

[The Mistakes Parents Make](#)

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We all know that parents mean well, but well, sometimes they just get in the way. Asked whether parents can hurt their children's chances of admission at the recent Unigo/Wall Street Journal On Campus program entitled, "Inside the Admissions Office", Seth Allen of Grinnell quipped, "I've met many parents I'd like to admit!"

The "Inside the Admissions Office" webcast brought together deans from Bryn Mawr College, Grinnell College, Marquette University, Princeton University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Vermont, Wesleyan College and Williams College for an interactive session where parents and students from across the country submitted questions and received answers directly from the source.

Parents need to strike a balance of being a good partner but not overstepping over the boundaries. In their zeal to assist their students in achieving their college dreams some parents are contacting the college too frequently, impersonating their sons and/or daughters on the telephone, answering questions for them in meet/greet situations, completing their applications, over-editing or even writing their essays, deciding where to apply and just over-managing the entire process. Beth Wisner, Dean of Admissions at the University of Vermont said that once they are on campus "students will need to work through issues themselves and the application process is a great place to start to practice that."

Students that allow mom and/or dad to be over-involved can suffer because they lose their voices in the process. They often end-up at colleges that their parents wanted them to attend or the most prestigious school they were accepted to as opposed to the college that represents the best fit for them academically and socially.

Freshmen with hovering "helicopter parents" have been described by college deans as "crispies" – students who are already burned-out and over-programmed even before stepping foot on campus and "teacups" – students who seem so fragile that they might shatter at the tiniest stress.

Parents are footing the bill for college in most cases so they have a right to be involved but here are some suggestions on how to be part of the process but not take over:

- Encourage your student's ownership of the entire college admissions process. It might seem easier for you to do everything from scheduling the campus visits to researching colleges to filling out the applications but it is much more productive for the student and impressive to the admissions office when the student actually takes the initiative.
- Talk frankly about financial expectations.
- Allow them to dream but still stay grounded in reality. Support their choices and let them know it is his or her decision and not yours.
- Manage your own anxiety.
- Be their cheerleader from the sidelines.
- Stop talking and actively listen to their needs and wants.