>17</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How often do today's college parents want to hear from their student's college? What topics do they need more information about? Are they satisfied with how colleges have engaged them?

To answer these questions, CampusESP conducted a survey of more than 30,000 families of current college students at over 80 colleges. This report summarizes the core themes and takeaways – to help you improve your family engagement strategy.

## Parent-to-Student Communication Trends

- Nearly half of students **interact with their families daily**. (pg. 4)
- The highest rates of daily communication come from **families earning less than \$60k per year** (pg. 4)
- Students lean on their families most for support with **student life, academic advice, and mental health**. (pg. 5)

## College-to-Parent Communication Preferences

- 77% of families want to **hear from their student's college weekly** or more, a 7% jump from last year. (pg. 6)
- While email is the preferred communication channel, **text message is a growing preference** – especially for Black, Hispanic Latino, lower income, and first-generation families. (pg. 7)
- **Facebook Groups are at the bottom** of the list of parent communication preferences. (pg. 8)

## Satisfaction with the College Experience and Communication

- As **parent satisfaction with the ROI of college tuition declines**, families are seeking more information about post-graduation outcomes. (pg. 9)
- Families are most satisfied with content related to academics, and **least satisfied with information related to job placements** and career services. (pg. 9)
- 78% of families would **encourage their student to enroll at the same college** again. (pg. 10)

## Desire for More Opportunities for Involvement

- A third of families **feel more connected to their student's college** than their own alma mater. (pg. 11)
- 22% of families are **more likely to donate to their student's college** than their own alma mater. (pg. 11)
- **Less than half of families are satisfied** with their general opportunities for involvement. (pg. 11)

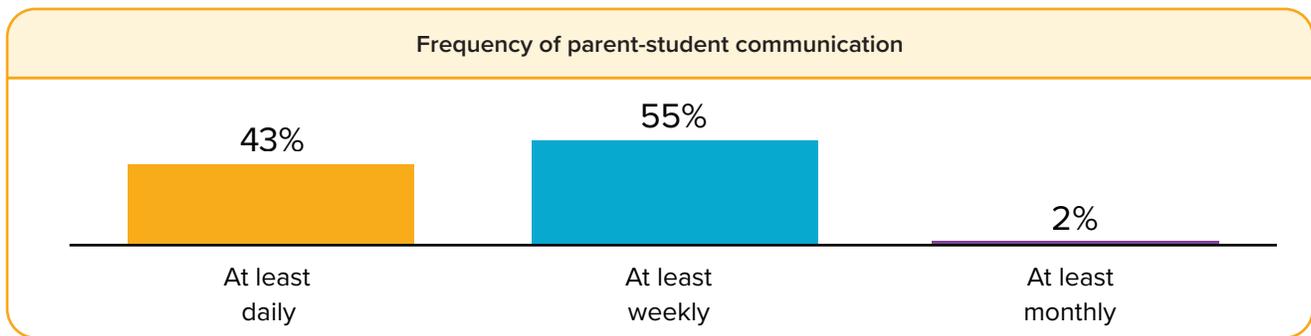
## Financial Aid and Paying for College

- 59% of families say that **it will be difficult to fund their student's college** education. (pg. 12)
- Only 25% of families feel that financial aid information is easy to navigate, and **nearly half had to reach out for clarification**. (pg. 12)
- Access to student financial data is a high priority for parents, with **the request for bills data (89%) and financial aid data (79%) ranking at the top** of the list. (pg. 13)

# Parent-to-Student Communication Trends

## Nearly half of students interact with their parents daily.

Today's college parents are highly influential in their student's journey. 43% of parents talk to their student daily, and nearly all families speak weekly.



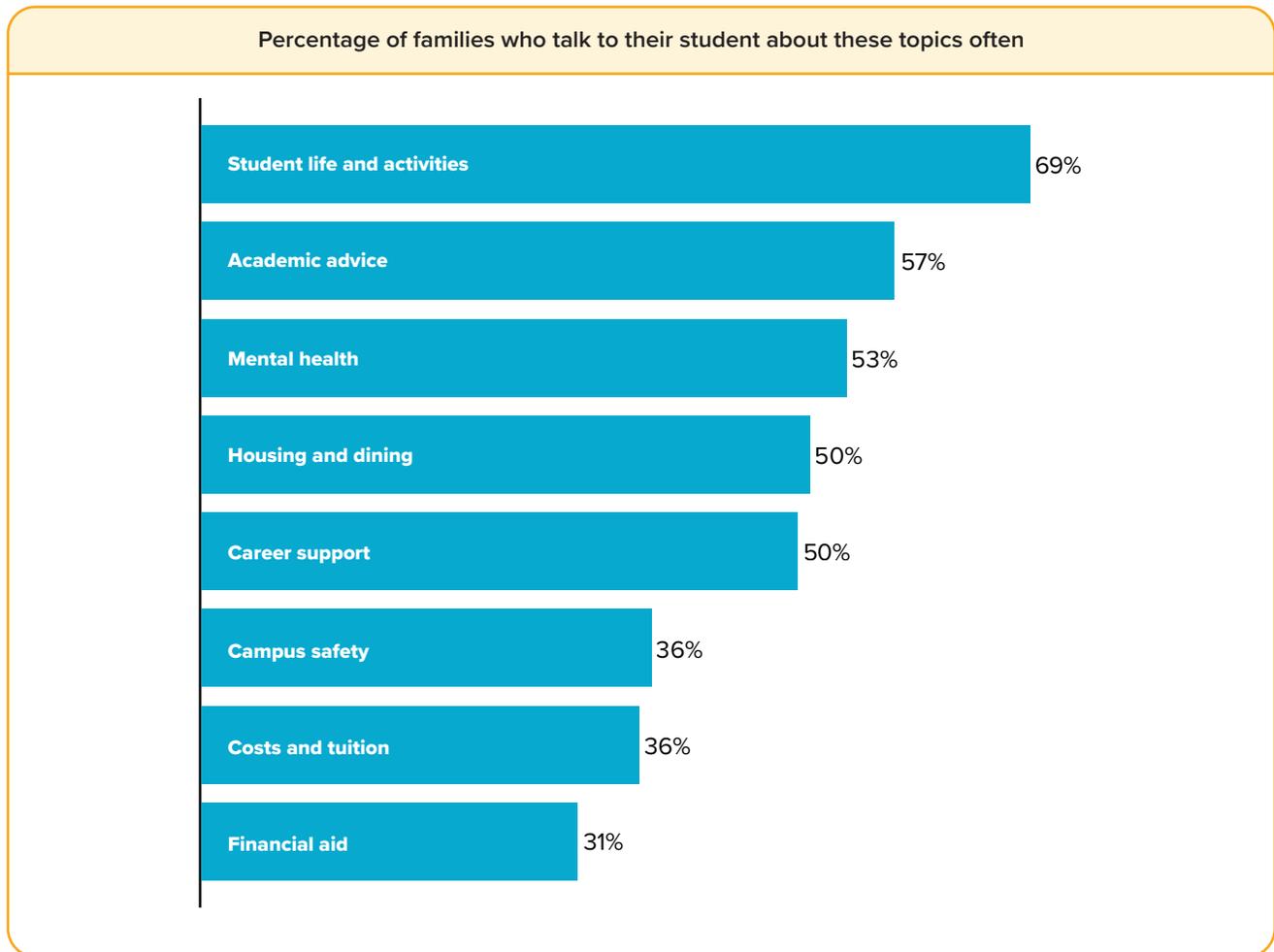
## The highest rates of daily communication come from families earning less than \$60k per year.

The highest rate of daily communication comes from families earning less than \$60k per year (61%). Next, Black, Hispanic or Latino, and first-generation families are all tied, with 57% communicating with their students daily.

	At least once a day	At least once a week	At least once a month
<b>BY ETHNICITY</b>			
Asian/Pacific Islander	47%	49%	3%
<b>Black or African American</b>	<b>57%</b>	41%	1%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>57%</b>	42%	1%
Multi-racial	47%	49%	3%
Native American or American Indian	50%	47%	2%
White	41%	57%	2%
<b>BY INCOME</b>			
<b>Less than \$29.9k</b>	<b>61%</b>	35%	3%
<b>\$30k to \$59.9k</b>	<b>60%</b>	38%	2%
\$60k to \$99.9k	50%	48%	2%
\$100k to \$149.9k	45%	53%	2%
\$150k to \$199.9k	40%	58%	2%
\$200k to \$249k	38%	61%	2%
\$250k or more	37%	61%	2%
<b>BY STATUS</b>			
Continuing Generation	39%	58%	2%
<b>First-Generation</b>	<b>57%</b>	41%	2%

## Students lean on their families most for support with student life, academic advice, and mental health.

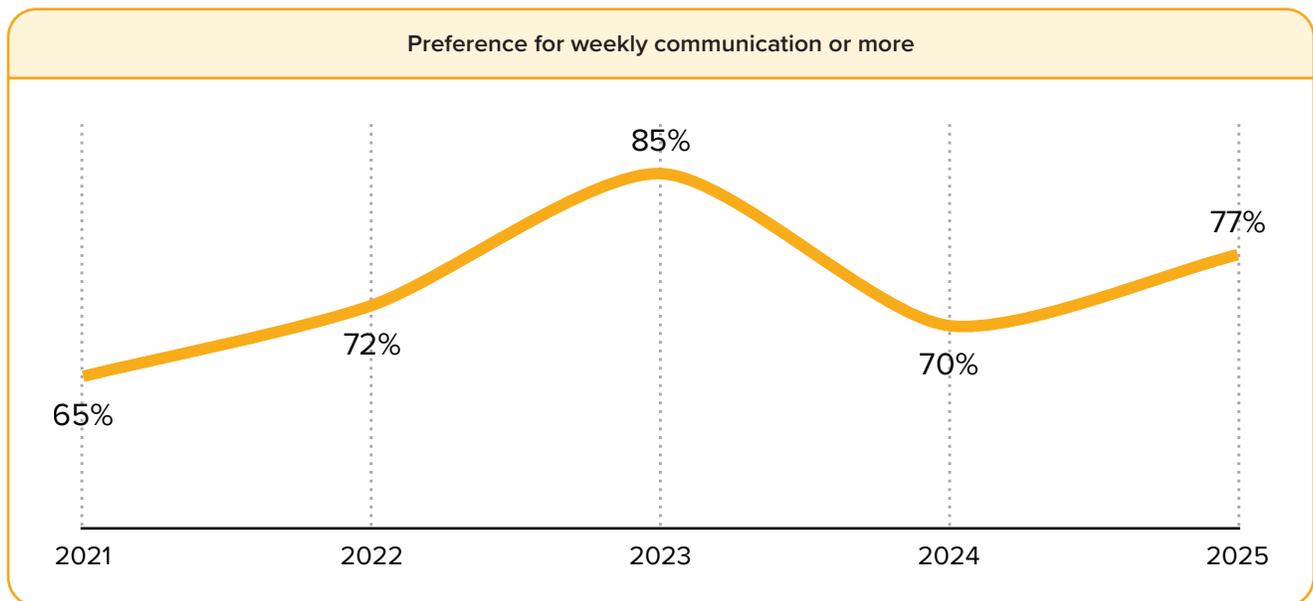
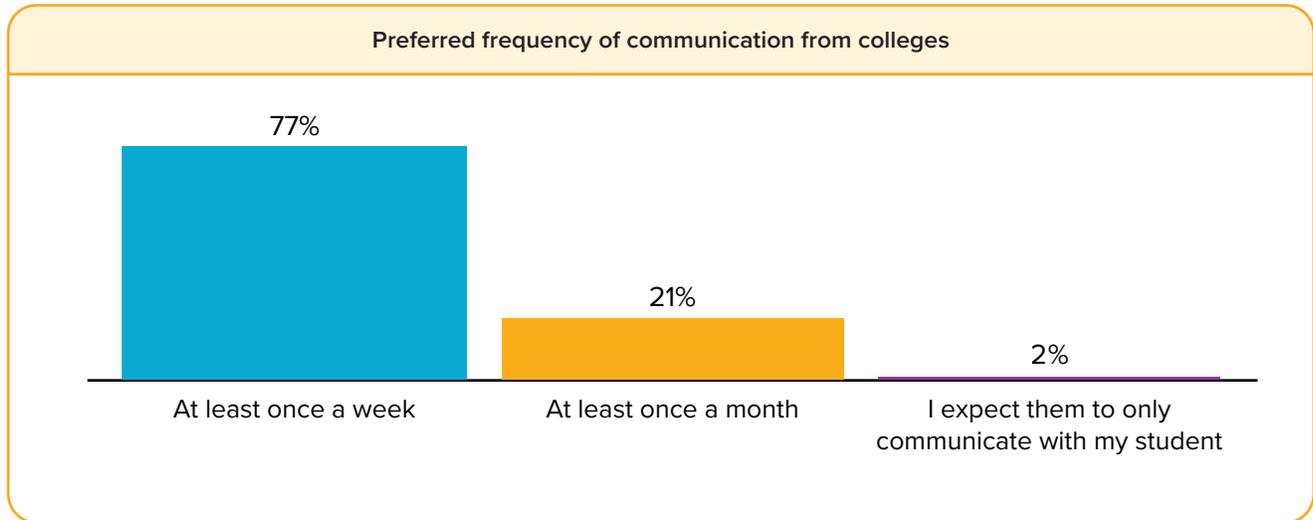
Parents and family are a student's first line of support. Parents speak with their students most about student life and activities (69%), academic advice (57%), and mental health (53%). Colleges should consider how they're preparing families to have these conversations.



# College-to-Parent Communication Preferences

**77% of families want to hear from their student's college weekly or more.**

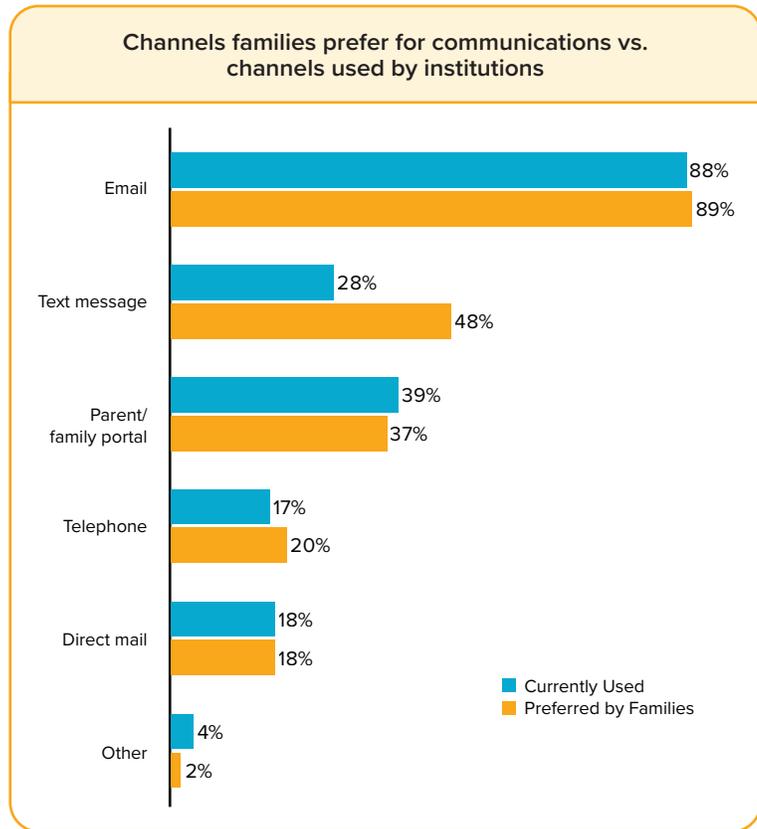
Most families expect communication, a figure that has grown 7% over the last year and 12% over the last four years.



**While email is the preferred communication channel, text message is a growing preference – especially for Black, Hispanic Latino, lower income, and first-generation families.**

Email continues to be the most highly requested communication channel, preferred by 89% of families. Text messaging is a growing preference, with 6% growth from last year.

There remains a communication gap between families wanting text communication (48%) and colleges offering it (28%). The preference for text messages is highest for Black families (64%), families earning less than \$60k per year (59%), Hispanic or Latino families (58%), and first-generation families (56%).



**BY ETHNICITY**

	Email	Text message	Parent/family portal	Telephone	Direct mail	Other
Asian/Pacific Islander	86%	50%	35%	25%	18%	4%
<b>Black or African American</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>64%</b>	46%	39%	25%	2%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>58%</b>	34%	33%	17%	3%
Multi-racial	86%	53%	36%	28%	22%	3%
Native American or American Indian	87%	48%	40%	28%	21%	2%
White	90%	46%	37%	17%	18%	2%

**BY INCOME**

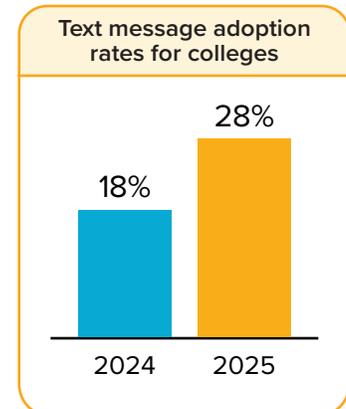
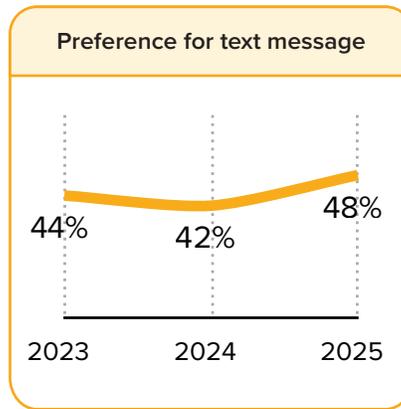
	Email	Text message	Parent/family portal	Telephone	Direct mail	Other
<b>Less than \$29.9k</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>59%</b>	35%	42%	20%	4%
<b>\$30k to \$59.9k</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>58%</b>	37%	33%	24%	3%
\$60k to \$99.9k	88%	52%	37%	26%	21%	3%
\$100k to \$149.9k	89%	48%	38%	20%	19%	3%
\$150k to \$199.9k	90%	47%	37%	17%	18%	2%
\$200k to \$249k	90%	45%	36%	16%	16%	2%
\$250k or more	90%	45%	36%	16%	15%	2%

**BY STATUS**

	Email	Text message	Parent/family portal	Telephone	Direct mail	Other
Continuing Generation	90%	46%	37%	18%	18%	2%
<b>First-Generation</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>56%</b>	37%	29%	20%	2%

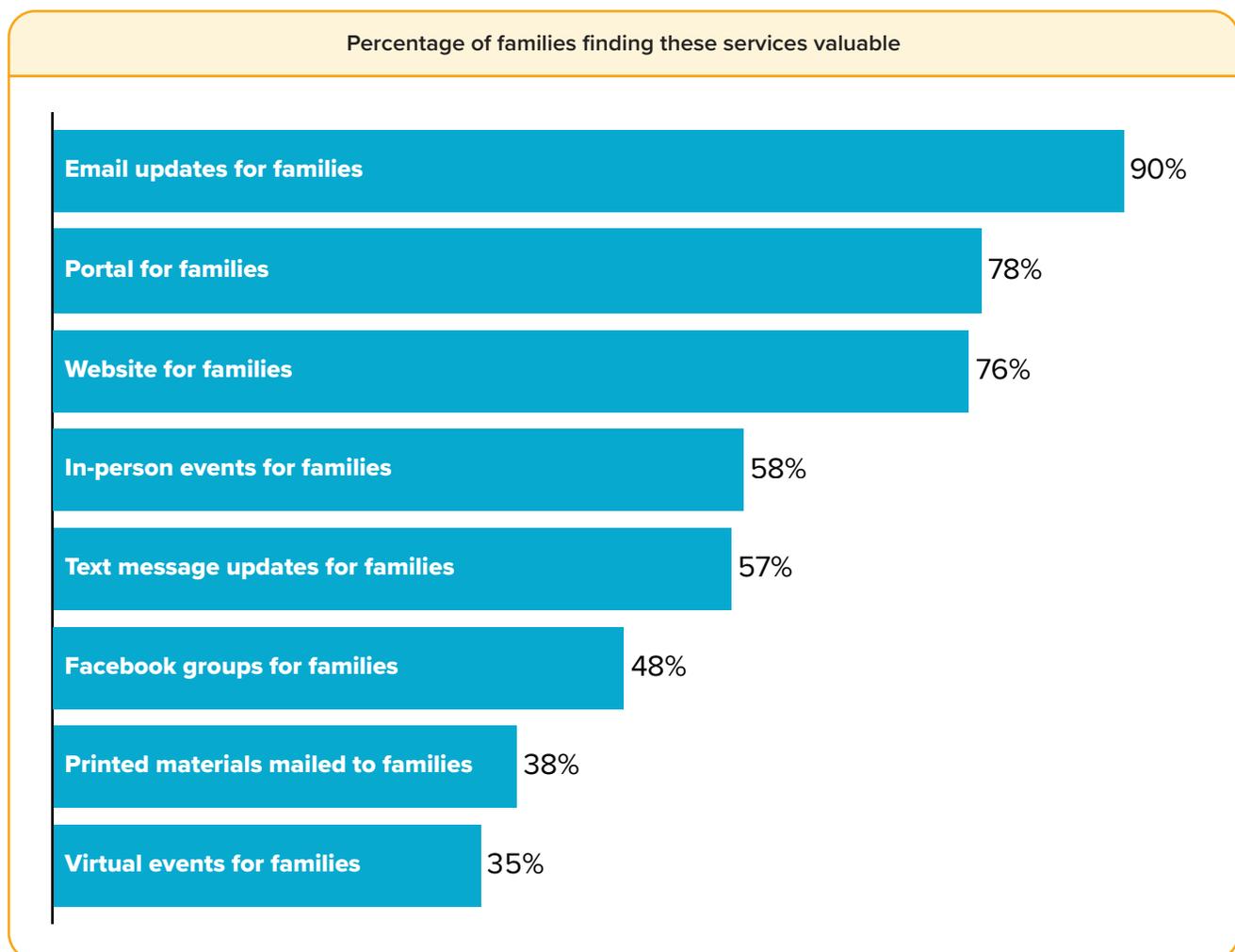
## More colleges are adopting text messaging as a key communication channel with families.

As the family preference for texting grows year over year, so does the college adoption rate for text messaging. This year, 28% of colleges are proactively communicating with families via text messaging, compared to only 18% of colleges last year.



## Facebook Groups are at the bottom of the list of parent communication preferences.

When asked which family services are most important, families ranked email updates (90%), family portals (78%), and family websites (76%) as the most valuable. Facebook Groups fell towards the bottom of the list (48%), ranking only above virtual events and family mailers.

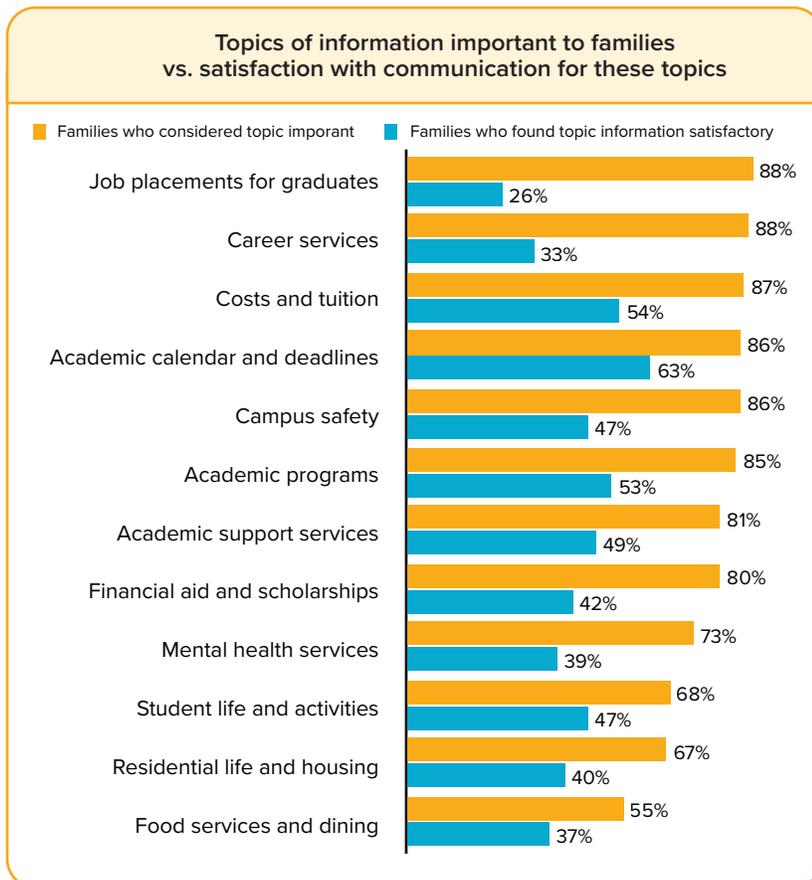
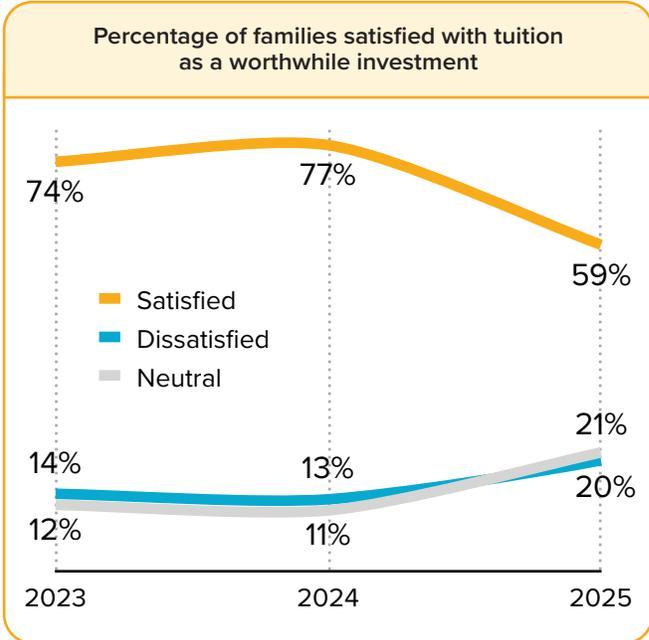


# Satisfaction with the College Experience and Communication

## As satisfaction with the ROI of college tuition declines, families are seeking more information about post-graduation outcomes.

College may be the largest financial investment for most families, yet satisfaction with tuition as a worthwhile investment has dropped since last year (77% to 59%).

At the same time, families are expressing a strong need to receive information related to job placements (88%), career services (88%), and costs and tuition (87%). These topics were ranked higher than anything related to academics or campus life.



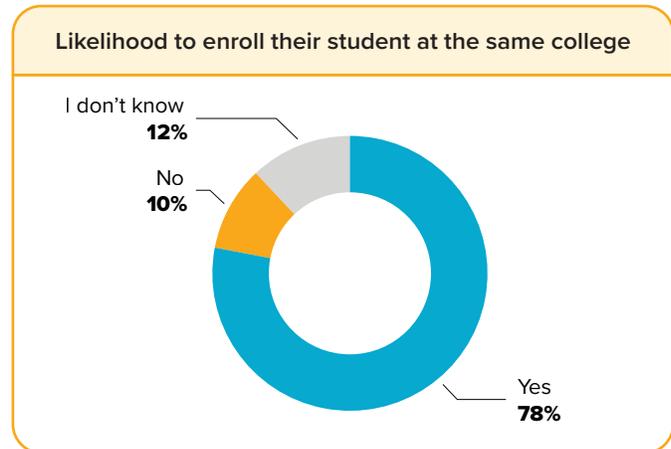
## Families are most satisfied with content related to academics, and least satisfied with information related to job placements and career services.

Families are most satisfied with communications regarding the academic calendar (63%), costs and tuition (54%), and academic programs (53%).

However, the topics that families consider most important are also the topics they are least satisfied with. Only 33% of families found career services information satisfactory, and job placement information (26%) ranked at the bottom of the list.

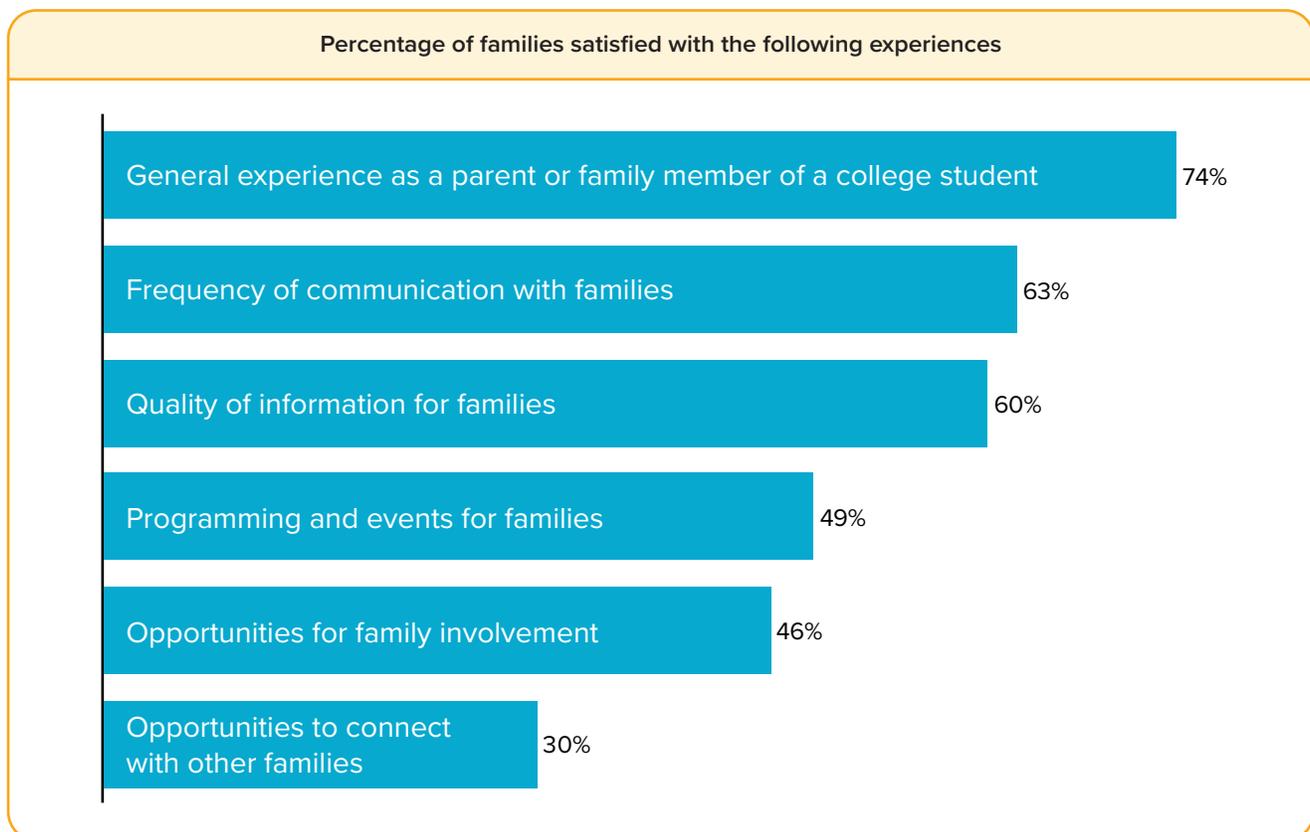
## 78% of families would encourage their student to enroll at the same college again.

Overall, most families would encourage their student to enroll at the same college, if they had to do it over again. Only 10% of families say they would not re-enroll at the college.



## 3 out of 4 families are satisfied with the parent experience.

A majority of families (74%) are happy with the welcome their student's college has extended. However, there's room for improvement in opportunities to connect with other families (30%) and opportunities for family involvement (46%).

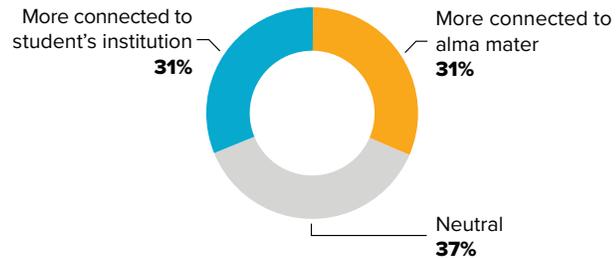


# Desire for More Opportunities for Involvement

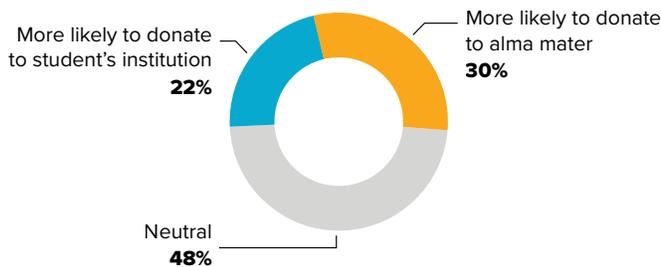
## A third of families feel more connected to their student's college than their own alma mater.

31% of families feel this high degree of connectedness. These families will be eager to get involved and support their student's experience at their college – even more than for their own college.

Feeling of connectedness with student's institution



Likelihood of donating to their student's institution



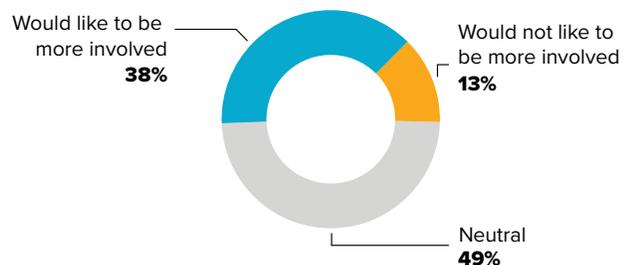
## 22% of families are more likely to donate to their student's college than their own alma mater.

This is a significant proportion of families that are likely to financially support their student's college experience. Schools should engage and nurture relationships with these families – they may be the next in line to give.

## Nearly 40% of families want to get more involved with their student's college.

38% of families actively express a desire to get involved with their student's college. Families want to support student experiences, and engaging these families through communication, events and programming, and parent-to-parent interactions can go a long way in growing family affinity.

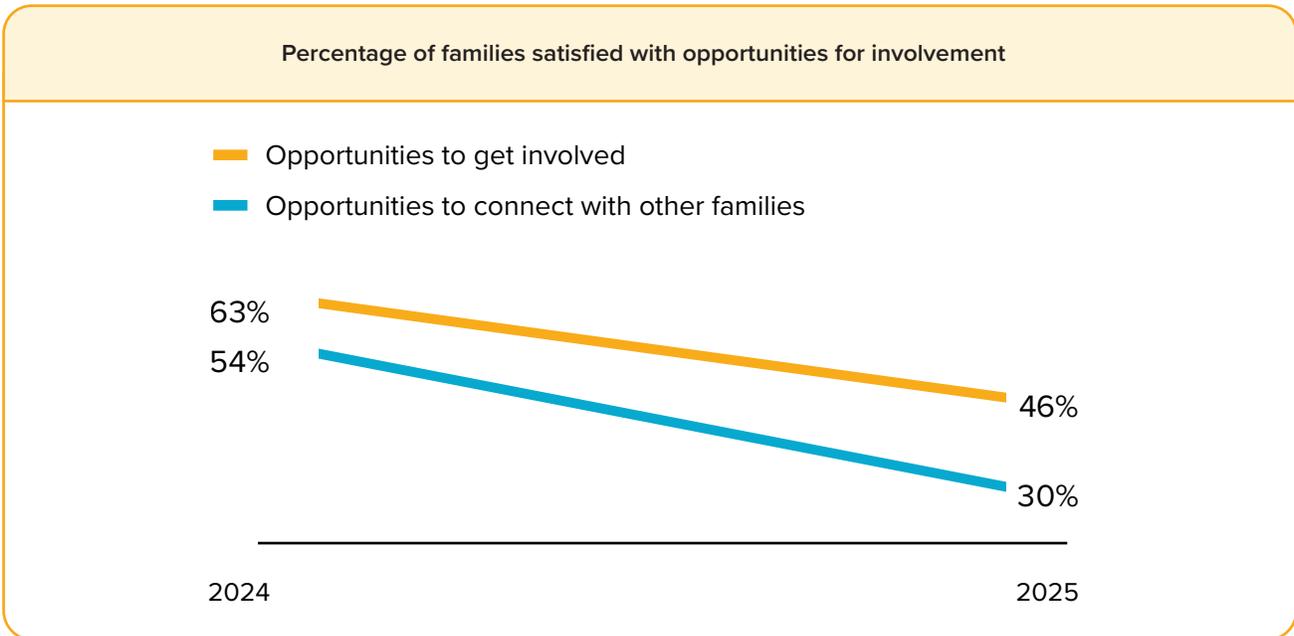
Desire to get involved with their student's institution



## Less than half of families are satisfied with their general opportunities for involvement.

Only 46% of families say they're happy with their ability to get involved with their student's college. Compared to last year (63%), this level of satisfaction has dropped by 17%.

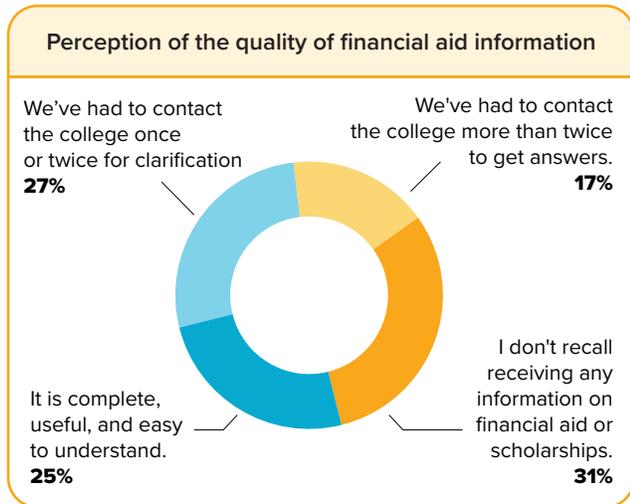
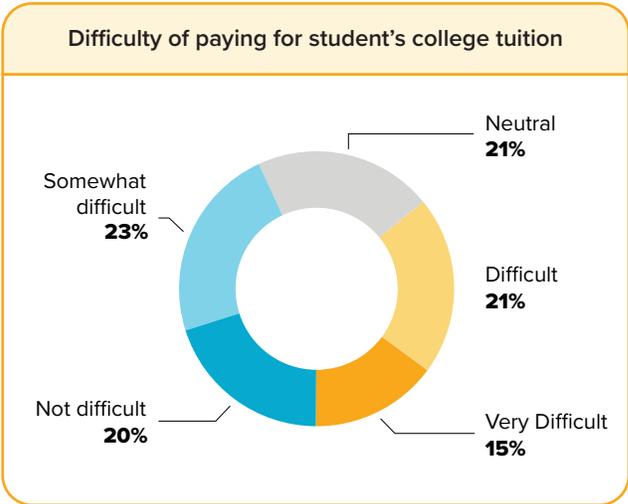
The same trend is true for family-to-family interaction, with only 30% of families reporting satisfaction with opportunities to connect with other families, compared to 54% from the previous year. Families are expressing a growing preference for family involvement.



# Financial Aid and Paying for College

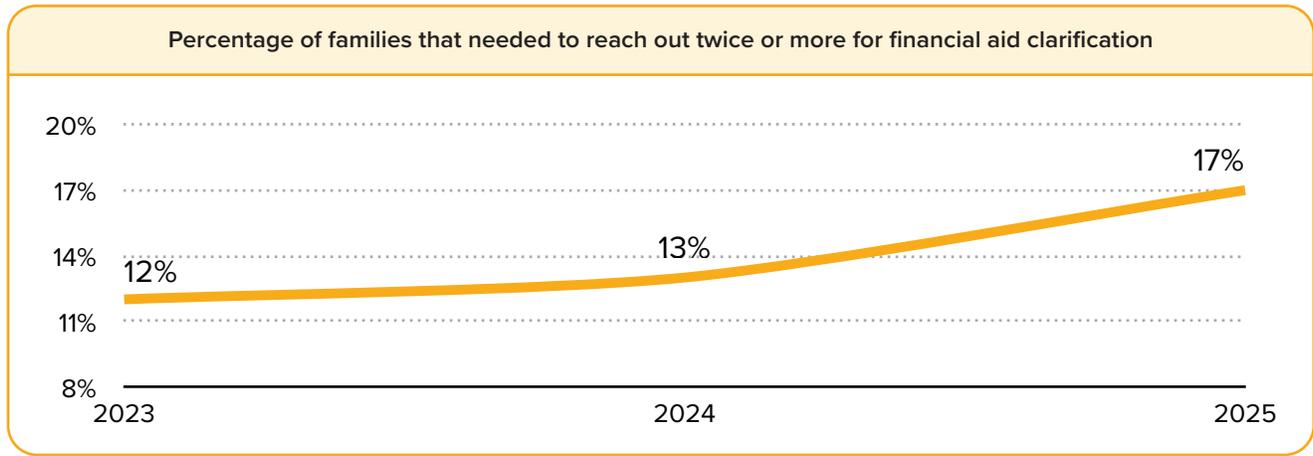
**59% of families say that it will be difficult to fund their student's college education.**

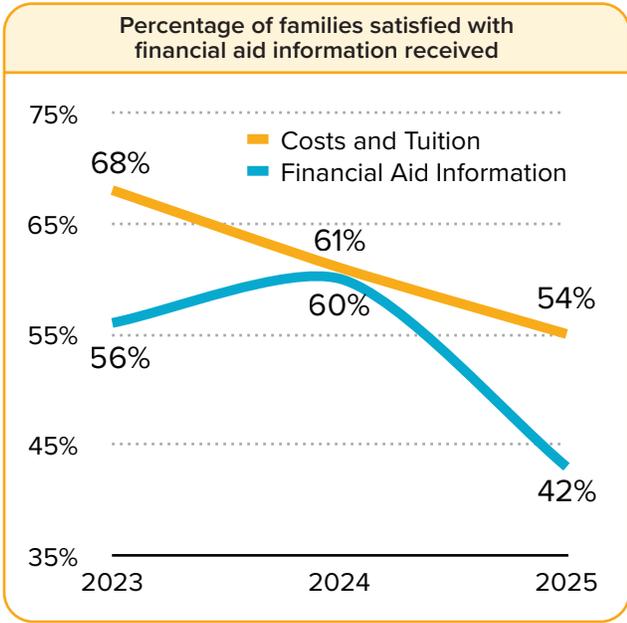
Only 20% of families won't experience difficulty paying for their student's college tuition.



**Only 25% of families feel that financial aid information is easy to navigate, and nearly half had to reach out for clarification.**

In addition, the proportion of families that need to reach out multiple times for clarification has increased year over year, with 12% of families reporting this trend in 2023, compared to 17% this year.





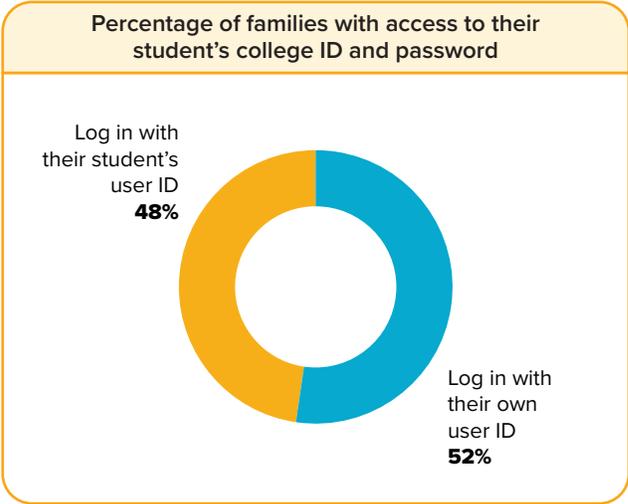
### Families are increasingly less satisfied with the quality of financial aid information from their student’s college.

Despite 80% of families reporting that financial aid content is important to them (see page 11), only 42% are happy with the quality of information they receive.

In 2023, 68% of families were happy with the quality of costs and tuition information, and 56% were happy with the quality of financial aid information. In just two years, this percentage has dropped to 54% and 42%, respectively.

### Nearly half of families that access their student’s records do so using their student’s own college ID and password.

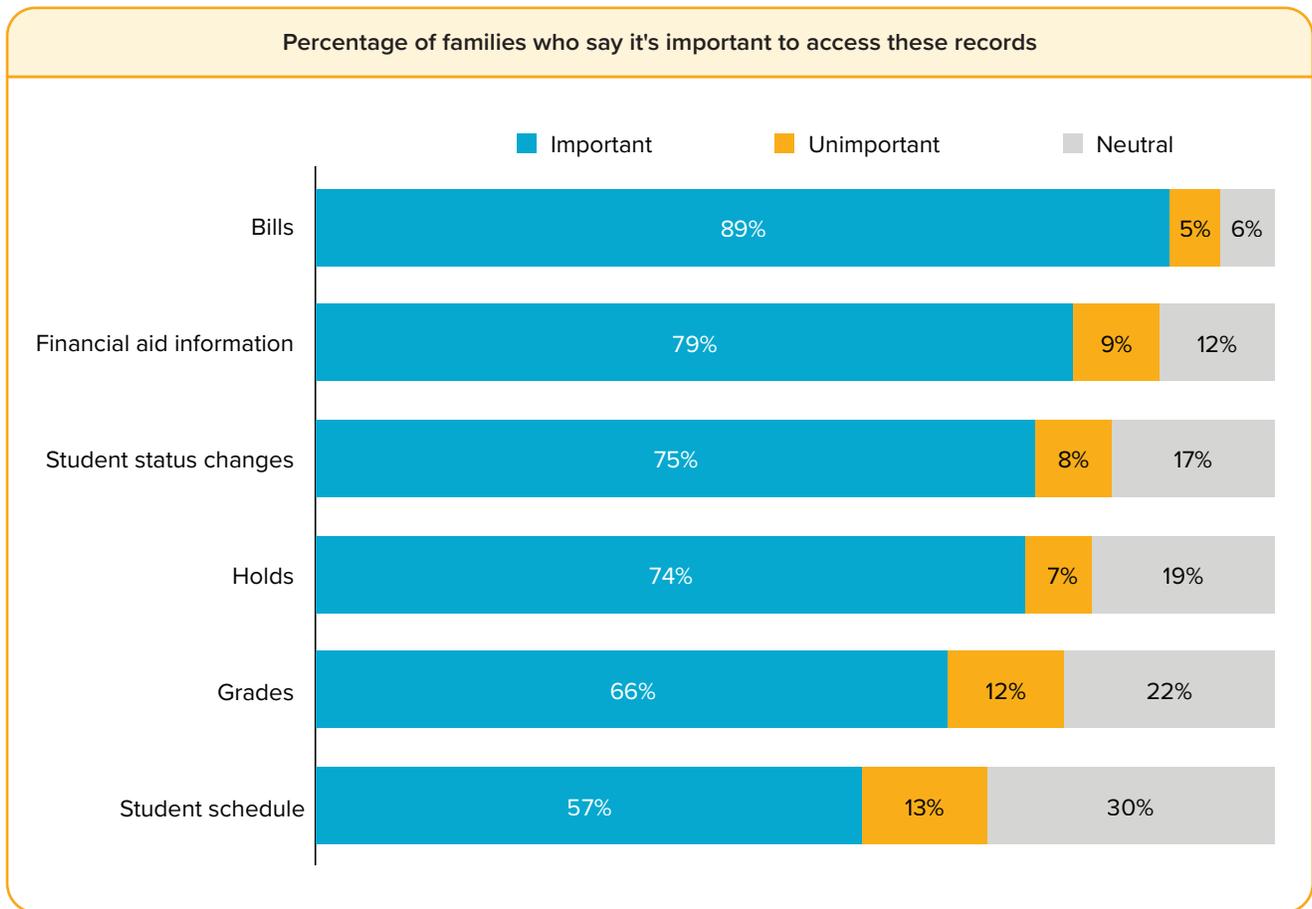
Families want to support their students, but 48% of families that access student information rely on their student’s login to see FERPA-protected information. This is a student data privacy concern – once someone has a student’s login credentials, they can access ALL student academic and financial records.



## Access to student financial data is a high priority for parents, with the request for bills data (89%) and financial aid data (79%) ranking at the top of the list.

Most students rely on parents to help cover the cost of college tuition – or at least to help advise them on their largest financial investment to date.

Bills, financial aid, and student status ranked as the three most important FERPA-protected records for families to access, while student grades and schedules fell to the bottom of the list.



# About the Participants

CampusESP invited families of current college students to complete an electronic survey directly through their institutions' CampusESP parent portal between January and February of 2025. No personally identifiable data was collected on the survey, and all responses were anonymous.

INSTITUTION SIZE	
0 to 4.99k	38.3%
5k to 9.99k	25.9%
10k to 19.99k	18.5%
≥ 20k	17.3%

INSTITUTION TYPE	
Public	66.7%
Private	33.3%

RACE/ETHNICITY	
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.6%
Black or African American	7.8%
Hispanic or Latino	7.1%
Multi-racial	1.9%
Native American or American Indian	1.1%
White	75.3%

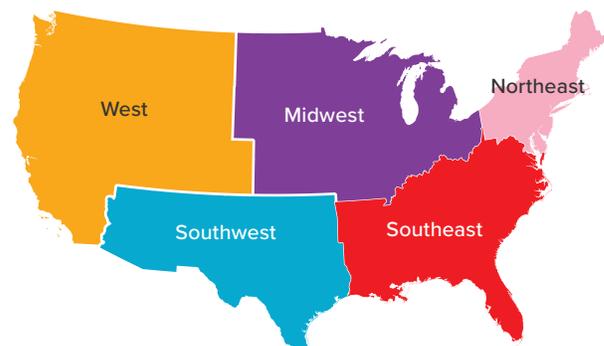
FIRST-GENERATION STATUS	
Continuing Generation	79.1%
First-Generation	20.9%

STUDENT'S EXPECTED GRADUATION YEAR	
2024	2%
2025	16%
2026	20%
2027	26%
2028	32%
2029	3%
Other	1%

PARENT/ADULT BIRTH YEAR	
1964 or earlier	11.4%
1965 to 1980	81.5%
1981 to 1996	5.3%
1997 or later	0.4%

FAMILY INCOME	
Less than \$29.9k	2.6%
\$30k to \$59.9k	7.2%
\$60k to \$99.9k	13.8%
\$100k to \$149.9k	21.4%
\$150k to \$199.9k	18.9%
\$200k to \$249k	13.1%
\$250k or more	23.0%

REGION	
Northeast	23.5%
Southeast	29.6%
Midwest	28.4%
Southwest	6.2%
West	12.3%





CampusESP is the leading, AI-powered parent engagement solution trusted by over 450 colleges. Our all-in-one platform helps you share personalized content with families across a portal experience, email, and text message, while our team of experts curates over 90% of your content and gets you launched in 3 weeks. From enrollment to retention to fundraising, parents are involved in their college student's journey. CampusESP's strategic family engagement platform channels that parental influence into measurable results.

**Learn more about the impact of family engagement at [CampusESP.com](https://CampusESP.com)**

**How to cite this report:**

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