

CHILDCARE: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

A WHITE PAPER
FROM
THE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS
OF WOMEN

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I. WHAT WE WANT

The Commission on the Status of Women urges the University of Arizona Administration to seek ways to support **affordable, high quality childcare for all members** of the University Community. We propose a package of **family-friendly policies and practices** to meet the diverse needs of the entire community: undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff.

Three areas are of most urgent concern: **facilities, resources, and coordination**. Currently there are very few facilities that suggest a welcoming environment for families, and the resources devoted to childcare services do not begin to approach the probable demand for such services. Finally, the University lacks a centralized coordinating authority who would be a resource for the childcare needs for the entire University community, students as well as staff.

FACILITIES:

1. In the current budget climate, the construction of an on-campus childcare facility is not practical. But we must think beyond the present moment; in the longer term, such a facility could be a **primary focus for and symbol of the university's commitment** to working and learning parents.
1. One approach that should be explored immediately is the possibility of **contracting with a private childcare provider** to render a range of **day-care services on campus** at a site or sites to be leased from the University as space is now leased in the Student Union to various private vendors.
2. Other possibilities exist for expanding or improving current facilities: **space** could be made **available in the Student Union** where parents could relax with their children; **changing tables** could be provided in restrooms across campus.

RESOURCES:

1. The notion of affordability clearly implies that the University should, at a minimum, seek to spread the burden of childcare equitably by developing a **well-considered and comprehensive system of subsidies**. We need to make a concerted effort to **expand the voucher system** already in place.
2. Family-friendly policies and practices should include **flex-time and time-sharing** for employees as part of the mix. Ultimately, childcare should be made available on a variety of short- and long-term bases (i.e., drop-in/emergency vs. monthly/yearly contracts).

COORDINATION:

1. In order to focus our efforts to develop excellent childcare resources, it is essential that the University create a position of **Childcare Resources Coordinator**. This person

would be charged with (among other things): research; identifying problems and opportunities; building coalitions; exploring funding opportunities.

II. WHY WE WANT IT

In keeping with our mission to advocate “an inclusive and just campus community . . . by working to overcome impediments to the full participation and achievement of women and other underrepresented groups,” the Commission on the Status of Women is especially concerned to promote the **University’s Diversity Agenda** and to support **Family Values**.

1. The University’s perceived commitment to Childcare has a direct bearing on Recruitment and Retention, especially in the case of Women and other Underrepresented Groups.

Both the Millennium I and Millennium II reports, as well as a recent survey conducted by graduate students, identify Childcare as a critical concern among a limited group of faculty, staff, and students for whom it is a High Priority.

2. The struggle to manage childcare with very little university support can be a tremendous source of **stress and job dissatisfaction** for faculty with small children. Although the Millennium I data are not quantitative, the qualitative interview sessions indicated clearly a significant level of dissatisfaction with current policies and resources.
 1. Parents employed by or studying at this institution generally believe that **the University discourages children on campus** and offers limited support and resources for these parents. Faculty who participated in the University of Arizona Millennium I project clearly identified childcare as a recruitment and retention issue. Deficiencies associated with the administration of current policies and the unavailability of resources devoted to childcare contribute to a perception that **the university lacks concern for family commitments**.
 2. The Millennium II survey of staff and appointed personnel supports these conclusions. According to one respondent, “**The fact that UA does not offer child care reflects on how poorly it views its employees**” (M2:28).
 3. The recently published **Graduate Student Dependent and Childcare Survey** clearly indicates that a significant number of **graduate students are also dissatisfied** with current support for childcare.
3. Overall, this situation contributes to the **attrition of quality teaching, research, and support staff** and a loss of top students to competing institutions.
4. Conversely, increasing childcare resources **would promote a positive environment** that speaks powerfully to our professed commitment to being a “Student-Centered Research University.”

Childcare would constitute a strong incentive for prospective staff, faculty, and students to come to the University and would encourage them to remain here.

2. Insufficient Childcare Resources strongly impact the University’s Diversity Agenda.

As society is presently constituted, women continue to bear the primary responsibility for childcare. The great majority of single parents, especially, are women.

3. Women suffer disproportionately when childcare is unavailable, prohibitively expensive, or insufficient; their quality of life suffers, both in the short run, as they struggle to meet conflicting family and institutional pressures, and in the long run, inasmuch as their economic opportunities may be severely restricted by postponed entry into the work force. As Ann Crittenden's recent book, *The Price of Motherhood*, shows, women in academia, especially female faculty with children, are particularly affected by the lack of childcare options and flexibility. Consequently, **the lack of adequate childcare constitutes discrimination against women.**
 1. A recent paper by Mason and Goulden, "Do Babies Matter? The Effect of Family Formation on the Life Long Careers of Women" (2/13/02) points out that in science and engineering, no matter the size of the institution, there is a **24% gap in the rate of achieving tenure between women and men who have babies early in their careers** (i.e. prior to 5 years post-PhD). In the humanities and social sciences, this gap is 20%. The effect of this gap, and of the lack of support for female faculty in general, is quite clear in **the lack of faculty diversity at the tenured level.**
 2. In her article, "The Subtle Side of Discrimination," (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 4/14/2003), Joan Williams, Professor of Law at American University, demonstrates clearly the ways in which **female faculty with children are discriminated against in terms of tenure and promotion.**
 3. A study from the Department of Education shows that **students who had dependents** while pursuing postsecondary degrees had a **60% attrition** rate. Further, more women than men cited a change in family status as the reason for leaving school.¹
 4. The demographics of Arizona suggest that a lack of commitment to childcare and family-friendly policies on the part of the University may impact **student recruitment**, and **adversely affect the diversity of the student population.**
 5. **Transfer students**, especially those from Pima Community College, who have had subsidized resources for childcare may expect them, and choose not to transfer to the University of Arizona because of its perceived lack support for parents and families.²

Conversely, the development of adequate childcare resources would constitute a very powerful affirmation of the University's commitment to diversity.

3. Support for Working Parents would express a Commitment to Family Values.

1. **Modern American culture is actively hostile to families.** Many institutions of higher learning contribute to the problem by intensifying pressures on working parents.
2. The Commission believes that the University of Arizona can and should **become part of the**

¹ "Short-term Enrollment in Postsecondary Education: Student Background and Institutional Differences in Reasons for Early Departure, 1996-98." Published in November 2002 by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

² A federal grant from the Department of Education, the "Child Care Means Parents in School Program," currently subsidizes the childcare fees of students at Pima Community College and Arizona State University.

solution by working to enhance the quality of life for families and working parents.

III. WHAT WE KNOW (OR DON'T)

Resources currently devoted to childcare are woefully inadequate. There is a clear and demonstrable need for greater resources in the Childcare Voucher system. Although students are the most poorly served at present, employees could benefit significantly from increased subsidies. Currently, for instance, a family making more than \$36,000 (regardless of whether it's \$40,000 or \$140,000), would be eligible for an annual subsidy of 20% of their childcare costs, not to exceed \$500. This \$500 subsidy might represent at best the fees for one month of childcare. Further, since the voucher system allows only an additional \$50 for each additional child annually, this \$550 would not go far to cover the childcare fees for a family with two children.

In the present state of our affairs, it is much easier to say what is needed (more resources) and why (It's the right thing to do) than it is to recommend concrete strategies for coming to grips with the issues and for developing an appropriate range of responses. CSW has identified **three major reasons for this difficulty**.

1. **Frequent lack of adequate data.**

1. Although childcare resources are generally perceived as inadequate by those who care (primarily but not exclusively people with small children), it is **difficult to find out how many people have need** of childcare resources.
 1. One recent survey of graduate students conducted under the auspices of the Graduate and Professional Student Council and the Graduate College Office of Student Financial Aid concludes that approximately 23% of graduate students, or 1480, have children. (A copy of the Executive Summary of that Report is attached as an Appendix to this document.)
 1. Another recent survey, the 2001 Student Climate survey, indicated that 1% of undergraduate students (or 266) and 3% of graduate students (or 193) used University Childcare Programs or Services.
 1. The discrepancy makes clear that we lack the information to understand the full magnitude of the need, especially since we have no data on the numbers of faculty and staff who would use childcare resources.
1. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that **the number** of persons who would use available childcare **is large**.
2. Yet, at present, only 214³ faculty/staff and students enjoy subsidized childcare (at levels generally felt to be inadequate). So even without taking account of the need to increase the amounts of individual subsidies in many cases, the **potential demand greatly exceeds available resources**.

³ This figure is based on the latest data obtained from Life/Work Connections.

1. Although the demand is great, its urgency is felt by relatively few people. Members of the community who want childcare will need to advocate vigorously if they are to make their voice heard. **Leadership in this area will be crucial.**
2. **General ignorance**—of two kinds.
 1. Little awareness of resources on the part of those who would avail themselves.
 2. Indifference on the part of many who are not directly affected.
1. **Lack of centralized authority.**
 1. Although Life/Work Connections has responsibility for faculty/staff concerns, there is really no comparable authority for undergraduates, and the situation of graduate students (some of whom are employed by the university but are neither faculty nor staff) is complex and confusing.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

We have several recommendations for how we may begin moving toward the goal of affordable, high-quality childcare for all members of the university community.

1. COORDINATION. We recommend the appointment of a Childcare Resources Coordinator; this person would report to the **Vice President for Executive Affairs and University Initiatives**, who would bear the primary responsibility for assuring progress in this area. The duties of the position would have to be determined by the Supervisor, in consultation with interested parties. Nonetheless, certain desiderata already seem clear. The responsibilities of the Childcare Resources Coordinator should include:

2. **Clearly identifying current resources and ascertaining the dimensions of the need.** According to the Millennium I report, “faculty were highly supportive of alternative duty policies and the sick childcare program; however, concerns were raised that many individuals do not make use of the alternative duty policy due to fears that negative consequences will result. Others, while wanting to take advantage of these institutional policies and programs, have been discouraged or prevented from doing so by leaders and administrators” (164).
3. **Identifying, developing, and promoting family-oriented personnel policies.** While it is widely documented that the tension between work and family is a national problem, managers are often reluctant to make even small changes in how they handle personnel. Within the context of existing policies, the Childcare Resources Coordinator could work with Human Resources to **draw up concrete guidelines** and procedures to help managers and employees arrange flexible work schedules, compressed work weeks or telecommuting days.⁴
4. **Building constituencies.** The initial emphasis should be on establishing **synergies** between diverse existing programs (like the Family Studies Program in the College of Agriculture and Work/Life Connections in Human Resources) and interest groups (like the Association of Women Faculty, the Commission on the Status of Women, and various student and staff professional organizations).
5. **Developing and conducting programs of education**, addressed both to families and to other groups. Such programs might include, for example, the creation of a family listserv, and of several specific University web sites. (See Appendix for further suggestions.)
6. **Seeking various outside sources of support for developing childcare resources.**

⁴ New low-cost, or no-cost, alternative work strategies need to be initiated. These include job sharing for academic appointments, options for temporary reduction of hours, and maternity/paternity leave for faculty and staff. In her article, “How the Tenure Track Discriminates against Women,” Joan Williams (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 10/27/2000) proposes two tools for reshaping academic work: job sharing and part-time tenure track. Such family-friendly personnel policies pay for themselves many times over in recruitment and retention, as well as an overall increase in productivity and job performance for all employees.

2. FACILITIES. In the short term, we recommend the following relatively inexpensive actions, which will have a large positive impact on students and staff with children.

1. Developing a **contractual relationship with a private childcare vendor** who would **provide childcare on the main campus** of the University of Arizona. The Graduate Student Association specifically recommends “the creation of an on-campus child care facility” (See Appendix). This recommendation is anticipated by the evidence compiled in the Millennium I Report: “The faculty specifically recommended the establishment of an on-site child care facility” (163). We believe the University of Arizona should support the idea of having childcare on campus, as the most constructive way possible of meeting the expressed desires of its working families.
2. **Developing Facilities: A child-safe playroom in the Student Union.** Currently the new Student Union includes lounges for commuters, alumni, and other groups, but there are no plans for a room for parents and toddlers. The existing lounges and other public areas are not childproof or enclosed, so a child can dart out the door easily, undetected. Nor are they child-friendly; for example, there are no high chairs in the food court. We request that the University provide a small room in the Student Union with a sofa, some toys and a TV & VCR, where parents can safely be with their children on campus.
3. **Developing Facilities: Changing Tables in Restrooms.** Inexpensive diaper changing stations (e.g. the Koala Bear Stations) should be installed in restrooms. Currently there are only 4 such stations on the entire campus. The cost per station is approximately \$150 retail. To install one diaper changing station in each building would cost less than \$10,000.

3. RESOURCES. For the future, we recommend that the University find ways and means to enhance childcare resources, so as to facilitate the vision articulated in the first section of this paper affordable, high quality childcare for all members of the University Community as a consequence of family-friendly policies and practices that would meet the diverse needs of the entire community: undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty and staff.

1. We support **fund-raising and the eventual creation of a childcare center** (or centers) on campus. Many of our peer institutions, including Texas A & M University and Ohio State University, have actual childcare facilities. Certain other institutions even have more than one facility: both the University of Minnesota and the University of Michigan have three facilities; the University of Utah has eight affiliated childcare programs in different university locations.
2. We recommend that the **funding currently available for childcare subsidies and voucher plans be greatly enhanced** in such a way to allow for a larger subsidy for current participants and to increase access to the program, especially for the least affluent members of the community.
3. Childcare should be **conveniently located and have flexible hours** for all working and studying parents. Peer/Peer Aspirant institutions offer a variety of childcare options, ranging from full-time and flexible part-time care, to special childcare for evenings, and during finals week. These might serve as models for our own approach to the problem of childcare at the University of Arizona.

V. CONCLUSION

Childcare is a University-Wide Issue. The Commission on the Status of Women wishes to emphasize that a family-friendly environment affects all members of the university community, students, staff, and faculty, not just women, and not just those who happen to have small children. We are all in this together—members of the human family. Every member of the community contributes to and draws sustenance from the community as a whole. **On the deepest and most comprehensive level, a commitment to childcare is both an expression of our common humanity and a promise for the future.**

Appendix

Executive Summary of the Graduate Student Dependent and Child Care Survey

A survey assessing the dependent status, child care issues, employment and financial situations of a random sample 915 graduate students at the University of Arizona resulted in a response rate of 35 percent (n=319). The results of this survey provide insight into the situation of graduate students with children. Overall, approximately 23 percent of graduate students currently have children, and approximately 22 percent plan to have children in the future.

For graduate students with spouses or partners (55%), the spouse or partner most often cared for children when students were in class, teaching or working. The financial burden was substantial for those 35 percent of graduate students (n=25) in this sample who paid for child care outside the home. Children were in day care an average of 27 hours per week, which cost on average \$406 per month. Graduate students used multiple means to pay for this child care including working, taking out student loans and using family for child care.

Further analysis of the data revealed that 26 percent of graduate students with children have incomes below 2003 Federal Poverty Guidelines. The first recommendation from this survey is to direct intensive outreach efforts towards increasing awareness of and access to existing university, state, and federal family-related resources for graduate student families living below the federal poverty level.

In general, graduate student parents are not aware of existing resources such as the Sick-Child and Student Child Care Subsidy Program. The second recommendation resulting from this survey is to increase financial resources to UA Life/Work Connections to promote the Sick-Child program and referral service.

At the University level, graduate students with children expressed a desire for enhanced child care resources. The third recommendation of this study is the creation of an on-campus child care facility, specific University child care financial aid, and child care scholarships and grants arising from departments, University groups, and the Office of Student Financial Aid.

The final recommendation resulting from this survey is to enhance communication of new family-related information and resources to graduate student families through creation of a graduate student family listserv, placing information on specific University web sites, in graduate student orientation materials, in the *Arizona Daily WildCat*, and using e-mail.