

# Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs and the Students They Serve

A Study Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
2016



ENDICOTT  
COLLEGE

PROGRAM EVALUATION & RESEARCH GROUP

## About the Program Evaluation and Research Group (PERG)

Founded in 1976 at Lesley University, the Program Evaluation and Research Group (PERG) moved to Endicott College in 2013. PERG is known for its capacity for studying complex projects in diverse settings. PERG has carried out over 800 program evaluations and research studies in formal and informal education environments, working with universities, schools, foundations, state and federal agencies, museums and other community-based organizations.

PERG researchers bring their well-honed inquiry and collaboration skills to all projects, pursuing accurate and nuanced answers to research and evaluation questions. Staff partner with clients to improve their programs through formative evaluation, assisting with the iterative process of design research, and provide an external perspective on effectiveness and impact. PERG employs mixed methods to ensure both a broad and deep understanding of any program or issue.

PERG's recent research and evaluation activities—which include both small and large-scale regional and national projects—include: parenting students in higher education; two-generation programs; arts integration and literacy partnerships; curriculum and software development projects; cultural/international exchange; informal education; museum exhibits and programs; out-of-school time; professional development; research on learning in science; STEM programs and partnerships.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This study of *Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs and the Students They Serve* offers a rare glimpse into the lives and experiences of almost 300 current young undergraduate student parents and recent alumni.**

It also provides useful information about the student parent programs that support them. Despite myriad challenges, these parents are motivated to stay in school by their hopes for a better life for themselves and their children. They know that a bachelor's degree will give them a better chance at a family-sustaining income, and a more secure pathway out of poverty for both generations.

There are over one million parenting students in baccalaureate degree programs nationwide. Unfortunately, most do not achieve a degree within six years, if ever. The programs participating in this study are devoted to changing that outcome. Their students and alumni also provide critical insights into how to help make the future different for themselves, for their families, and for all of us.

### **This study focuses on:**

- **Program design:** features of undergraduate student parent programs at 8 four-year colleges and universities, including features of wraparound and open programs, and common issues faced by all programs;
- **Parenting students:** description of young (under 35) undergraduate student parents in the study sample, their experiences on campus, with student parent programs, and effects of college attendance on their children;
- **Implications and recommendations:** these findings have implications for four-year colleges and universities, and state and federal agencies.

Findings are based on current student parent surveys (224), recent alumni student parent surveys (74), interviews and a focus group with program directors from the eight institutions.

## **Programs**

All of the well-established student parent programs in this study have similar goals and types of services and programming. They are designed to remove barriers and support students to stay in school and be academically successful.

### **These programs:**

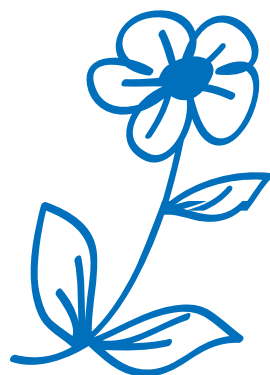
- Advocate for and empower students, and are often staffed by social workers
- Help students navigate bureaucracies, at their own institutions and elsewhere

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*Completion of my education  
means stability for my family.  
- Student parent*

---

- **Provide help with the most critical needs of student parents, in order to increase their chances of retention and graduation** directly or through referrals for: child care access and subsidies, public assistance, food security, affordable housing access and subsidies; many also help with employment, transportation, and healthcare challenges
- Offer informal and formal counseling, with staff and peer counselors
- Offer physical spaces that provide a critical locus of community, where student parents can break their isolation on campus, build relationships, share tips, etc.
- Build a supportive culture for student parents on campus; the existence of these programs counteracts the invisibility of parenting students and their families
- Provide advocacy on campus to help resolve a variety of academic and other issues, including educating and negotiating with faculty and staff or securing the help of others to obtain needed accommodations
- Address some needs of the “second generation,” expose them to college life by sponsoring activities for children and families on campus, and usually help to ensure quality child care placements
- Write grants and make other efforts to secure extra funding for student parents
- Coordinate with other offices on campus and form partnerships with organizations off campus



These programs face common issues and challenges, including program funding, access to institutional data, serving the neediest students, building community, housing issues, helping student families meet basic needs, addressing the needs of the second generation, and the lack of supportive institutional policies.

A high-level champion/advocate can be critical for starting and growing student parent support programs. These programs do best with strong support from many parts of the institution and partnerships with the wider community. Funding can come from institutional funds, student fees, special endowments, gifts, grants, and federal programs. *(The appendices include profiles of all of the programs involved in this study, and a framework of recommended practices.)*

Student parent programs, while similar in most regards, fall into two types:

**Wraparound programs** have separate applications and specific criteria for involvement; they provide intensive targeted supports for each student, keep track of academic performance, include some required activities, and offer additional resources. They serve a small number of students and are primarily located in small, private colleges.

**Open programs** consist of campus offices or centers that provide a wide array of services and supports available to any interested student parents. The extent of access to these services depends on some combination of need, interest, and ability to initiate contact with the program. They serve a large number of students and, in this sample, are mostly located in larger public institutions.

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*I have been able to do things I never would have imagined being able to do and I will be able to take care of my daughter so much better.*

*- Student parent*

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## Students

### Current Student Parents

Student parents (under 35 years old) in our sample who attend four-year colleges and universities with student parent programs, are:

- **Mostly female, young, and poor, with young children; often single; from all racial groups and many are first-generation college students**
- Highly stressed, especially from balancing school, home, and work
- Academically strong and motivated by a desire to provide a better life for their families
- Relatively isolated on campus, and rarely attend campus activities
- Especially appreciative of on-campus child care, information and staff to help with physical and emotional needs, and all forms of financial assistance
- Parents to children who are more proud of them, more interested in school themselves, express more desire to attend college, and wish they had more time with them, compared to before they enrolled in college

### Benefits to Wraparound Program Students

Students in wraparound programs, who are usually very young and/or vulnerable in other ways, reported stronger outcomes in several areas, including: less stress; greater food, child care, employment, and housing stability; more involvement in campus life; more connection to other student parents; receiving more help with parenting issues; and having children who experience greater benefits. Students in wraparound programs are also more likely to live in centrally-located, on-campus housing.

### Recent Alumni

The majority of alumni in our sample, who were student parents and graduated within the last five years, are:

- Living more independently, using less public benefits, and experiencing more food, housing, child care, and employment stability than before they entered college
- Still struggling financially
- Less stressed than current students, but still challenged by balancing the different parts of their lives
- Pleased, in retrospect, by the student parent services they received, especially financial assistance, information about services and supports, family housing and a supportive community of student parents
- Experiencing positive outcomes from their college experience and degree, including: knowledge and skills that they have used in their jobs; connection with new role models and mentors; new friendships; and improved self-confidence



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*Going to and graduating from college as a single parent has changed my life completely. It has broken the cycle of poverty in my family and I have encouraged other parents to go to school. ... I no longer feel the stress of how I will support my child. Going to college also taught me how to become a better mother.*

*- Student parent alumna*

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## Implications and Recommendations

The findings in this report have implications for institutions of higher education, for student parent programs, and for state and federal agencies, in several areas.

The final section of the report includes a full list of recommendations for colleges and universities, and for state and federal agencies. They address program design and practice, data tracking and reporting, services and accommodations for parenting students, and financial support.

### Highlights from the recommendations:

#### *For colleges and universities*

- Convene a campus-wide task force to assess existing resources and to plan for strengthening support for student parents and their children, using the *Family Friendly Campus Framework of Recommended Practices* as a guide. (See Appendix B. A Toolkit to support this process will be available in spring 2017 at [www.endicott.edu/PERG](http://www.endicott.edu/PERG).)
- Become familiar with the recommended strategies outlined by the 2013 US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights pamphlet, *Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students*.
- Create student parent programs and centers similar to those for veterans, minority students and other at-risk populations.
- Collect, track, compare, and report on the demographics and academic progress of all student parents, including transfer students and those who stop out and return.
- Enact and publicize institutional policies to provide fair access for student parents, including early course registration and other accommodations often available to other groups; extend any policies currently available only for staff and faculty parents to students; provide a clear process for requesting additional accommodations.
- Fully investigate on-campus child care options, and ensure that any on-campus child care is made available and affordable for student parents.



#### *For state and federal agencies*

- Add student parents to the list of high-risk students eligible for TRIO program funding.
- **Prioritize student parents as an at-risk population and require institutions to track and report on them, including transfer students and those who stop out and return.**
- Clarify or modify rules regarding intra-institutional access to the names of students who claim dependents on their FAFSA applications so that student parents can be identified.
- Develop federal or state “student parent grant” programs to help fund additional expenses related to dependent children.
- Include postsecondary four-year programs among new two-generation initiatives, including those relating to TANF funds; align TANF block-grant funding with public benefits agencies and community partnerships servicing low-income student families; these services should be available on campuses.
- **Ensure full child care funding for all income-qualifying students to cover all class and study time and realistic allowances for commuting; provide encouragement and funding for quality on-campus child care options for student parents.**
- Review all Pell grant and other scholarship funding for requirements that adversely impact pregnant and parenting students; enable students who are parents of young children to carry a lower course load without negative student aid consequences.
- Increase the loan cap for students with children so that they do not run out of funds before they complete their degrees.



# INTRODUCTION

**There are 4.8 million college students, or 26% of all undergraduates, raising dependent children (Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2014).**

The majority of parenting students are enrolled in community colleges (comprising 30% of all community college students), for-profit institutions (comprising 51% of all students enrolled), or non-degree granting programs. There are 1.1 million, or 23% of student parents, pursuing bachelor's degrees at four-year colleges (nonprofit, public or private) (IWPR, 2016a). Of these, only 17.4% earn a bachelor's degree within six years. When any type of institution is included, only 3.5% of student parents attain bachelor's degrees within six years (IWPR, 2016b).

The majority of students juggling parenting and school are women, and disproportionately, women of color (IWPR, 2016a). For women who have children while in their teens, only half receive a high school diploma by the time they turn 22 (Perper, Peterson, & Manlove, 2010), and only between two and three percent earn a college degree by the age of 30 (Hoffman, 2006). Students with children are more likely than their non-parenting peers to have low incomes (IWPR, 2014). Those who fail to complete their degree are often left in a situation in which they not only cannot support their families, but they also have student loan debt that they cannot pay back. Student parents who do graduate have more student loan debt than their childless peers (IWPR, 2014).

An annual livable income for a single-parent family with one or two children can exceed \$60,000 in some areas of the US (Center for Women's Welfare, 2015).

**With the exception of some positions in STEM fields, most jobs that only require a two-year degree or credential do not pay enough to support a family.**

Earning a four-year degree is the best pathway to self-sufficiency for parenting students. On average, each year of additional schooling increases an individual's income by 10% (Kaushal, 2014).

The benefits for families of a parent with a bachelor's degree are not just economic. Research has shown causal positive effects not only on children's test scores, health and behavior, but on mothers' behaviors that can affect their children's wellbeing, such as teenage childbearing and substance abuse (Kaushal, 2014).



Recent research and program initiatives on student parents have largely focused on student parents in community colleges and certificate programs, which has provided important information about this population. Yet, despite the large number of parenting students enrolled in four-year degree programs, they remain largely invisible. Very little research is available about contemporary baccalaureate student parents or the college and university programs and support services that support their ability to be successful.

This study takes a beginning look at several programs across the country that support parenting students in public and private, not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities. It also shares the experiences of and impact on almost 300 parenting students and alumni, and their children. Finally, the authors make policy, research, and other recommendations that derive from these findings.

## Data Collection

The research team worked with the Keys to Degrees National Replication Program’s director, Dr. Autumn Green, to recruit partner schools to participate in the research study. The targeted recruitment effort sought schools from across the country with different types of long-standing student parent programs. Eight institutions, with nine programs, participated in the study. These schools vary in size, location, public/private status, and the type of student parent supports offered. Program directors worked closely with the research team on the work of the study. Each school received a stipend for their participation.

Data were collected through multiple interviews with program staff, collection of institutional data (although the difficulty in accessing this data at most schools made it impossible to complete planned analyses), a survey of current student parents, and a survey of recent student parent alumni. (Contact PERG for more information about research methods and data collection, and for interview protocols and survey instruments.)

The student survey was completed by 224 undergraduate student parents under the age of 35, from small “wrap-around” programs or much larger “open” programs. The following table is a breakdown of how many responses came from each school/program, and how many fall into the open vs. wrap-around categories.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES BY SCHOOL

	Amount
<b>Open programs</b>	<b>176</b>
St. Catherine’s University—Access program	14
Grand Valley State University	23
Portland State University	55
University of California at Berkeley	79
University of Massachusetts	5
<b>Wraparound programs</b>	<b>48</b>
Eastern Michigan University	6
Endicott College	10
St. Catherine University—STEPs to Success	16
Wilson College	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF ALUMNI SURVEY RESPONSES BY SCHOOL

	Amount
<b>Open programs</b>	<b>60</b>
Grand Valley State University	1
Portland State University	26
St. Catherine’s University – Access program	6
University of California at Berkeley	27
<b>Wraparound programs</b>	<b>14</b>
Endicott College	6
St. Catherine University—STEPs to Success	1
Wilson College	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>

*Because the program at Eastern Michigan University is relatively new, alumni were not yet available to survey.*

*The biggest challenge for myself as a student parent is handling different roles. It is difficult trying to be a daughter while living under my parents’ roof as well as a parent to my daughter and the only one in charge of her.*

*- Student parent*

## PART I: PROGRAMS

Some four-year colleges and universities across the country have devoted critical resources to help parenting students achieve academic success through the establishment of student parent programs. The institutions in this study have well-established programs that specifically target undergraduate student parents, offering them a variety of services to ease the substantial challenges they encounter while working towards a bachelor's degree.

The student parent programs in this study vary widely, as do the institutions they reside in, but the goals and the nature of each program are remarkably similar. (See Appendix A for short profiles of each program in this study.) They are all designed to remove barriers that prevent or slow student parent pathways through four-year colleges and universities; all offer a wide array of supports and programming that fit within their particular institutional context. (See Appendix B for the variety of services, programming, and other supports offered at these institutions.)

**These programs have an articulated philosophy and set of goals, staffing, space, and services to help student parents succeed in college while also raising their children.**

While not always explicitly stated, they take a strengths-based social work approach to supporting and empowering students (Saleebey, 2005). Several, but not all, are staffed by professional social workers. Program staff provide direct support to students, ensuring that they have access to on-campus, public, and community-based services, including academic services, counseling, child care, food supports, housing, and health care for themselves and their children. In addition, they facilitate community-building among

students and their families through the provision of family-friendly spaces and activities.

Program staff also coordinate with other offices on campus, educate staff and faculty members about the needs of student parents, and serve in an advocacy role to ensure that students have the support they

need to succeed. They network and forge partnerships with other organizations in the larger community that provide services to student parents and their children, and build a supportive culture for parenting students and their families both on campus and beyond.

The support of the institution is critical to the success of student parent support programs, including administrative and

financial support. Sources of financial support vary greatly, from programs that are funded largely by institutional funds or student fees to those that have an endowed fund or rely on ongoing efforts by an institution's development staff to raise funds through grants and gifts. Some program leaders scramble to write grants to provide additional needed support for their programs and the students they serve. Program staff are also adept at accessing subsidies and other financial supports that students are eligible to receive, from SNAP benefits to child care subsidies and scholarships. Most also utilize donations of food, clothing, and services from local agencies and businesses.

Another critical aspect of institutional support is a program champion in a leadership role who proactively advocates for services for student parents. This person communicates that student parents and their children matter and that they deserve support from all members of the campus community. The champion might be a president or cabinet-level administrator, or a program leader with sufficient political capital to influence others in key positions.







## Types of Programs and Their Key Features

The nine programs (at eight institutions) represented in this study fall into two broad categories—wrap-around programs and open programs.

### Wraparound programs

The wraparound programs have separate applications and specific criteria for involvement; they also provide intensive targeted supports to all participants, which students are required to utilize. They keep track of academic performance, include some required activities, and offer additional resources. Most also ensure that the children of all participating student parents are in quality child care programs. Participants must fit into certain age, gender, marital status, and/or family size constraints.

**Wraparound programs**, which often but not always require families to live on campus in designated program housing, **are especially suited for single or particularly vulnerable younger parents.**

This type of program can provide the extra support needed for new parents who are first-time students and living on their own for the first time. This support requires high levels of resources for small numbers of students.

### Open programs

Open programs consist of campus offices or centers with many levels and types of programming and support available to students on a walk-in basis. Students who have a high need of assistance, are motivated, and can initiate and maintain contact, can often get extensive individualized help and support from open programs. Most parents will check in or get involved less often, when they need help with a particular issue, such as child care, accessing public benefits, or getting academic accommodations.

**Open programs are a critical resource for all student parents** living on and off campus in a college community. They serve a large number of student parents, including some that receive intensive supports, while having no requirements. However, some student parents will not get the services they need because they do not engage with the program, or because the program does not have the resources to meet all of their needs.




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*Finishing my degree means beating the stats.  
I got pregnant at 18 and my father told me  
my life was over.*

---

*- Student parent*

---

The following charts, divided into wraparound and open programs, indicate the variation in particular features of the different programs in the study.

**TABLE 3: KEY FEATURES OF WRAPAROUND PROGRAMS**

	Eastern Michigan University	Endicott College	St. Catherine University	Wilson College
Urban/metropolitan setting	x		x	
Rural/Suburban setting		x		x
Public institution	x			
Private institution		x	x	x
Formerly Women's College		x	x	x
5% or more of undergraduate students are parents	x		x	x
Single parents only	x	x		x
Age restrictions on parents	x	x	x	x
Age restrictions on children	x	x		x
Institution-provided subsidy for housing	x	x		
Students required to live on campus	x	x		x
Institution-provided child care subsidy (if needed)		x		x
Other funding (such as tuition, daily living expenses, etc.)		x	x	
Subsidized or free food plan for children		x		x
Individualized guidance or support	x	x	x	x
Academic Monitoring	x	x	x	x
Programming for parents (including courses, workshops, social events, referrals, etc.)	x	x	x	x
Required activities for students and/or families	x	x	x	x
Funded (in part or whole) by student fees				
Funded (in part) by foundation funds or major donation(s)	x	x	x	x

**TABLE 4: KEY FEATURES OF OPEN PROGRAMS**

	Grand Valley State University	Portland State University	St. Catherine University	University of California Berkeley	University of Massachusetts Amherst
Urban/metropolitan setting	x	x	x	x	
Rural/Suburban setting					x
Public institution	x	x		x	
Private institution			x		
5% or more of undergraduate students are parents	uk	x	x	x	uk
Only single parents					
Age restrictions on parents and/or children					
Some Family Housing available on campus	x	x	x	x	x
Housing Subsidy (not including public assistance)				x	
Institution-provided child care subsidy (if needed)	x	x	Covered by State	x	x
Other funding (such as tuition, daily living expenses, etc.)					
Subsidized or free food plan for children					
Programming for parents (including courses, workshops, social events, referrals, etc.)	x	x	x	x	x
Funded (in part or whole) by student fees		x		x	x
Funded (in part) by foundation funds or major donation(s)			x		



## Common Program Issues and Challenges

The student parent programs in this study deal with a number of common issues that impact their programs and the student families they serve. These issues include:

- Need for champion and administrative support
- Program funding
- The influence of contextual and historical factors
- Maximizing approach to meeting basic needs
- Ensuring opportunities for community building
- Student funding
- Addressing the needs of the second generation
- Serving younger, needier students
- Housing issues
- Access to institutional data
- Institutional policies

## Champion and Administrative Support

**Program success can hinge on the support of a high-level administrator who can champion the program** and provide critical advocacy for its importance at the institution, although some programs have succeeded without such a champion.

Supportive administrators at many levels and in many departments can make a big difference in the effectiveness of parenting programs.

## Program Funding

Programs at small private schools are mostly funded by private individual and foundation grants or endowments; those at large state universities often receive significant funding from student fees. Tight resources are a common challenge for parenting programs, and good funding often requires a high-level champion, extensive advocacy with good documentation of outcomes, or both.

## Context

Each program and the students it serves are influenced by contextual factors, including location, size, and general student demographics of the parent institutions. Other factors are also important, including:

- *Housing and transportation*—Rural or suburban campuses make living on campus much more desirable or necessary (but may require students to have a car); some urban campuses are surrounded by high-cost rental areas; those who do not live on campus sometimes have long commutes from affordable housing.
- *Referral services*—Campuses in or near metropolitan areas may provide a much richer array of nearby community resources to which students can be referred.
- *Demographic differences*—Large campuses are more likely to have a more diverse student population, including many student parents, than smaller campuses. Student parents recruited specifically for a wraparound program may find themselves on a campus where the majority of the student population is demographically different from them, regardless of parenting status.
- *Origins*—Most of the programs began in order to meet perceived needs of one or more student parents already on campus. However, their start-up histories vary markedly, and can continue to influence their current status.
  - *Champions*—Top administrators eased development of programs in some cases; one or two women advocated for program creation and support over long periods of time in other cases.
  - *Precursor programs*—**Some parent centers grew out of women's centers** and commuting student centers as sympathetic staff became aware of the large unmet needs of student parents, and parents advocated for more supports for themselves; parenting programs also grew out of efforts to secure child care subsidies.
  - *Women's colleges*—Smaller, private women's colleges began to provide intensive supports, especially for single mothers, in part because of their mission to provide educational opportunities for women. Each of the wraparound



programs in this study that pre-dated Kellogg Foundation funding were started at institutions that are, or were, historically women's colleges.

## Meeting Basic Needs

The programs and institutions in the study take somewhat different approaches to meeting the basic needs of housing, food, and child care. While the wraparound programs assume a more active role in ensuring housing, food security, and quality child care, all of the programs in the study provide help, sometimes extensive, for students who seek it out.

- *Family housing*—Some programs prioritize providing family housing, with or without subsidies; others prioritize helping students secure affordable housing elsewhere.
- *Food*—A couple of programs provide free meal plans for children, but most do not; however, programs often help provide access to food pantries, secure free food donations, distribute gift cards to food stores, and help enroll parents in federally- or locally-funded food programs, or sometimes provide subsidies funded by the institution.
- *Child care*—Some programs have on-campus child care centers and provide subsidies for student parents; all programs have staff who are available to help students find child care and apply for federal funding to pay for it.
- *Emergency assistance*—Many of the programs are able to provide occasional emergency help with basic needs, including gas cards, small grants or loans, etc.

## Community Building

The programs rely on a variety of approaches to help students build community in support of their lives as parents.

- *Parenting center*—Some but not all programs have enough space for parents to hang out together, eat, use computers, nurse, etc.
- *Family housing*—Some programs require student families to live together in dorms on campus to help build community (most of the wraparound programs); many other institutions



have family housing available, especially the large state schools.

- *Courses*—Some programs use required or voluntary courses to connect student parents with each other for support and mutual assistance.
- *Special facilities and programming*—Programs and institutions have special facilities specifically for families, such as a family resource room with study space or family study areas in campus libraries. Programs provide educational and social events geared for parenting students where they can meet and share experiences.
- *Family-focused events*—All programs provide some programming that includes or is targeted at the second generation of students, such as holiday and other social events on and off campus.



## Student Funding

Most student parents also work for wages, but students at all institutions rely on loans in order to pursue a bachelor's degree. The amount of debt student parents take on varies based on a number of factors beyond tuition, room, and board at each school.

- *State policies*—The cost and level of support for low-income students can depend on state policies; for instance, low-income students at one state school qualify for free tuition and fees, as well as a very generous housing subsidy. State policies can also influence child care affordability; for instance, at least one state has generous coverage for child care for student parents at both public and private institutions.
- *Institutional policies*—Some institutions provide special parent grants for all parents or all low-income parents, which vary from \$1,350 to almost \$9,000. In addition, some institutions provide housing for families at a reduced rate, or in one case, no cost.
- *Child care subsidies*—While all programs provide some type of assistance around obtaining child care subsidies, some have written grants for federal funding; some institutions commit substantial funding for child care subsidies themselves.

## Addressing the Needs of the Second Generation

Each of the program directors is very aware of the potential of their program to impact the children of the student parents they serve, while recognizing that their focus is on the parents. They provide help in obtaining quality child care, and offer emergency supports and other ongoing assistance, as they are able, to help with basic needs and alleviate stress levels for the whole family.

**They recognize that if conditions are too hard for the family, the parent cannot remain or succeed in school.**

Many, but not all, also provide parenting education. They also offer occasional direct programming for children, usually on campus, which can help children envision themselves as college students. Those with child care centers on campus can sometimes track issues with the children of student parents more closely, but that is not common. The parents are also very aware of being a role model for their children, especially those who are the first generation in their family to attend college.

## Serving Younger, Needier Students

**Younger students who come to college directly out of high school generally have very different types and levels of need than older student parents, including only slightly older transfer students.**

Most have not lived away from their own parents before (or may still be living with them), and almost all are single mothers with very young children. They may also be the first generation in their families to attend college.

They experience all of the usual issues of adjusting to college life, while being a (relatively) new parent, and trying to figure out how to balance being a parent with being a student. While those entering college directly from high school are often academically strong, depending on the institution, they can need help with planning, organizing, and learning how to get needed resources. They can also feel and be more isolated than older student parents, especially those without family support. An important need for this group is a place to gather and meet with each other. Campus providers of services to these students find that they often need a large amount of support.

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*I think everything we do impacts  
the second generation.*

*- Program director*

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It is harder for open programs to meet all of these needs than it is for the wraparound programs. The wraparound programs have the advantage of required regular contact and the ability to track these students from the start, beginning with their application and acceptance into the program.

Transfer students, even younger ones, have already learned to manage college life. If they had a child while in school previously, they have figured out how to navigate and succeed at going to school while being a parent before arriving at their current institution. However, some student parents of any age and marital status can still need extensive services to help them manage their time, handle crises, stay economically afloat, address mental health needs and other challenges so that they can stay in school and graduate.

## Housing Issues

### Housing choices for parents can have major implications for their lives as students.

On-campus family housing, if available, can often increase debt levels but decrease stress. It can enable a parent to have a more “traditional” undergraduate experience, including extracurricular activities and other involvement in campus life that more closely matches the experience of non-parenting students. This may be more important for some students and on some campuses. Living on campus makes participation in campus life much more possible for student parents of all ages. The benefits can include:

- Easier to create relationships with other students
- Easier to be involved with extra-curricular activities on-campus
- Access to community of student parent families who can help each other out
- Less transportation burdens, time, and expenses
- Availability of work-study students as babysitters
- Children can see college experience first-hand
- Children can easily have relationships with other children of college students
- More distance from pressures of taking care of own parents
- Exposure of other undergraduates to different types of lives and families

All of the schools offer at least some family housing on campus. However, financial or child care considerations, or availability, can keep young families off campus. Three of the four wraparound programs in this study, serving many young, relatively vulnerable single mothers, require their students to live in subsidized, on-campus family housing. The fourth program plans to add a residential component. One large state university with an open program provides substantial subsidies for both undergraduate and graduate student parents as part of their financial aid packages. Another accepts Section 8 subsidies for on-campus family housing, but does not provide any subsidies. Student parents may live with their own parents, a partner, or in cheaper housing, often a distance from school. This can require long and complicated transportation arrangements for themselves and their children.

## Access to Institutional Data

All of the schools in this study have major challenges collecting data needed to identify and/or track student parents on their campuses. Most have no way of knowing how many student parents are enrolled in their schools and have no way to specifically contact them. Some of the programs have access to the number indicating dependents on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications, but have no access to contact information. Any information from FAFSA is tremendously helpful, although it is not complete or fully accurate. Not all parents are financially supporting their children; some others may have exhausted their financial aid, or, like veterans, may not need to fill out FAFSA forms. At least two programs are able to distribute information to new parenting students before they arrive on campus.

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*It's hard to give them individualized resources [through our open program] . . . I hear they [the youngest students] are lonely, isolated, that they can't relate to older ones. They are not married, at a different place in life.*

*- Program director*

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**Accessing information such as enrollment and graduation data, and academic progress/GPA of student parents, is critical for assessing their rates of academic success,** retention, time to graduation, and other measures that could be used to compare outcomes with the student body as a whole, and with student parents at other institutions.

(This study determined a set of institutional data points necessary for this purpose, but the inability to collect complete data prevented any useful analysis. Being able to survey student parent alumni is also important. These things are not yet possible at most colleges and universities.

### **Institutional Policies in Support of Student Parent Success**

**Almost none of the institutions in this study, even those with highly successful parenting programs, have institutional policies targeted specifically to issues faced by student parents.**

While Title IX protects pregnant and postpartum women, it does not require policies covering parents otherwise. Instead, parents generally must rely on negotiating accommodations as needed.

Staff at some of the programs have been able to educate faculty enough so that they are reliably responsive to

individual requests for accommodations. Others advocate for students when asked for assistance. One school has recently implemented a formal policy designating who pregnant and parenting students should go to for

help when issues with faculty arise; that person is the parenting program director. Supportive deans at several schools also help students obtain needed accommodations. Other programs have deliberate (informal) policies against any special treatment because of parenting status. Rather, these programs try to provide enough supports so that special treatment will not be needed, such as emergency babysitting resources for sick children.

As a result of many years of advocacy for parents at one institution, pregnant and parenting students are able to ask for a reduced course load using a standard form. Others are able to apply for the same accommodation through the disability office when the stress of being a student parent becomes a mental health issue. Not only does this support their

parenting and academic work, it also extends the time limit on their financial aid.

*See Appendix B for a Framework of Recommended Practices in support of student parents, relating to campus services, institutional supports, campus culture, and the wider community, compiled from interviews with program directors involved in this study.*



*If we were not looking at how the parent is at the child care center, having trouble with their child's behavior, or affording child care, those stresses can end up with students dropping out. We're trying to look at the family unit as a whole. That's the way I look at it.*

*- Program director*

## PART II: STUDENT PARENTS\*

### Overview

**The typical parenting student is a female in her mid-20s who was barely an adult when she had her first child.**

She currently has between one and two children under the age of 7; the average age of her youngest child is 3.6 years.

**She more likely than not considers herself a single parent, often with no support or contact with the other parent.**

She has a 40% chance of having been raised primarily by a single parent. She may be the first generation in her family to attend college, and could be part of any racial group(s).

Student parents are likely to be poor, although the majority work or are looking for work while enrolled in school. They are likely to use public assistance, especially for food support and child care. Not surprisingly, student parents experience high levels of stress from many causes, often related to the challenge of balancing work, school, and home needs.

Motivated by the desire to support her family and be a role model for her children, the typical student parent enrolls in a four-year school after becoming a parent, often transferring credits from a community college. Almost a third have found that they needed to “stop out” of school for a while, one or several times. Becoming pregnant is the biggest single reason for these breaks. The typical parent has a self-reported GPA averaging 3.2.

Most parenting students do not take part in on-campus activities very often, which contributes to a sense of isolation from other students. Supports that are most important for the majority of students include: on-cam-



pus child care and child care subsidies; staff to help with their needs and provide related support and information; emergency financial assistance; and family-friendly spaces, activities and policies. While many students report that the student parent services on their campus do a good job of meeting their needs, almost as many report the opposite. (This includes students who are aware of all of the available resources, as well as some who are not.)

Students in wraparound programs are more likely to live in centrally-located campus housing, feel less isolated, and be under less stress. They have a much higher likelihood of getting help with parenting issues. They are also more likely to report positive changes in their children.

**According to the parents in all programs, most of the children are more proud of their parents, more interested in school themselves, and express more desire to attend college than previously.**

Academic performance has improved for many of the children, as has behavior at school, although it has gotten a little worse for some, as well. Almost all children wish they had more time with their parents.



*My biggest challenges are finances, balancing the life of a mother, student, employee, girlfriend, daughter, etc. while still having time to be a 21-year-old.*

*- Student parent*

\* Unless otherwise noted, all statements about student parents in this report refer only to those in the survey sample, who are under 35 and from four-year schools with student parent programs.

## Who are Undergraduate Student Parents at Four-Year Colleges and Universities?

### Demographics

- Young student parents in this study are overwhelmingly female (83%)
- Their average age is 26
- About a third (35%) of these students identify as White, 21% identify as Hispanic, 13% as African American, and 11% as more than one race/ethnicity
- For 29%, English is not their first language

### Parenting

- Over half (54%) consider themselves single parents, and 40% were raised primarily by a single parent
- Most were in their teens or early 20s when their first child was born
- They have an average of 1.4 children; the average age of the youngest child is 3.6, of the oldest is 7, and most currently have preschool-age children
- 23% have little or no contact or support from the other parent
- **13% of current student parents became a parent after enrolling in their current college**
- 87% were parents before they enrolled in their current college

### College

- Two-thirds (67%) are transfer students, and most parents are juniors or seniors
- Many (58%) are first-generation college students
- Self-reported GPA averages approximately 3.2
- Student parents are most likely to live in college-owned housing, either on- or off-campus (49%), in a house or apartment on their own (21%), or with a romantic partner (18%)
- 29% have taken 1–5 breaks from college
- Of these 65 students, 50% took a break because they became pregnant and had a baby

### Finances and Employment

- Over a third (39%) have a household income under \$10,000
- Another 21% have a household income \$10,000–20,000, totaling 60% with household incomes under \$20,000; 73% have household incomes

under \$30,000

- Almost all (87%) utilize at least one form of public assistance; 40% utilize 3 or more forms of public assistance (compared to 20% prior to enrollment)
- The most common forms of public assistance are SNAP, WIC, and child care subsidies
- 35% are employed part-time, 9% full-time, and another 19% are looking for work
- Of those who work, student parents work an average of 21 hours per week for an average hourly wage of \$13
- Half do not think they have enough financial aid and three-quarters are concerned about their level of debt
- Two-thirds believe that their education will be worth the cost



### Meeting Basic Needs

Housing, food, work, finances, and child care security are all basic needs of parenting students, and essential for success in school. While many student parents have stable housing, food, and child care situations, **a sizeable number of parenting students experience some insecurities in relation to basic needs.**

- *Housing*—73% of student parents report an extremely or quite stable housing situation
- *Food*—68% report an extremely or quite stable situation in regard to food
- *Job*—Only 41% report an extremely or quite stable situation in regard to a job, with another 36% reporting a slightly or not stable situation
- *Finances*—Only 22% report an extremely or quite stable situation in regard to their financial situation, with another 55% reporting their financial situation as slightly or not stable at all
- *Child care*—60% report an extremely or quite stable situation in regard to their child care situation, although 28% report their child care situation is only slightly stable or not stable at all



## Child Care

- Three-quarters of parents “strongly agree” or “agree” that they are satisfied with the quality of child care that their youngest child receives (as defined by having a caring and responsive provider in a safe, age-appropriate, and stimulating environment), while 9% “disagree” or “strongly disagree”
- Student parents utilize a variety of child care sources
- The most frequently used are: child’s grandparents or other relatives (46%); the other parent (32%); a child care center on campus (31%); neighbors and friends (23%); off-campus, non-Head Start child care centers (17%); off-campus, Head Start/Early Head Start center (6%)

*School budgets and financial aid were based on a single student, with no consideration or individual budget plan for student parents. No subsidies for family housing or a parking permit (school only offers subsidies on bus passes which does not work well for a student parent in emergency situations).*

*- Student parent*

## Relationship with Other Parent

Student parents have a variety of relationships with the other parent(s) of their children, which are hard to define. This study has only begun to capture the complexity of this aspect of the lives of young student parents.

- **Almost a quarter (23%) are living apart from the other parent with little to no contact or support**
- Another 38% are living with or married to the other parent
- A different 19% chose one or more of the following options:
  - Living apart and sharing at least some parenting responsibilities
  - Receiving non-financial support from other parent (child care, emotional support, gifts, etc.)
  - Receiving financial support from other parent
- Over half (54%) consider themselves single parents

*I wish there was an on-campus child care facility so that I could take my child to school with me and check in on him during the day. It would make scheduling much easier. I also wish there was an opportunity to have special child care for studying hours.*

*- Student parent*

## Emotional Support

- The majority of student parents receive social and emotional support from immediate family members (66%), a spouse or romantic partner (60%)
- They also receive support from friends at school who are also parents (36%), or from other friends (50%)
- About a quarter (24%) receive support from faculty or staff at their school

## Stress

**The majority of student parents report high levels of stress in their lives. Almost none report very little stress.**

TABLE 5: STRESS LEVELS

(n=215)	Huge Amount	Quite a bit	Moderate	A little	No stress
%	39%	36%	20%	4%	1%

Parenting students find that balancing work, school, and home causes high levels of stress in their lives. That, along with money, school work, sleep, and spending time with children are the most common stressors that student parents indicate as “extremely” or “quite” stressful.

*Everything as a student parent is challenging.*

*- Student parent*

While “security” is the common language used in the literature, in piloting our survey we found that student parents needed clarification of that term. We used the term “stability” instead in our surveys.

TABLE 6: MOST COMMON SOURCES OF STRESS

n=215	% Extremely or quite stressful
Balancing work, school, home	81%
Managing money	67%
Keeping up with schoolwork	64%
Getting enough sleep	64%
Enough time with children	57%
Ensuring proper child care	40%
Managing eligibility for public assistance	39%
Managing health	36%
Affording basic needs	35%
Feeding yourself and family	32%
Dealing with relationship issues	31%
Managing children's health	29%
Transportation	28%
Providing safe housing	22%

## Challenges

Many of the common stressors were also common challenges for student parents.

TABLE 7: MOST COMMON CHALLENGES

Challenges (n=215)	%
Family commitments	89%
Paying for child care	57%
Finding child care	50%
Work commitments	46%
Getting/keeping public assistance	43%
Transportation	38%
Sick or disabled child	37%



*My biggest challenge as a single parent is having to stay home with my daughter when she's sick. I have had a professor that discriminated towards me and tried failing me because of it. This is when I found pregnancy and parent services to help my case.*

- Student parent



## Undergraduate Student Parent Experiences at Four-Year Colleges and Universities

### Encouragement and Motivation to Attend a Four-Year College

Most students who were parents prior to enrolling in college received encouragement from one or more sources to attend a four-year college program; however, some relied on their own motivation only, with no outside encouragement at all.

TABLE 8: SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO ATTEND COLLEGE

Source	
Family members	54%
HS or CC counselor	26%
Friends	23%
Availability of services for student parents	19%
No encouragement	17%
Other mentor or counselor	11%
School-based program	5%

Those who became pregnant while already in college also benefited from encouragement to stay in school, from the following sources:

TABLE 9: SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO REMAIN IN COLLEGE

Source	
Family	76%
Friends	55%
Availability of services/supports	41%
Staff from current school	24%
Other mentor	41%

TABLE 10: SOURCES OF MOTIVATION TO ATTEND COLLEGE

Motivation	
Support my family	87%
Role model for my children	63%
Personal fulfillment	60%
Be better able to contribute to my community	35%
Find a better paying job or field	33%



*A college education means finding my own place in the world rather than just accepting the place that I was born into. It means giving my children a better starting point and the knowledge that they can go from there to wherever they want.*

- Student parent

*My infant goes to school with me and attends child care on campus. I often get “looks” from other students, who I assume do not have children. It makes me feel uncomfortable and ashamed, like I don’t belong.*

- Student parent



## Breaks from School

“Stopping out” of school for various periods of time is not uncommon for student parents, given their complicated lives.

- About 30% of current student parents have taken 1–5 breaks from their college or university
- **Of those who took a break from school (n=65), half did so because they became pregnant and had a baby**
- Other common reasons for taking a break after having a child: financial considerations, needing to care for family, and being too overwhelmed

## Experiences as a Student Parent On Campus

Student parents have a range of social experiences on campus.

TABLE 11: ASPECTS OF SOCIAL LIFE FOR STUDENT PARENTS

n=224	Very often or often	Sometimes	Rarely or never
Take part in activities	18%	23%	58%
Have opportunities to make friends	51%	33%	16%
Interact with students with children	46%	27%	25%
Feel isolated from students	37%	30%	33%
Feel judged by students	14%	21%	65%

On the academic side, there are also variations in experience.

TABLE 12: ASPECTS OF ACADEMIC LIFE FOR STUDENT PARENTS

n=224	Very often or often	Sometimes	Rarely or never
Feel judged by faculty/staff	5%	22%	75%
Don't mention children to faculty/staff	13%	20%	66%
Find child friendly study spaces	39%	17%	43%
Confident in ability to finish school	67%	27%	6%
Consider dropping out of school	14%	22%	63%

## Student Parent Support Services

Around half of parenting students find the support services for student parents on their campus meet their needs extremely or quite well (54%). Twenty-four percent (24%) report that campus parent support services only meet their needs slightly or not at all. (All of these students are on campuses with robust student parent programs, although some may not be aware of them.)

TABLE 13: STUDENTS' RATING OF PARENT SUPPORT SERVICES

n=219	Extremely Well	Quite Well	Moderately Well	Slightly Well	Not at all
%	27%	27%	23%	14%	10%

A variety of services for parenting and pregnant students are available on four-year campuses. Which services are available differs greatly from school to school and program to program.



*Class schedule limitations—many courses are offered in the early mornings and late afternoons when there is no child care offered during that period of time.*

*- Student parent*

The most commonly offered services for student parents are: information about supports for student parents, child care subsidies, and a staff person to provide support.

These were available to the majority of students in this study, and also rated as helpful by most students.

TABLE 14: HELPFULNESS OF SERVICES FOR PARENTS

	% (n) with access to this service	% of those with access stating service is extremely or quite helpful
On-campus child care facilities	54% (121)	76%
Staff person available to address student parent needs or to provide related support	73% (163)	72%
Child care subsidies	75% (167)	71%
Emergency financial assistance	44% (99)	69%
Dining hall/meal plans that accommodate children	25% (57)	65%
Information about services and supports for student parents	79% (176)	63%
Drop-in child care	34% (76)	62%
Family friendly spaces, activities, policies	65% (147)	60%
Activities or groups for students with children	58% (129)	59%
Disability accommodations for pregnant students	19% (42)	59%
Financial education and counseling	51% (114)	59%
Parenting skills information/education	46% (102)	57%
Peer counseling from student parents	51% (114)	56%
Accommodations from faculty available for pregnant and parenting students	52% (117)	54%
Access to on campus healthcare for children	19% (42)	50%

## Help with Parenting Issues

Most parents need help with a variety of parenting issues, including those listed below. About half of students who needed help in these areas received at least some help.

TABLE 15: ASSISTANCE WITH PARENTING ISSUES

	Received a little help	Received a lot of help	Received no help	n	Did not need help in this area (n=224)
Child guidance & discipline	34%	14%	50%	118	35%
Understanding of child development	35%	19%	44%	130	29%
Healthy communication	32%	21%	46%	130	29%
Nurturance of self-esteem	31%	19%	48%	136	27%
Helping children succeed in school	28%	15%	55%	127	26%
Parenting special needs child	13%	11%	73%	64	37%

*I want to show my two girls that if I can do this they will also be able to achieve any goal they set for themselves.*

*- Student parent*





## Impacts on Children

Parents report many more positive effects on their children as a result of their college participation than negative ones, although the changes are not all positive.

TABLE 16: IMPACTS OF COLLEGE ON CHILDREN

	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	n
Wish had more time with parent	86%	11%	4%	178
Expressed more desire to attend college	76%	22%	3%	113
More proud of parent	78%	22%	0%	123
Angrier with or resent parent	22%	33%	44%	154
More interested in school	75%	19%	6%	149
Less interested in school	38%	24%	38%	148

TABLE 17: IMPACTS OF COLLEGE ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

	Much better	A little better	No change	A little worse	Much worse	n
Home behavior changes	14%	13%	44%	25%	4%	170
School/child care behavior changes	23%	12%	51%	10%	2%	162
School academic performance	25%	14%	48%	11%	2%	127
Study habits	13%	20%	52%	11%	4%	101

*[The college experience] means giving my children a better starting point and the knowledge that they can go from there to wherever they want.*

*- Student parent*





## Differences Between Wraparound and Open Program Student Experiences and Outcomes

All of the parenting programs in this study are committed to removing barriers, providing supports, and advocating for conditions that enable student parents to successfully complete four-year degrees.

**They provide help in securing basic requirements of student family life for those who need it, including child care, housing, and food.**

They assist students in navigating on- and off-campus resources, through individual help, workshops, courses, and referrals. They also help with negotiating academic challenges related to being a parent, and offer community building and family social opportunities.

However, this study includes two distinct types of programs:

**Wraparound programs** place requirements on participants, starting with a program application prior to enrollment in the school. Students commit to a certain level of interaction with program staff and academic accomplishment in exchange for a high level of (required) personalized services, tracking, and extra financial support. These programs have very limited enrollments, and usually target young single parents. Most are residential programs.

**Open programs** have many levels and types of programming and support available to large numbers of students on a walk-in basis, for those students who initiate and persist with contact with the program. Those who are motivated and have a high need of assistance can often get extensive individualized help and support from the open programs. Other student parents check in or get involved less often, when they need help with a particular issue.

### Differences Between the Two Groups of Students

Almost all of the wraparound program students attend smaller, private institutions, while almost all of the open program students attend large, public universities.

**Although students in both types of programs are similarly low income, those in wraparound programs are usually more vulnerable than the majority of those in open programs.**

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*Having the ability to live on campus is huge! I can have a real college experience as well as be a mother. My daughter is learning great socializing skills as she is around different children and parenting all the time—something that is not available to most people. She is also learning the importance of an education and doing homework.*

- Wraparound program student

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*I am a first generation college student and it was very important for me to finish school after getting pregnant my senior year of college. I had to stay an extra year to complete my degree but with the support of my student parent center, I was convinced and had the necessary tools and information I needed to complete my degree and take care of my family.*

- Open program student

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## Wraparound program students:

- Are over 4 years younger (average of 23 vs. 27 years)
- Became pregnant 3 years younger (average of 19 years vs. 22)
- More often consider themselves to be single parents (73% vs. 49%)
- Are slightly more likely to have been raised by a single parent (44% vs. 39%)
- Are less likely to be living with or married to the other parent (13% vs 44%), and are more likely to have little or no contact or support from the other parent (31% vs. 21%)
- Are more likely to be African American (39% vs. 7%)
- Are 4 times more likely to live on campus (wraparound programs are often residential) (60% vs. 16%)
- Are more likely to use center-based child care, on or off campus (54% vs. 46%)
- Are more likely to use a fellow student parent for help with child care (17% vs. 6%)

## A higher percentage of open program students:

- Are first-generation college students (62% vs. 42%)
- Are not native English speakers (31% vs. 21%)
- Are Hispanic (24% vs. 8%)
- Are transfer students (72% vs. 46%)
- Became a parent while enrolled in their current school (14% vs. 10%)
- Use the child's other parent (36% vs. 17%) or a grandparent or other relative (48% vs. 38%) for some child care

## Stronger Outcomes Related to Wraparound Program Students

Regardless of the differences in the programs, many students in both of these types of parenting programs reported similar experiences and outcomes. However, there were many areas where wraparound program students, with their almost uniformly high level of interaction with parenting program staff and more centrally-located on-campus housing, experienced stronger results.

**Thus, these types of resource-rich programs can be highly effective for the most vulnerable students.**

(It should be noted that the total survey sample of those in wraparound programs is much smaller (48) than the sample of those in open programs (176), due to the smaller size of these programs. Also, all comparisons refer to percentages of survey respondents.)

This section of the report highlights only those areas of the survey with sizeable differences between the two populations.

## Wraparound program students:

- ✓ Report less stress, including related to having enough time with their children
- ✓ Receive more emotional support from a variety of sources
- ✓ Experience greater stability in relation to food access, child care arrangements, employment, housing
- ✓ Are more involved in school life
- ✓ Are more connected to other student parents
- ✓ Are more satisfied with services for student parents
- ✓ Receive more help with parenting issues
- ✓ Have children who experience greater benefits
  - More (all) express a greater desire to attend college
  - Are more likely to be more interested in school, and to be doing better academically

## Stress, Challenges, and Sources of Support

Despite the younger age and greater vulnerability of most students in the wraparound programs,

- A higher percentage of wraparound program students than open program students report little or no stress overall (13% vs 3%)
- A higher percentage of wraparound program students report less stress related to many important aspects of their daily lives

TABLE 18: COMMON FACTORS CAUSING LITTLE OR NO STRESS

	Wrap (n=45)/ Open (n=170)*
Providing safe housing	66%/53%
Managing eligibility for public assistance	50%/23%
Ensuring proper child care	48%/34%
Feeding themselves	59%/39%
Transporting themselves and their families	65%/43%
Managing their own health	52%/32%
Managing a child's health	57%/47%)

\*Percentage indicating "a little" or "no stress"

TABLE 19: COMMON FACTORS CAUSING HIGH STRESS

	Wrap (n=45)/ Open (n=170)*
Having enough time with their children	38%/59%
Keeping up with school work	52%/67%
Getting enough sleep	54%/66%

\*Percentage indicating "extremely" or "quite" stressful

Wraparound program students also find common parenting tasks to be less challenging than students in open programs, but find work commitments to be more challenging. (Other types of challenges are similarly hard for both groups.)

**TABLE 20: TOP CHALLENGES FOR STUDENT PARENTS**

	Wrap (n=48)/ Open (n=176)
Finding child care	38%/53%
Paying for child care	38%/63%
Family commitments	81%/91%
Work commitments	58%/42%

Far more wraparound program students also report receiving emotional support from a variety of sources, especially friends, staff and parents at their school, but less often receive support from a spouse or romantic partner.

**TABLE 21: SOURCES OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

	Wrap (n=48)/ Open (n=176)
Friends at school who are parents	60%/30%
Nonparent friends at school	40%/18%
Other non-parent friends	42%/25%
Faculty and staff at their school	50%/17%
Spouse or romantic partner	50%/63%

## Meeting Basic Needs

Wraparound program students report greater stability than students in open programs in several key areas of their lives:

- **Food access currently; and improved food access compared to 6 months ago**

A higher percentage of wraparound program students currently experience more stability around food access than open program students (69% vs. 55%); also, the situation for wraparound program students around food stability is better now than it was 6 months ago (69% now vs. 59% 6 months ago), while for open program students the percentage decreased compared to 6 months ago (55% now vs. 65% 6 months ago).

- **Dependable and stable child care arrangements**

Current child care access is dependable for a higher percentage of students in wraparound programs than for those in open programs (65% vs. 48%); 6 months ago child care stability was about the same (50% vs. 48%) for the two groups.

- **Stable job with dependable hours**

A higher percentage of wraparound program students than open program students report job stability (40% vs. 24%).

- **Safe and dependable housing**

A higher percentage of wraparound program students report housing stability than open program students (77% vs. 69%).

## Encouragement and Motivation to Attend a Four-Year College

Students in both types of programs experienced similar encouragement and sources of motivation to attend college, except in the few areas in the table below.

**TABLE 22: DIFFERENCES IN SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION TO PURSUE A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE**

	Wrap (n=48)/ Open (n=176)
<b>Sources of Encouragement</b>	
Availability of Student Parent Supports	35%/15%
No encouragement	5%/20%
<b>Sources of Motivation</b>	
Role model for children	81%/58%

## Experiences On Campus

Experiences of student parents at school varied markedly between those in the two types of programs, with those in wraparound programs being more involved in school life and also more connected to other student parents.

They have better experiences on campus in relation to most of the areas in the following table.

**TABLE 23: ASPECTS OF LIFE ON CAMPUS**

	Wrap (n=48)/ Open (n=176)
Feel isolated from other students	25%/40%
Have opportunities to make friends at school	69%/46%
Take part in student activities	34%/14%
Interact with students who have children	73%/49%
Can find child-friendly study spaces at their schools	69%/46%
Feel judged by other students	21%/12%
Try to hide that they have children	2%/16%

\*Percentage indicating very often or often on a 5 choice scale



## Helpfulness of Services for Student Parents

Wraparound program students were more satisfied with and received more help from services for student parents than open program students. However, interacting with services and parenting program personnel is a requirement for those in wraparound programs.

- A higher percentage of wraparound program students than open program students report that overall services for parents at their school meet their needs “extremely or quite well” (67% vs 48%).

A higher percentage of wraparound program students consistently rate particular services as more helpful to them (extremely helpful or quite helpful), although the order of the most useful services for students in both programs was similar.

**TABLE 24: HELPFULNESS OF PARENT SUPPORTS FOR WRAPAROUND AND OPEN PROGRAM STUDENTS**

	% Wrap/Open*
On-campus child care facilities	79%/74%
Staff person available to address student parent needs or to provide related support	77%/71%
Child care subsidies	81%/67%
Emergency financial assistance	75%/66%
Dining hall/meal plans that accommodate children	75%/62%
Information about services and supports for student parents	71%/60%
Drop-in child care	81%/57%
Family friendly spaces, activities, policies	71%/55%
Activities or groups for students with children	69%/56%
Disability accommodations for pregnant students	57%/60%
Financial education and counseling	67%/55%
Parenting skills information/education	61%/54%
Peer counseling from student parents	63%/53%
Accommodations from faculty available for pregnant and parenting students	69%/47%
Access to on campus healthcare for children	60%/44%

\*Of those who had access to the service

**According to the students, wraparound program parents received much more needed assistance with parenting issues.**

**TABLE 25: PARENTING SUPPORT RECEIVED**

	Wrap /Open	n*
Child discipline and guidance	87%/36%	29/89
Understanding of child development	88%/42%	33/97
Healthy communication	85%/41%	33/97
Nurturance of self-esteem	85%/38%	34/102
Helping children succeed in school	70%/34%	31/96
Parenting a special needs child	45%/19%	11/53

\*Number who expressed a need

## Children

The children of those in wraparound programs, according to their parents, experience greater benefits than those in open programs. (The children in three of the four wraparound programs in this study live on campus with their parents. They are also younger, on average.)

**TABLE 26: CHILD OUTCOMES**

	Wrap /Open	n*
Expressed more desire to attend college	100%/70%	20/93
More proud of me	95%/74%	21/102
Angrier with me or resent me	20%/22%	30/124
More interested in school	86%/72%	28/121
Less interested in school	4%/5%	28/120
Improvements in school performance	52%/36%	27/100
Improvements in study habits	41%/ 31%	17/84

\*Percent choosing *agree* or *strongly agree*

*It has given him (my son) a sense of what it means to follow your dreams. College wasn't part of my parents' experience and so I never knew how to prepare, whereas my son now has the cultural capital to see himself in higher education.*

*- Student parent*

## Recent Alumni Experiences and Outcomes

All of the programs succeeded in reaching some of their recent alumni, despite challenges with obtaining contact information. This section includes survey information about student parents who graduated in 2009 or later.

*Aside from becoming a parent, graduating college has been one of the most life challenging journeys I've been on. Setting that goal, the struggle to accomplish it, being part of a community, and intellectual challenge and growth have been completely life altering.*

- Student parent alumna

TABLE 27: ALUMNI SURVEYS COMPLETED

	Number
Open	60
Wraparound	14
All	74

TABLE 28: YEAR OF GRADUATION OF ALUMNI

	Everyone (n= 74)	n Open (n=60)/ Wrap (n=14)
Graduated 2009-2011	30%	25%/57%
Graduated 2012-2014	70%	75%/43%



## Alumni who responded to the survey are:

- 91% female (89% open/100% wraparound).
- 52% first-generation college students (57% open/ 28% wraparound).
- 44% raised primarily by a single parent (48% open/29% wraparound).
- 81% having English as their first language (77% open/100% wraparound).
- 35% currently married (38% open/21% wraparound).

## Outcomes for Student Parent Alumni

Almost all alumni report important outcomes that they attribute to their college experience and bachelor's degree.

TABLE 29: IMPACTS OF GRADUATING WITH A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE

	Everyone (n=74)	Open (n=61)/ Wrap (n=14)
Gave them new knowledge, tools, or skills that they have used at work	87%	89%/79%
Connected them with new role models, mentors or supporters	83%	82%/86%
Helped them establish new friendships/connections	83%	80%/93%
Improved their self-confidence	83%	82%/86%
Made them aware of/interested in better paying career options	73%	75%/64%
Helped them get a job or a better job	71%	70%/71%
None of the above	0%	0%/0%

## Current Employment and Finances

Almost all (90%) recent alumni who responded to the survey are either working full-time or are in graduate school.

TABLE 30: EMPLOYMENT OF ALUMNI

	Everyone (n=74)	Open (n=61)/ Wrap (n=14)
Part time job(s)	17%	21%/0%
Full time job	63%	57%/86%
Graduate student	27%	31%/7%
Stay at home parent	1%	2%/0%
Unemployed – looking for work	5%	5%/7%

A quarter of these recent alumni (24%) are still very low-income—living in a household of below \$20,000/year. When graduate students are removed from the data, 14% report an income below \$20,000/year, while 34% of non-graduate student alumni report a household income of below \$30,000.

The households of slightly more than a third of non-graduate student alumni are now earning \$50,000 or more/year.

**TABLE 31: HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF ALUMNI**

	Everyone (n=67)	Open (54)/ Wrap (13)	Non-graduate Students (n=49)
\$0 to \$10,000	12%	11%/25%	6%
\$10,000 to \$20,000	12%	15%/0%	8%
\$20,000 to \$30,000	19%	22%/8%	20%
\$30,000 to \$50,000	25%	20%/46%	29%
\$50,000 to \$75,000	15%	17%/8%	18%
\$75,000 to \$100,000	9%	9%/8%	8%
\$100,000 and up	7%	6%/15%	10%

Student parent alumni have a great deal of student loan debt, with 43% of all alumni having more than \$50,000 in debt.

**TABLE 32: STUDENT LOAN DEBT OF ALUMNI**

	Everyone	Open / Wrap
\$0-\$5,000	6%	4%/0%
\$5,000-\$10,000	1%	2%/0%
\$10,000-\$15,000	1%	2%/0%
\$15,000-\$20,000	6%	5%/8%
\$20,000-\$30,000	16%	16%/15%
\$30,000-\$40,000	18%	16%/23%
\$40,000-\$50,000	12%	13%/8%
More than \$50,000	43%	42%/46%

As would be expected, fewer student parent alumni are using public benefits than when they were in school, with wraparound program alumni using less than open program alumni. (More open program alumni are still in school.)

Graduate students are utilizing more food and childcare subsidies than other alumni.

*This opportunity and the education I am able to receive is more than I could have dreamed 10 years ago. Having my son three years ago got me back on track. I am finally focused, driven and enjoy learning more than I ever did in high school.*

~ Student parent

*I shudder to think what kind of job or life we would have without a degree. We would be financially dependent on my parents.*

~ Student parent alumna

**TABLE 33: CURRENT USE OF PUBLIC BENEFITS BY ALUMNI**

	Everyone (n=75)	Open (n=61)/ Wrap (n=14)	Non-graduate Students (n=55)
Earned income Tax Credit, or EITC	39%	36%/50%	40%
Subsidized housing, such as public housing or Section 8 housing	3%	3%/0%	2%
Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC benefits	9%	12%/0%	5%
Utility discounts or credits (energy assistance, etc.)	5%	5%/7%	4%
Veterans benefits, such as GI Bill or VA Benefits	1%	2%/0%	2%
Food assistance, such as SNAP or food stamps	23%	26%/7%	11%
Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Disability benefits	1%	2%/0%	2%
Public/government child care subsidy	9%	10%/7%	4%
None	41%	39%/50%	45%

## Living Situations

The majority of alumni are currently living independently or with a romantic partner (83%). This is a big contrast to their situations six months before enrolling in college when 40% were living with a parent or grandparent.

(Alumni were able to check all that apply.)





TABLE 34: CURRENT LIVING SITUATIONS OF ALUMNI

	Everyone (n=74)	Open (n=61)/ Wrap (n=14)
House/apartment of my parent/grandparent	8%	3%/29%
House/apartment on own	51%	52%/43%
House/apartment with romantic partner only	32%	33%/29%
House/apartment with friends/roommates	7%	0%/8%
House/apartment of other relatives	0%	0%/0%
Public Housing	1%	2%/0%
Section 8 Housing	1%	2%/0%
Temporary	0%	0%/0%
Shelter	0%	0%/0%
Homeless	0%	0%/0%
Other	1%	2%/0%

TABLE 35: PAST LIVING SITUATIONS OF ALUMNI

	Everyone (n=74)	Open (n=61)/ Wrap (n=14)
House/apartment of my parent/grandparent	40%	33%/71%
House/apartment on own	25%	30%/7%
House/apartment with romantic partner only	16%	15%/21%
House/apartment with friends/roommates	9%	0%/8 10%/7%
House/apartment of other relatives	0%	0%/0%
Public Housing	0%	0%/0%
Section 8 Housing	0%	0%/0%
Temporary	3%	3%/0%
Shelter	0%	0%/0%
Homeless	1%	0%/4%
Other	1%	0%/4%

## Meeting Basic Needs

Many student parent alumni are still struggling financially; otherwise, almost all report at least having moderate stability of basic needs. When only non-graduate students are considered, overall stability improves slightly, although housing and food instability also show slight increases.

*The college experience is priceless to my family.*

*- Student parent*

TABLE 36: CURRENT STABILITY OF BASIC NEEDS FOR ALL ALUMNI

	Extremely Stable	Quite Stable	Moderately Stable	Slightly Stable	Not Stable
Housing (n=70)	53%	30%	11%	6%	0%
Food (n=70)	44%	37%	14%	3%	1%
Job (n=65)	45%	29%	12%	5%	9%
Financial (n=70)	21%	17%	29%	17%	16%
Child Care (n=63)	38%	29%	24%	8%	2%

TABLE 37: CURRENT STABILITY OF BASIC NEEDS FOR NON GRADUATE-STUDENT ALUMNI

	Extremely Stable	Quite Stable	Moderately Stable	Slightly Stable	Not Stable
Housing (n=51)	57%	29%	6%	8%	0%
Food (n=51)	53%	31%	10%	4%	2%
Job (n=50)	50%	28%	12%	0%	10%
Financial (n=51)	25%	16%	29%	12%	18%
Child Care (n=46)	44%	26%	24%	4%	2%



<sup>d</sup> While the “Food Stamp” program officially ended with the passage of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, which renamed the U.S.D.A. food assistance program for low-income families as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), many families still colloquially refer to the SNAP program as “Food Stamps” and so both were included in the survey to reduce respondent confusion.

## Stress

Many recent alumni, especially graduates of wraparound programs, report experiencing large amounts of stress in their lives currently, but many less experience a “huge amount of stress” than current student parents (18% vs 39%).

TABLE 38: CURRENT STRESS LEVELS FOR ALUMNI

	A huge amount of stress	Quite a bit of stress	Moderate stress	A little stress	No stress at all
Open (n=56)	18%	36%	34%	11%	2%
Wrap (n=14)	14%	64%	14%	7%	0%
Non-Graduate students (n= 51)	16%	37%	33%	12%	2%
Everyone (n=70)	17%	41%	30%	10%	1%

The stress that alumni are experiencing is most likely to be related to home/life balance (however much less for non-graduate students), money management, and work demands (particularly for wraparound students).

TABLE 39: SOURCES OF STRESS FOR ALUMNI

	Everyone (n=70)	Open (n=56)/ Wrap (n=14)	Non-Graduate Students (n=51)
Balancing work/grad school, home life	46%	56%/43%	37%
Managing money	38%	32%/58%	38%
Work demands	28%	25%/43%	31%
Enough time with children	25%	26%/21%	20%
Managing health	23%	23%/21%	24%
Dealing with relationship issues	16%	16%/14%	18%
Affording basic needs	8%	8%/7%	6%
Feeding self and family	5%	7%/0%	6%
Providing safe housing	10%	12%/7%	10%
Ensuring proper care for children	7%	8%/0%	6%

## Student Parent Services

The majority (76%) of alumni say that the student parent services at their school served them extremely or quite well with open program alumni rating the services they received more highly.



TABLE 40: RATINGS OF STUDENT PARENT SUPPORT SERVICES BY ALUMNI

	Everyone (n=70)	Open (n=56)/ Wrap (n=14)
Extremely Well	44%	49%/21%
Quite Well	32%	28%/50%
Moderately Well	25%	14%/21%
Slightly Well	8%	9%/7%
Not at all	0%	0%/0%

The most helpful aspect of the student parent services was financial assistance with child care (for open program alumni), and on-campus housing (for wraparound program alumni). Former open program students also remembered information and staff to help them with their needs as being highly important. While these were helpful to wraparound program students also, the integrated way in which these services were offered in those programs may have made them less visible to some of these parents. After child care funding and housing, wraparound program students remembered the supportive community of other student families as being the most helpful to them.

*It has helped me get back my self-esteem after my divorce and helped me get a job where we would be able to survive. It has helped me tremendously.*

*- Student parent alumna*

TABLE 41: MOST HELPFUL SERVICES

	Everyone (n=70)	Open (n=56)/ Wrap (n=14)
Financial assistance or subsidies to pay for child care	71%	72%/64%
Supportive community of student parents	63%	59%/79%
Information about services and supports for student parents	56%	64%/21%
Staff person available to address student parent needs or to provide related support	56%	61%/36%
Child and family friendly spaces, activities, and policies on campus	55%	56%/50%
On campus family housing	44%	33%/93%
On-campus child care facilities	37%	36%/43%
Accommodations from faculty/professors available for pregnant and parenting students	32%	33%/29%
Financial education & counseling for parents	25%	26%/21%
Emergency financial assistance for families	23%	26%/7%
Dining hall or meal plans that accommodate children	13%	5%/50%
Parenting skills information/education	11%	13%/0%

*I worry that one of the ways it has impacted me most is by the amount of debt I have accrued in pursuing my education. However, I have grown and invested in myself. I also believe that it will have positive effects on my daughter, since she saw her mom succeed in college.*

- Student parent alumna

*I left with a sense of resiliency; that if I could complete a full-time undergraduate program, be my child's primary care-giver, work a part-time job and be involved on-campus – that anything after this had to be easy.*

- Student parent alumna

## Impacts on children of Alumni

Alumni wrote about how their experience of going to and graduating from college has affected their children. Over and over again, they commented on the expectation their children have that they, too, will attend college.

*My child is certain that her own path includes higher education. I also observe that it has made her a better student.*

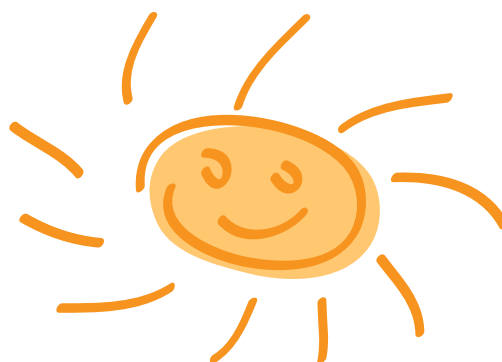
- Student parent alumna

*My daughter is only 6 and I'm now in law school, but I feel that the experience has affected her in a positive way. I feel like now she knows that she is expected to go to college.*

- Student parent alumna

*My daughter and I grew together at this school. I had never been on my own before. For the most part, she saw my mother as the authoritative figure. She learned to see me as her mom. She also built relationships with traditional students at the school (they loved to get her for slumber parties) and older children became family. She had a college experience of her own.*

- Student parent alumna





## PART III: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMS, PRACTICE AND POLICY

**Over one million student parents in four-year colleges and universities (IWPR, 2016a) are a largely invisible population to their institutions as well as to researchers and policymakers.**

Those in traditional four-year programs are overwhelmingly low-income young mothers with young children, who are often single parents and disproportionately women of color (IWPR, 2016a). They are highly motivated, which they have to be to overcome the myriad challenges they face as parents, students, workers, and sometimes caregivers for other family members as well. A bachelor's

degree means a chance at a family-sustaining income (Center for Women's Welfare, 2015) giving both them and their children a more secure pathway out of poverty than most two-year degrees or certificate programs. It means better outcomes for both generations in terms of education, economic security, and health and well-being (Kaushal, 2014).



However, **as of 2009, only 17.4% of students with children who pursued a four-year degree** from public and private not-for-profit schools **graduated within six years** (IWPR, 2016b). (Those attending for-profit colleges rarely achieve BA degrees in six years [IWPR, 2016b]). This study documents many of the reasons why it is so hard for these student parents to graduate, as well as the services and supports that can make a critical difference, including for the most vulnerable. Based on data from those who provide services to parenting students, and from the student and alumni parents themselves, these new findings add important insights into how to increase retention and graduation rates for parents at four-year colleges and universities.

Institutions of higher education, governments, and society at large all have a lot to gain from increased retention of student parents. Hence, it is in their interests to make changes and devote resources to improving the experiences of student parents and increasing their chances of graduation. The findings in this report have many program and policy implications at every level. Some of the most important relate to program design and practice, data about student parents, services and accommodations, and child care and financial supports.

This section includes discussion of implications and recommendations for colleges and universities, and for state and federal agencies. Actions suggested at the institutional level largely leverage existing resources, policies, and practices. Many of the institutional constraints that impact higher education institutions and the student parents they serve are the result of policies and priorities at the state and federal level.

**Supportive, targeted government and institutional policies and practices can make a critical difference in the ability of student parents to persist and graduate from four-year colleges and universities.**

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*The balance of work, school, and parenting forced us, in a positive way, to become a team. He witnessed first-hand the hard work and dedication it takes to do well in college.*

*- Student parent alumna*

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## Recommendations

### Program Design and Practice

#### *Colleges and Universities*

**From the program findings of this study, a comprehensive framework for program design and practice has been developed. It describes characteristics of, and provides examples from the well-established programs in this study across several dimensions: the parenting program or services; institutional supports; campus culture; and the wider community.**

*(See Appendix B)*

While no single program embodies all of the attributes in the framework, they all have worked within their particular contexts to address student parent and family needs. The framework recognizes that programs depend on their larger institutions and communities, both structurally and culturally, and provides a resource for institutions seeking to assess and strengthen their support services for student parents and their children.

#### **Recommendations**

- **Convene a campus-wide task force** to assess existing resources and to plan for strengthening support for student parents and their children, using the *Family Friendly Campus Framework of Recommended Practices* as a guide.\* (A Toolkit to support this process will be available in spring 2017.)
- **Become familiar with the recommended** strategies outlined by the 2013 US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights pamphlet, *Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students* (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2013).  
[www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf)
- **Create student parent programs** similar to those for veterans, minority students and other at-risk populations.

#### *State and Federal Agencies*

**Establishing a priority of supporting student parents' retention and graduation from baccalaureate programs, and aligning policies and resources with this priority is key.**

While this may look different in each state, and at the federal level, offices and programs that deal with higher education, early



\* With funding from the US Department of Education through the National Center for Student Parent Programs, this framework and other new tools, along with revised versions of the interview and survey instruments developed for this Kellogg Foundation-funded study, are being incorporated into the design of a "Family Friendly Campus Toolkit" self-assessment process for higher education institutions interested in developing or improving their services for student parents, available from PERG in Spring, 2017.

childhood education, child care, families, and workforce development all have a stake in supporting families in moving out of poverty through education and successful transition to careers. One example of a cross-agency or cross-program effort is the Strengthening Working Families Initiative launched by the US Department of Labor to link efforts to support workforce development programs with access to flexible child care options.

### Recommendations

- **Encourage colleges and universities to implement the recommended strategies and programs** for pregnant and parenting students in the 2013 US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights pamphlet, *Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students* (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2013).
- **Encourage all four-year colleges and universities, through reports, conferences, funding and other incentives, to create student parent programs similar to offices for veterans, minority students, and other at-risk populations.**
- **Add student parents to the list of high-risk students** eligible for TRIO program funding and incentivize TRIO grantees to provide student parent supports through their Student Support Center programs.
- **Explore ways to collaborate across programs and agencies** to support student parents and their children through college to successful graduation and transition to self-sufficiency.
- **Expand funding and incentives to colleges and universities to offer campus-based child care** serving student families through funding opportunities such as CCAMPIS or other federal grants targeted toward support for college and university student parent support programs. Additional opportunities may be available by expanding inclusion parameters of Perkins-funded programs to include four-year degree programs connected directly to a high-skills career pathway as a form of vocational education.
- **Continue ongoing support for research and program evaluation** to inform best practices for student parent success. An example of such a program is the US Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education's Center for Best Practices to Support Single Parent Students

in Higher Education, although it is unclear whether this program will receive renewed funding beyond its introductory award cycle.

## Data Tracking and Reporting

### Colleges and Universities

**While there are some data about the number of student parents from national databases, student parents are largely invisible to most four-year colleges and universities mainly because of the lack of institutional data about them.**

This study discovered the inability of student parent programs and others to track institutional outcomes for student parents. Participating programs were not able to access full data sets of information about student parents, currently or over the past five years, due to a lack of identification of this population in most places.

If programs are to be able to evaluate student parent outcomes and the degree to which they are supporting the success of their participants, they need to know who they are and be able to see how their performance compares to the larger student body. An additional challenge is that many of these students have transferred into the school, so they are not counted in the cohort-based model that institutions use to report to the US Department of Education. This reinforces the invisibility of this population, and makes it impossible to assess academic success, including retention and graduation rates.

Some programs have been able to get information on students with dependents from FAFSA data through their financial aid office. In most cases, this has been limited to the total number of students claiming dependents, due to interpretations of FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act). However, even FAFSA data does not provide a completely accurate measure of the parenting student population, as some students may not apply for FAFSA for a variety of reasons, including veterans and others receiving tuition support from other programs, and foreign or undocumented students. Access to full institutional data about all student parents is critical for programs, institutions, researchers, and policy makers at all levels.

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*Being a student hinders me from being the mom I want to be and being a mom hinders me from being the student I want to be.*

*- Student parent*



Although this study did not succeed in collecting the institutional data needed to report on many aspects of student parent outcomes, the research team developed a list of data points that would enable many outcomes to be determined.

### Recommendations

- Give students opportunities to **disclose parental status** after acceptance.
- **Track and report on the following data points:** demographics, such as the number of student parents in each class in a given year, and a breakdown by age, sex, race for parents and their children; academic data, such as the number of students graduating, not returning the following year, transferring in, and GPAs for all student parents; and the number of student parents and their children living on campus.
- **Analyze, compare to non-student parents, and publicize student parent data** about course activity, retention, and graduation (including for transfer students).
- **Collect relevant information** about student parents and their children **after graduation** as part of other alumni tracking efforts.

### State and Federal Agencies

**Changing federal reporting requirements to require schools to track student parents would make an enormous difference.**

It would encourage institutions to attend to and use the data about these previously invisible students, and address program issues to strengthen student supports, as needed.

Another area related to data access is the availability of FAFSA data. If financial aid officials were able to share FAFSA data on students who claim dependents with student parent program leaders, schools could do a better job of reaching out to these students about the services available to them.

### Recommendations

- **Prioritize student parents as an at-risk population and require institutions to track and report on them**, including transfer students and those who stop out and return. These data should be publicized to prospective students to both allow them to assess their opportunities for success within the

institution as a student parent, and to further incentivize colleges and universities to be more attentive to identifying and supporting their student parent populations.

- **Clarify or modify rules regarding intra-institutional access** to the names of students who claim dependents on their FAFSA applications in order to support outreach to these students; allow and require FAFSA contact information of student parents to be identified and shared.

## Services and Accommodations for Student Parents

### Colleges and Universities

Most institutions and their campuses are not designed for families. Student parents face major barriers and stressors in trying to navigate school, which also influence their families.

**The schools in this study have implemented many programmatic strategies in support of parenting students and their children; but almost none have developed formal policies that address the particular needs of this population.**

The Title IX law applies explicitly to accommodations for pregnant and post-partum students, but not to students parenting older infants and children. Parenting students are protected by Title IX, but only insofar as they cannot be mandated to participate in an educational program or class specifically for pregnant and parenting students (all programs must be optional), or excluded from an educational program or opportunity based on their parenting status. However, the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights has issued suggested strategies for educators and programs on supporting pregnant and parenting students.<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes policies designed for other purposes are utilized to protect parenting students, such as advising student parents under extreme stress to apply for an accommodation plan through the school's office of disability services, which can make it possible for them to reduce their course load and extend their financial aid timeline. Many colleges and universities have work-life policies for employees that allow, for example, staff and faculty to use sick time to care for a sick child, but don't have a policy that allows a student to miss class for this reason. Every institution in this study, even with well-developed student parent programs, requires

student parents to initiate and obtain special permission for all or almost all accommodations. Parents of young children are often in need of accommodations to overcome common barriers to their academic success and continued enrollment, and avoiding this step could be especially helpful for them.

**Improvements in on-campus child care and options for emergency, sick, and after-hours care would go a long way to limiting the need for many accommodations.**

Standardized policies that relate to the particular challenges and needs of student parents and their families may help many more students to complete their degrees. It is imperative that every institution have an office or at least a well-publicized, designated staff member responsible for the well-being of student parents, and this person needs to be well-versed in the institutional policies and federal laws as they pertain to support and accommodations.

**Recommendations**

- **Every college and university needs a student parent center**, or as a start, a trained staff member with designated responsibility and resources to remove barriers to academic success and promote the visibility, community-building, and well-being of this population, following the models presented in this report. These services should be well-publicized to all students before and after acceptance, on campus, and to faculty and staff.
- **Administrators should review the 2013 pamphlet, *Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students*** under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, issued by the US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2013).
- **Enact and publicize institutional policies to provide fair access** for student parents to the education provided by the university, including early course registration and other accommodations often available to other groups such as student athletes; extend any institutional policies regarding staff and faculty parents to students; and provide a clear process for requesting additional accommodations from faculty and others.
- **Fully investigate on-campus child care options**, and ensure that any on-campus child care is made available and affordable for student parents.

**State and Federal Agencies**

Title IX applies explicitly to pregnant and post-partum students. The 2013 “Dear Colleague” letter issued by the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights was helpful to higher education institutions in clarifying how Title IX applies to accommodations for these students (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2013). The accompanying pamphlet offers strategies to educators and programs for all supporting student parents.

**Recommendation**

- **The Office of Civil Rights should promote and expand the 2013 “Dear Colleague” letter**, extending Title IX protections, based on the spirit of the law and prior recommendations, to include additional protections for parenting students with young children, including, specifically, at institutions of higher education.

**Financial Support for Two Generations**

**Colleges and Universities**

Student parents are largely low-income and are often single parenting. They rely on financial aid to get through school and to help support their families while they are full-time students (and often part-time workers.)

**Even if their expected contribution is zero based on their income, student parents often come up short after borrowing the maximum allowed, due to paying for family living expenses.**

Those without family members who can qualify to co-sign for private supplemental loans (even though their high interest rates and inflexible repayment terms make them inadvisable) can run out of funds before they complete their degrees, and often need to work many hours while in school to try to make ends meet. For those who are able to live in on-campus (preferably centrally-located) family housing, the time saved, community-building opportunities, and greater possibility of attending more academic and other activities in the evening, can greatly support their college experience and family’s well-being. However, this is often only possible with heavy subsidies. Some institutions are able to provide scholarships and subsidies to students with children beyond federal funding, but this is difficult for others with large numbers of low-income students.

## Recommendations

- **Set up a special work-study program for student parents**, through the career services office, so that they can have relevant on-campus jobs with good supervision, to save time and support future employment.
- **Make sure that students have access to information** about and support for accessing all possible scholarships and subsidies for which they qualify.
- **Seek ways to provide additional financial support** for students with children through institutional funds, grants, and donations.

## State and Federal Agencies

At the state level, there is great disparity in the ways that student parents are supported as college students. Some states provide a great deal of support for students with children, but others do not. Changing the calculation for cost-of-living needs for parents could help many of these students.

**Given the positive effects on children when their low-income parents get a bachelor's degree, providing increased funding for school and living expenses, especially including quality child care, has the potential to raise two generations out of poverty at once.**

Student parents require more financial support than their non-parenting peers, yet federal FAFSA calculations provide the same award packages to low-income students regardless of their parenting status. Even parents who are able to successfully receive an adjustment to their Cost of Attendance (COA) calculation through their college's or university's financial aid office find that they have often maxed out their federal grant and loan eligibility before meeting their full basic costs for tuition/fees, textbooks and technology, housing and meals, childcare, transportation, and other approved costs of education. Federal and state policy could potentially

address the gaps between student needs and financial aid funding through strategies such as those recommended below.

## Recommendations

- **Develop federal or state "student parent grant" programs** to help students with children fund additional expenses related to their dependent children, such as family housing and childcare.
- **Include postsecondary four-year programs among federal two-generation initiatives**, including those relating to TANF funds; make efforts to allow low-income parents to maximize their time towards educational, family support, and career development activities and minimize time required to complete paperwork to maintain or recertify benefits. Align TANF block-grant funding with public benefits agencies and community partnerships servicing low-income student families; these services should be available on campuses.
- **Ensure full child care funding** for all income-qualifying students to cover all class and study time with realistic allowances for transportation; provide encouragement and funding for quality on-campus child care options available and affordable for student parents.
- **Review all Pell grant and other scholarship funding for requirements that adversely impact pregnant and parenting students** and their children, including summer funding and course load requirements; enable students who are parents of young children to carry a lower course load without negative student aid consequences.
- **Inform students and financial aid offices of the cost of living (COA) adjustment** that is allowed for students with dependent children under federal student financial aid guidelines.
- **Increase the loan cap** for students with children so that they do not run out of funds before they complete their degrees.

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*It greatly contributed to my self-esteem...After graduating, I felt as though I was "back on track", that I was not a "statistic", that I was "just like my friends" in that I had attended college and obtained my degree. I left with a sense of resiliency; that if I could complete a full-time undergraduate program, be my child's primary care-giver, work a part-time job and be involved on-campus – that anything after this had to be easy.*

- Student parent alumna



## Questions for Further Inquiry

This study of Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs and the Students They Serve has only begun to dig into the experiences and outcomes of parenting students at four-year colleges and universities who are on campuses with student parent programs.

**There is still much to be explored and many unknowns about how all student parents and their children are progressing through their academic careers, their graduation rates, and what their lives are like after graduation.**

**There is also more to understand about the implementation, challenges and benefits of student parent programs on four-year campuses.**

### About Students and their Children

- National statistics on student parents enrolled in undergraduate programs cited in this report are from the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of 2009 data. What are current statistics for this population?
- What are the retention and graduation rates for parenting students at schools with parenting support programs? How do those rates compare to graduation rates for students as a whole at that institution? How do they compare to others of similar demographics nationally?
- What are the experiences of student parents at schools that do not offer services explicitly for parenting students? How do these experiences compare to those of students at schools with services?
- What impacts does the college experience have on children? Are they more likely to be ready for kindergarten, to progress successfully through school, to attend a four-year college themselves?
- Are students who live on campus (in centrally-located housing) more likely to graduate than those who live off campus? What are the experiences of and outcomes for children whose families live on campus compared to those who do not?
- How does the overall picture of family health and well-being (economic, social, health, etc.) change after a single parent receives a bachelor's degree?

## About Student Parent Support Programs

- How can open programs move toward serving their most vulnerable students using a wraparound approach?
- Using the framework derived from this study's program findings, how and how successfully do various colleges and universities assess, develop, and strengthen their programs for student parents?
- How can the expertise of the program directors that participated in this study be utilized to support the development of robust student parent programs in other four-year colleges and universities?



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## APPENDICES

- Appendix A:** Program Profiles
- Appendix B:** A Framework of Recommended Practices



## Appendix A: Program Profiles

### – WRAPAROUND PROGRAMS –

## Eastern Michigan University

### Keys to Degrees Program

Eastern Michigan University (EMU) is a large public university located in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The large urban campus serves 18,000 undergraduate students, as well as many thousands more graduate students from across the country. The school is very diverse, enrolling students of many backgrounds and ages, as well as a large number of student parents.

#### Program description

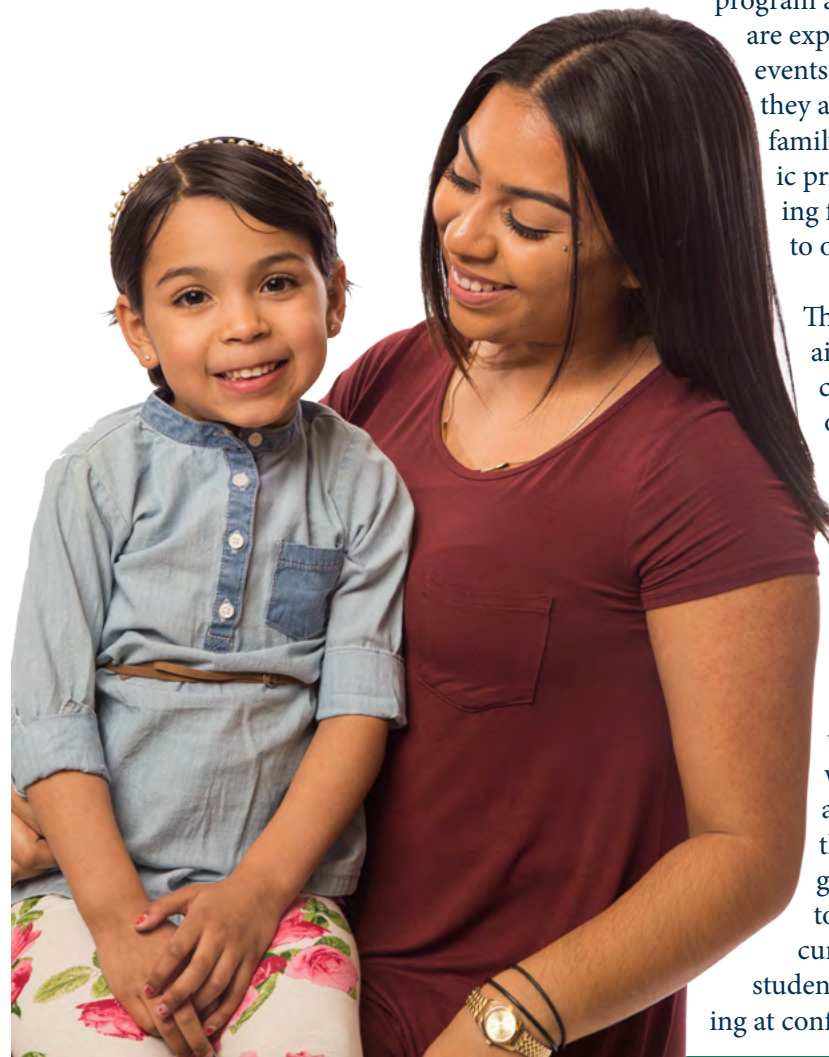
The Keys to Degrees program at Eastern Michigan University is a replication of the Keys program at Endicott College, with students entering the program beginning in the 2011–12 school year. The goal of the program is to provide supports for both the parent and child, in order to remove as many barriers to attaining a degree as possible. It is hoped that this will provide an opportunity for parents to attain higher paying jobs and pass those benefits on to their child or children. The program is open to single parents with one child, and provides housing, child care referrals, support services, and other resources to students. Students must enroll as freshmen, be under 24 years old at the time of enrollment, and have only one child who is at least 18 months old.

Based on the original Keys to Degrees model, a main feature of the EMU Keys program is housing. Students in the program are provided with on-campus housing in townhomes, and are expected to support each other and participate in community events. Students must apply to the Keys program separately once they are admitted to the university, and agree to participate in family programming, follow all guidelines, and maintain academic progress. The program provides one-on-one supports, ranging from weekly meetings with a staff member or social worker, to once-a-month meetings as students progress.

The program helps students with applications for financial aid, child care assistance, and other programs. While there is child care on campus, most Keys children go to Head Start, or to other off-campus programs due to cost and availability.

#### Funding and sustainability

Being a state school without many resources, EMU has not been able to add any additional students beyond the original 10 families. Five of those students left before graduation for a variety of reasons, four graduated, and the final student will graduate this spring. The university has been under the leadership of interim presidents, and no decision will be made about whether to continue the program until a permanent president is installed. However, the mission of the university has shifted to include student parents as a key group in need of extra attention and resources. The director (who also has other responsibilities at the university) is currently seeking additional funding in order to enroll more students, through grant applications, private donors, and networking at conferences and other professional events.





## Endicott College

### Keys to Degrees Program

Endicott College is a small, private, four-year college located in a suburb north of Boston, with an undergraduate population of almost 2,500, and about the same number of graduate students. While Endicott also offers a non-traditional college for adult learners including associate's, bachelor's and graduate programs, which serves a sizable number of commuter student parents, the Keys to Degrees program exclusively serves students in Endicott's traditional undergraduate college. The campus is self-contained and a distance from any commercial areas. Almost all undergraduates in the traditional undergraduate college live on campus, with graduate students often attending evening or weekend programs. Endicott used to be a women's college, and became co-educational at about the same time that the Keys to Degrees Program began about 20 years ago. The majority of students in the undergraduate college are white and come from middle- and upper-income families, while the majority of Keys students, at least currently, are part of racial minority groups and come from low-income, urban backgrounds. There are a very small number of other parents enrolled in the undergraduate college as commuter students, living off campus.

#### Program description

The president of Endicott, Dr. Richard E. Wylie, started Keys to Degrees as a residential two-generation program for young single parents and their children 20 years ago, with an important strengthening of the program 10 years ago. The program enrolls up to 10 students at a time, who currently share five residential suites, and it is administered by a full-time director. The current director of Replication for Keys to Degrees and the dean of the School of Education also play important roles with Keys students. The program maintains close communications in particular with residence life, tutoring, and counseling services on campus. Its primary goal is for students to graduate and successfully transition to work or graduate studies.

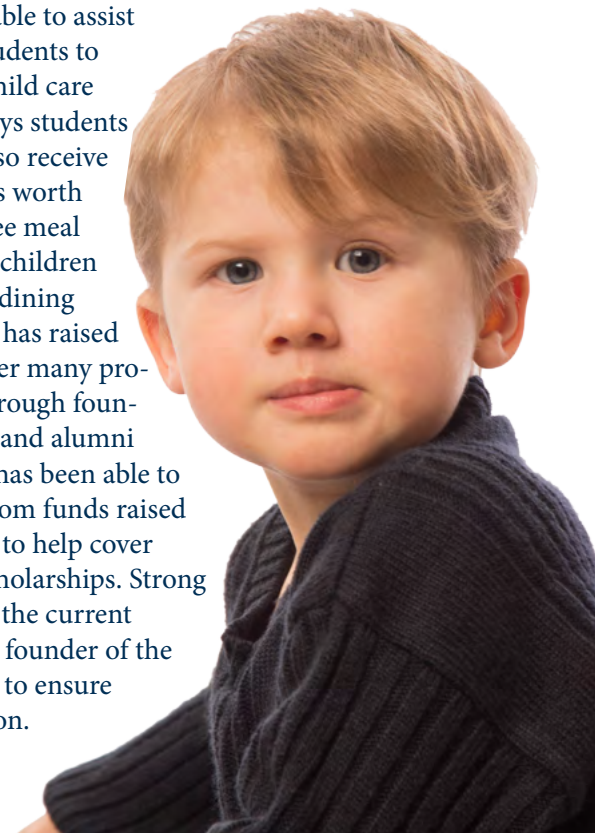
As a wraparound program, Keys to Degrees provides housing and food, and it oversees enrollment in quality child care. Staff work with individual students to assist with access to a variety of needed or helpful services or supports. In addition, each student is closely tracked and supported. Students are required to attend a bi-weekly class that covers a variety of topics relevant to their lives and situations as single parent students.

They also begin the program with one-to-one tutoring from an educational professional, focusing on academic skills and successful work-family balance. This is paid for with their Single Parent Grant, and most continue with it throughout the program, although the requirement is lifted if their grades are high enough. Another requirement is to have a car on campus, in order to provide transportation for child care, children's medical appointments, and to meet other needs, which can be a challenge to afford.

The current director monitors the quality of child care by visiting and approving all sites used by program families, and occasionally helps to move a child to a more appropriate program. Students are also required to participate in leadership and mentoring activities with nearby young single parents. On-campus counseling services are also available to students. The program is in the process of strengthening the formal agreements it makes with program students into a new contract, with clearer language about requirements and grounds for dismissal.

#### Funding and sustainability

Students get a \$20,000–24,000 Single Parent Grant, which is higher than the \$15,000 scholarship for low-income students they would likely have received from the institution if they were not parents. The program also covers 75% of child care costs if students do not have a voucher from the state. (Last year, the Keys program director was able to assist all 10 Keys students to secure state child care vouchers.) Keys students at Endicott also receive a parking pass worth \$300 and a free meal plan for their children at the college dining hall. Endicott has raised money to cover many program costs through foundation grants and alumni support, and has been able to use interest from funds raised in prior years to help cover earmarked scholarships. Strong support from the current president and founder of the program help to ensure its continuation.



## St. Catherine University

### Steps to Success Program

St. Catherine University, located in St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, includes a traditional undergraduate women's college of about 2,000 students; an evening/weekend/online program with over 600 students, and about 900 associate students; and about 1,400 graduate students over two campuses. As a Catholic university with a women's college, the institution's mission includes a strong focus on "the needs and aspirations of women." There are approximately 150 student parents in the traditional four-year day program, and well over 700 in the institution as a whole. While only about 12 families live on campus, the campus is considered "family friendly."

#### Program description

Steps to Success is a small wraparound program for young, high-risk student parents, that grew out of the larger, open program for student parents, Access and Success. Staff invite single parents who are between the ages of 18 and 23 and in their first or second year of college at St. Catherine, who are already known to them, to apply to the program. Participants have multiple risk factors, such as limited emotional and financial support, first-generation college students, and often raised in single-parent homes. This population has a much lower retention rate in the traditional baccalaureate program than other student parent groups. Goals include academic success, financial stability, social connectedness, physical and emotional health, and leadership development. The program began in 2009 with eight students, and currently has 20 students.

The social work staff create trusting relationships and provide personalized services and close supervision of progress. Activities include bi-weekly meetings focused on practical information and referrals to appropriate resources on- and off-campus. Participants must complete a leadership component of one activity each semester, such as working with teen parents, leading a lunch meeting for other parents, or advocacy work with state officials. Students must also keep a 2.5 GPA and make adequate progress toward a degree. Students in the program receive an annual stipend for non-tuition expenses of \$1,350/year. The program does not specifically provide housing or child care, although it helps



students obtain both. The state provides extensive child care funding for those in higher education.

#### Funding and sustainability

Half of the costs of the program are funded by a family foundation. The other half comes from federal Parent Assistance Fund funding, although that grant will end soon. The program is currently undergoing an evaluation that will hopefully make it easier to fundraise to replace the lost funds.



## Wilson College

### Single Parent Scholar Program

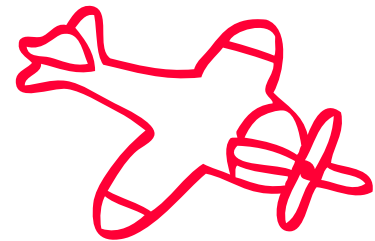
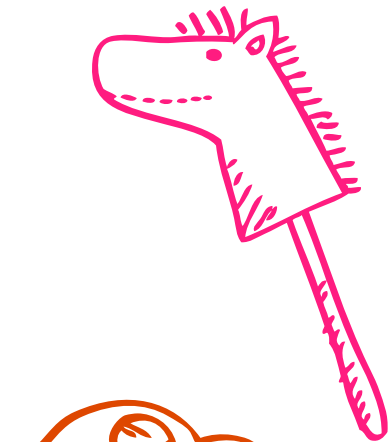
Wilson College is a private liberal arts college in rural South-Central, Pennsylvania with a little over 600 students. Until recently, Wilson solely enrolled women, but in the 2013–14 school year it welcomed men and is now officially co-educational. There are currently 17 mothers with children residing in the dorms, although it is also open to men at this time. The program can accommodate up to 26 residential families.

#### Program description

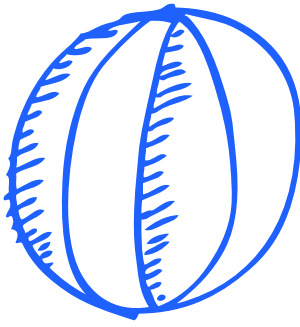
Formerly called the Women with Children (WWC) program, The Single Parent Scholar Program (SPS) began in 1996, and was spearheaded by the president of the college at the time, who was concerned by the lack of educational opportunities for women with children across the nation. As a college specifically serving women, she felt that it was necessary to create a program to serve mothers.

The goal of the program is to provide a means towards a bachelor's degree for single parents. Students in the Single Parent Scholar program are required to pay tuition, room, and board, and most finance this through scholarships and student loans, similar to traditional undergraduate students attending the school. The program provides on-campus child care, in addition to after-school care for older children, and evening care, as needed, for other events on campus—all free of charge.

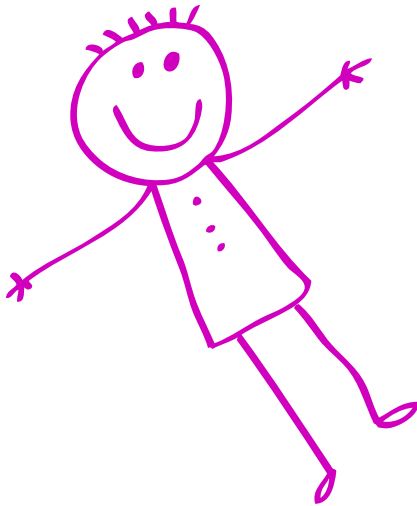
Participants in the SPS program can be of any age, as long as the youngest child is at least 20 months old at the time of enrollment. Housing for parents is situated in one entire dorm, which is centrally located on campus and has the child care center in the building. The dorm was slightly modified so that there are two bedrooms and a private bathroom in each unit. Each floor has a shared kitchen and laundry area, a playroom, and a computer room. An additional floor in the adjacent building is also designated for student parents. While students in the Single Parent Scholar program pay for their housing as any other students do, they are allowed to stay on campus throughout the summer for an additional rental fee.





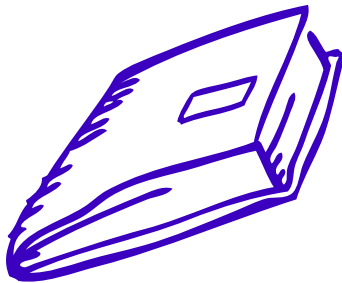


Wilson allows students in the program to choose from a few different levels of meal plans. Many choose the lowest level of the plan, and this still allows participants to receive federal aid for meals. Children are also able to eat in the dining hall at no cost. Some parents, especially those who have been living on their own before coming to Wilson, prefer to cook and prepare most of their meals in the dorm.



The SPS program encourages students to be a part of everyday campus life, through participation in clubs, athletics, student government, and other activities. Because the program is situated in the center of campus and makes up a substantial proportion of the students, the culture of the campus has come to be largely child-friendly. Children are welcome at most campus events, and are seen in the dining hall and residence halls.

Parents arrive on campus for a week of orientation specific to the SPS program, prior to their general campus orientation. This provides them with information and local resources for public assistance, health care, child care, connections to community organizations, and the general transition to campus life. New SPS students are required to meet with a counselor two times in the first semester, and are encouraged to continue this relationship throughout their time at the school.



Other programming offered includes dorm-specific activities run by resident assistants in the building; workshops on community building, time management, and communication; as well as social and celebratory events involving children and the wider campus community.

For students in the SPS program, their college experience is designed to be very similar to that of traditional students on campus. By removing the barrier of child care, the program hopes to provide a supportive, family-friendly atmosphere. Wilson's availability of housing space is unique among small colleges, and having a large amount of available housing units for parents means that the on-campus parenting community is strong and visible.

### **Funding and sustainability**



The Single Parent Scholar program is funded by a private endowment that is specific to the program. Without that endowment, according to the program director, the program likely would not exist. However, even with adequate funds, staffing remains a challenge. There is one program director who, at this time, has other responsibilities on campus, as well. Each dorm has residence life staff just as any other dorm would have, and those resident assistants receive some extra training from the program director. Other challenges include things like personal relationships between the parents, and transportation, as there is no public transportation around and off campus.

## – Open Programs –

### Grand Valley State University

#### Children's Enrichment Center

Grand Valley State University (GVSU) is located in Allendale Charter Township, Michigan, west of Grand Rapids. It was chartered by the state legislature in 1960 in response to the need for a public university in the state's second largest metropolitan area. GVSU enrolls approximately 24,500 students on the main campus and at satellite sites, with 21,000 of these being undergraduates. While the university's population is largely white, ethnic and racial diversity is steadily increasing. Nearly 400 international students attend GVSU from more than 80 countries.

#### Program description

Grand Valley offers several resources for student parents and their children: the Children's Enrichment Center (CEC); the Student Parent Club; and a variety of activities for student parents and their children. Activities, resources, and partnerships are overseen by the CEC director and a coordinating committee, the Family Support Group. The CEC director also provides ongoing informal support for student parents, from ad hoc counseling to referrals to on-campus and community resources.

The CEC provides discounted, on-campus child care to the children of students, staff, and faculty. It was founded in the early 1970s under the Division of Student Services in response to students' need for child care while they were in class. Other services and resources are informal and have evolved over time.

Forty years later, it remains in the Division of Student Services and has had consistent support from the university's administration. The CEC participates in federally-funded nutritional programs, and provides transportation to and from a local elementary school of choice. Last year, GVSU applied for a federal CCAMPIS (Childcare Access Means Parents in School) grant to provide child care subsidies to student parents but did not receive an award.

The Student Parent Club is a student-led initiative that connects and supports student parents on campus, through sharing information and planning events for families. The group maintains contact with student parents through a Facebook page.

The Family Support Group includes representatives from Campus Housing, Residence Life, Financial Aid, and the Title IX Coordinator. They meet regularly to coordinate efforts to both raise consciousness across the campus about student parents, to support student parents, and to plan and co-host a number of events for families each year.





Partnerships among GVSU departments have created a web of support and coordination across the campus. The CEC offers an “Out and About Night” with free child care a few times throughout semester. During the winter holidays, different offices on campus sponsor a family. A dads’ support group is co-facilitated by the CEC director and a staff member from Human Resources. “Family Fun Night” in the fall is a big carnival-type of event. The CEC offers a kindergarten readiness assessment for families in the area, and if it makes sense for their kids to go to a nearby school of choice, CEC offers pick-up and drop-off. They raise money for a Student Parent Fund, and also raise awareness about needs/ experiences of student parents among students, faculty, and staff through panels and documentaries around understanding the student parent culture. They also work with GVSU’s Women’s Center to help students become familiar with resources and provide information about infant care. The CEC director provides individualized counseling and referrals for student parents.

GVSU also partners with community organizations including the Lakeshore Pregnancy Center across the street from campus, the local school district, Allendale Community Foundation, the county health department, and the Michigan Great Start Collaborative.

GVSU does not currently have on-campus family housing, though the possibility of reinstituting it has been raised by the Family Support Group. For the past several years, many families have lived in an apartment complex across the street from campus where costs are significantly lower. In fact, these apartments are closer to the main part of campus, whereas campus housing is on the periphery.

### Funding and sustainability

The university has been supportive of the program for forty years, funding child care subsidies and staff. The CEC was once associated with a community early childhood program that had a Head Start component. Both were discontinued due to loss of funding. The CEC also no longer offers drop-in child care, as the model was not financially viable. The Family Support Group and other informal networking/resources have developed under the current CEC director, who has been in her role at GVSU for 10 years.

GVSU was a prospective Keys Replication School for the first Kellogg grant, but declined to participate due to concerns about financially sustaining a wraparound program over time. Funding is the key challenge cited by the CEC director for sustaining and growing support for student parents and their children.

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*It’s a sacrifice now, for hopeful future.*

*- Student parent*

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## Portland State University

### Resource Center for Students with Children

Portland State University (PSU) is Oregon's oldest and most diverse public university, founded to serve GIs returning from World War II. PSU is now an urban research university encompassing 50 city blocks, eight schools, 226 degree programs, and 29,000 students, including 1,700 international students. Approximately one third of PSU students are minority and/or international students. Over 5,000 students have children; approximately half of these are single parents.

#### Program description

The Resource Center for Students with Children (RCSC) is housed in the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. "The mission of the RCSC is to support students with children in achieving life-balance that helps them stay the course to successful completion of their academic goals. To accomplish this mission, the RCSC provides services that support our values of retention, access, social justice, engagement, networking and outreach." ([www.pdx.edu/students-with-children](http://www.pdx.edu/students-with-children))

The RCSC provides a number of services to student parents and their children, including: a family resource room with study space, kitchen, and children's play areas; a lending library of resources on child development, parenting, family budgeting, etc.; a children's clothing closet; child care referrals; individual consultation; a child care subsidy program (Jim Sells); and an emergency loan program. Free family events occur throughout the year; and "Winter Wonder," a program in which PSU departments "adopt" a family for the winter holidays, provides non-perishable foods and gift cards. There are 5,000–6,000 student parents on campus who use RCSC resources in a variety of ways. Three hundred receive child care subsidies through the Jim Sells program, which provides from 15% to 50% of child care costs for care in child care centers or more informal child care, such as nannies, babysitters, and family members. The eligibility for the subsidy is based on family income and other factors that increase student need. There are three child care centers on campus. The Helen Gordon Center was founded in 1971 in response to the activism of student mothers attending the uni-

versity at that time who engaged in a sit-in protest that persuaded the university to launch an on-campus child-care center. Today the Helen Gordon Center is a model center for high quality early childhood programming, serving 200 children ages 4 months to 6 years. The ASPSU Childcare Center is located within the Student Union providing a second childcare site for young children, supported by the Associated Students of Portland State University (ASPSU) the university's student association. The RCSC recently opened a third on-campus child care center, which provides care for families who need flexible childcare as opposed to full-time or full-day options. While the university has worked to provide a range of quality childcare options for students, faculty and staff, and student fee funding requires students to receive enrollment priority, high demand for on-campus care can result in wait lists for all three on-campus childcare options. There is no dedicated family housing, though students with children are eligible to live in one and two bedroom apartments located in scattered locations within university housing buildings. RCSC partners with Residence Life to sponsor programs for families through FLOCK (Families Living on Campus with Kids).

The current program, which is directed by a social worker, started in July 2012. Previously, a smaller program, Student Parent Services (SPS), was based in the Graduate School of Education for 17–18 years. In 2009, at the request of the president of the university, SPS worked with PSU's Institutional Research office to conduct a survey of student parents to assess their needs. The survey included items to assess the level of challenge and stress that students faced in attempting to balance family, work, and school responsibilities, as well as items to identify resources that are supportive of their success. While students reported different challenges and needs depending on the ages of their children, child care subsidies and scholarships, and more child care on campus, ranked highest across groups. The RCSC program was designed to address the needs identified by parents through the survey.

#### Funding and sustainability

Student activity fees fund the resource center staff and programming with a budget of approximately \$200,000 per year. Little Vikings Childcare Center receives approximately \$90,000 per year in support from student fees. Approximately \$600,000 of student fees is allocated for the Jim Sells child care subsidy program.

## St. Catherine University

### Access and Success Program

St. Catherine University, located in St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, includes a traditional undergraduate women's college of about 2,000 students; an evening/weekend/online program with over 600 students, and about 900 associate students; and about 1,400 graduate students over two campuses. As a Catholic university with a women's college, the institution's mission includes a strong focus on "the needs and aspirations of women." There are approximately 150 student parents in the traditional four-year day program, and well over 700 hundred in the institution as a whole. While only about 12 families live on campus in family housing, the campus is considered "family friendly."

#### Program description

Access and Success was started by the current director over 20 years ago, and is staffed by a very stable group of four additional social workers. Program services are available to all undergraduate and graduate student parents at the university as a whole, and are utilized by about 50–60% of all students with children each year. In addition to its general program, St. Catherine also has a small wraparound program that provides more intensive services to 20 undergraduate single mothers at high risk of dropping out. (See separate profile.)

The primary goals of the program are access for and retention of student parents, and it puts the development of relationships with students and between students at the core of all programming—the program model is "relationship plus resources equals retention." Although the program developers tried to start with a focus on housing, they ended up focusing on support and child care for single mothers instead. Early success in retention of single mothers, and advocacy by students, led to more institutional support and an expansion of the program to all student parents throughout the university.

The program focuses on providing or enabling access to a wide range of supports for student parents facing many types of challenges, whether low-income or not. The program sends out a weekly email to all student parents to keep them informed about activities and services of the program. Students initiate engagement at different levels. The program provides a wide range of direct services and referrals to community resources.

Priority services relate to basic needs, defined as child care, finances, food support, housing, safety, and transportation. Activities include: access to state and university-funded child care grants, emergency coverage, information on selecting child care, child-friendly study areas, and babysitting resources; help with different housing options, including finding subsidized and other housing; disbursement of small grants for immediate needs; help with financial planning; and information about food stamps, food shelves, etc. In addition, the program addresses other types of student and family needs through sponsorship of social events, support groups, workshops, a leadership program working with teen parents, and a mentoring program. These and other services are provided directly by the staff social workers, as well as through extensive referrals, including to career, psychological, and financial counseling. Finally, advocacy, on and off campus, around issues impacting student parents is also important to the program.

#### Funding and sustainability

The program has been sustained largely with private family foundation support and other private donors interested in women's issues and having an impact on women and children combined. Recently, support has also come from the federal Parenting Assistance Fund. The program itself provides no funding for student parents. However, the state provides strong support for child care for parents who are in school. In addition, there are some institutional scholarships specifically earmarked for student parents. The program won institutional support early on with data showing improved retention, and institutional support plays an even bigger role now, although ensuring funding is always a concern.



# University of California at Berkeley

## The Student Parent Program

UC Berkeley is a very large state university with over 25,000 undergraduates and another 10,000 graduate students, located in a metropolitan area. It is quite competitive, enrolling highly-motivated students who have done well in school. About one-quarter of a recent freshman class was made up of first-generation college students and about two-thirds had at least one parent born outside the US. Approximately 300 undergraduates and 300 graduate students are parents. Of the undergraduate parents, about two-thirds are women, and about half are single parents (two-thirds of the women are single parents). Undergraduate parents are mostly re-entry or transfer students with an average age of 33, although a greater number of younger students who get pregnant are staying in school. At least 65% of undergraduate student parents are members of racial minority groups. The average age of the general undergraduate population is 21 and approximately the same proportion are members of racial minority groups.

### Program description

The Student Parent Program originated and was sustained for over 25 years based on the leadership and efforts of one woman. It originally evolved from the Women's Resource Center, in response to the needs of women students with children who wanted to stay in school rather than wait until their children were older to complete their degrees. The founding director advocated for student parents and their needs with the administration over the years to advance an understanding of the issues and needs of student parents. After many moves around campus, she eventually secured an appropriate community space where students and their children could gather, get to know each other, provide mutual support, and access resources. Many of the internal services or benefits offered to student parents initially grew out of institutional interest in providing for the needs of faculty and staff parents, and were only offered to all parents on campus afterwards. Other services were developed as responses to common challenges or needs specific to student parents. After a variety of institutional "homes," the Student Parent Program is now located in the Division of Equity and Inclusion, in the Transfer, Re-entry, and Student Parent Center.

The program's mission and goals are to assist with "access, achievement, and advocacy" for all student parents at the institution. The program is committed to providing and supporting a voice for student parents, addressing any barriers in





institutional policies, and assisting students to negotiate university offices and programs to address issues and meet particular needs they may have because of their status as parents.

The Berkeley program consists of multiple components and interacts with large numbers of student parents each year, starting with phone calls to all newly admitted student parents to inform them of available services (in collaboration with the Student Parent Club). The most intensive work is with students in three pass/fail courses offered for credit and taught by Student Parent Program staff: an orientation course specifically for student parents, designed to share relevant information and to help create a supportive learning and living community for newly enrolled student parents; a course for continuing students designed to build a collaborative learning environment for student parents; and a course that helps with job search, career exploration, graduate school preparation, and generally transitioning to the next step. Program staff are able to keep close track of the approximately 80 students who enroll in these courses each year, while interacting with many other student parents who initiate contact with the Student Parent Center and use its resources in other ways. Students in the courses who choose to spend time in the Student Parent Center are able to form mutually supportive relationships. Many also build relationships while living in on-campus family housing.

In addition to the courses and workshops on a variety of topics, two staff, student parent interns, and other volunteers provide a wide array of services and supports at the center and during drop-in hours at a family housing apartment complex. Extensive individual assistance is provided to help students to negotiate, advocate, and overcome barriers within the institution related to their status as parents, such as getting increases in housing grants, help with late course withdrawals due to family issues, and getting appropriate disability accommodations for pregnant students. They also assist students to successfully apply for social-service and child care programs, including Head Start, sometimes relying on partnerships they have built with these programs to help ensure access for qualified students. In addition, they help with a range of academic issues, provide leadership experience for interested student parents, and assist them with transitional plans before graduation.



### Funding and sustainability

Almost all funding currently comes from student fees, since a four-year federal grant for child care access has just ended. Tuition and fees for all low-income students are paid by the state, all students have access to free health care, and parents who are income-eligible receive \$8,600/year towards housing costs. The university subsidizes preschool for 60 graduate and undergraduate students. The Student Parent Program can help get children into Head Start relatively quickly. In addition, the program assists students who qualify for general assistance for child care through the county, although this can take up to a year. Small emergency grants and some funding for specific events have been covered by funds raised by retired faculty wives.

This program has been at Berkeley for over 25 years, and its sustainability is supported by a tradition of students advocating strongly for their needs. Two personnel changes may affect the future direction of the center—a former user of the program has recently become the new director after the founding director retired a year ago; and the new chancellor has expressed increased support for meeting the needs of student parents.

## University of Massachusetts at Amherst

### Office of Family Resources

The University of Massachusetts at Amherst is a large public university located in western Massachusetts. It enrolls about 22,000 undergraduates as well as graduate students in many areas. The university has two apartment complexes that are designated for families and graduate students, while about half of all undergraduates live on campus.

#### Description of program

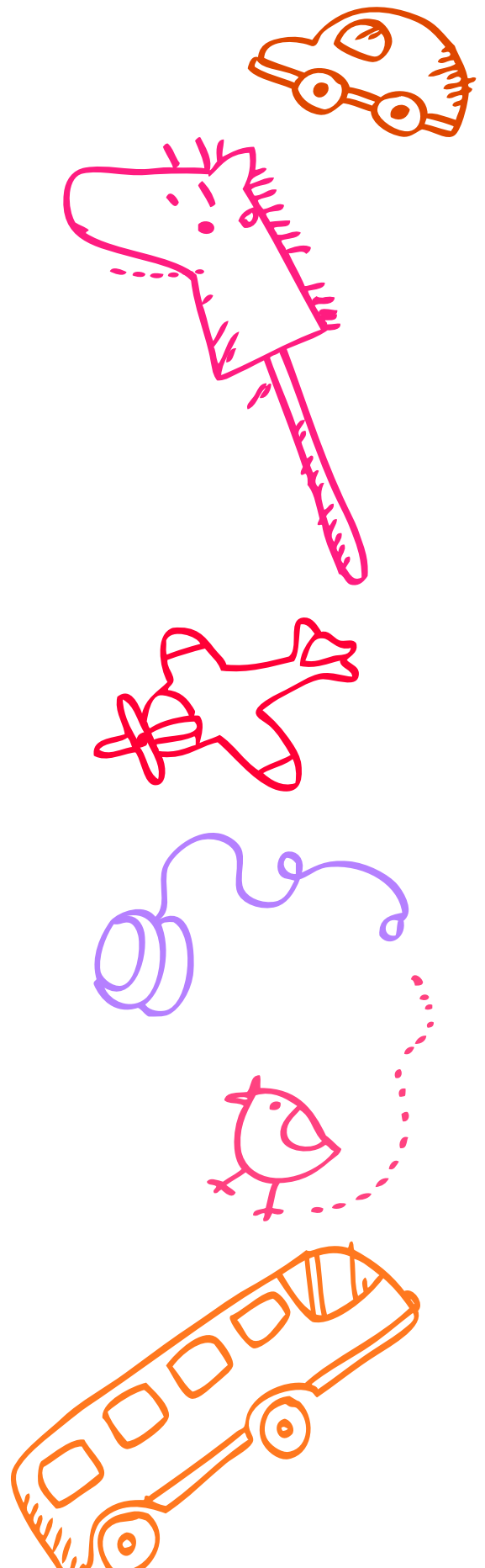
The University of Massachusetts at Amherst Office of Family Resources (OFR) provides services, events, and support for student parents, both graduate and undergraduate. The mission of the office is to provide access to educational resources and opportunities, as well as foster a sense of community among families on campus. The current office was created in 2005, and transitioned from the Office of Commuter Services, which also provided resources to commuters. As family programming became a larger part of the offerings, the office changed its central focus.

Currently, the Office of Family Resources offers a Childcare Tuition Assistance program to undergraduates; regularly scheduled educational and support events, such as “Special Saturdays” and “Dinner on Us”; and co-operates the Amherst Family Center (an off-campus community parenting center, which also receives state and county funds).

There is family housing available on campus in the North Village apartments, in which about 10 undergraduates and their children live. Direct programming for the residents of these apartments began in the fall of 2014. It is not known at this time how many other undergraduate student parents attend UMass Amherst, as most of them live in off-campus apartments.

The Childcare Tuition Assistance program is available to undergraduate student parents, and is financed by student fees. About 10–16 students receive this needs-based scholarship per year. The Amherst Family Center, which is open to the community and located off campus, also provides drop-in child care on weekday mornings, as well as additional support groups that are not specific to students. There are also various drop-in child care locations across campus, which are often open during non-business hours.

“Special Saturdays” are mornings once a month with interactive





cultural enrichment programs for families with young children. These include breakfast snacks, arts and crafts, storytelling, dance, and other activities. “Dinner on Us” is a parent education workshop series on Monday evenings during the school year. They include children’s activities and dinner, and discussion of a range of issues from child development to medical issues and family relationships. These events are free and open to any family on campus.

### Funding and sustainability

Funding for the Childcare Tuition Assistance program comes from student fees, gathered across the university. Many of the other services for parents have grown from the increased demand by graduate students and staff for family resources and services on campus. Although they have access to them, these have not been created specifically for undergraduates. Graduate student organizations have lobbied the administration for more services, with some success. However, as the demand for resources increases, and the number of offerings grows, the staffing levels have remained the same. There is one staff person directing the office, which has a vacant administrator position, along with the director of the Amherst Family Center. The family center utilizes up to 10 volunteers running its programs, and programming, such as the Saturday morning series and dinner events, are put on using volunteers, as well. The Office of Family Resources also employs students on a semester-to-semester basis.



*Getting my degree means finally reaching the goals I set for myself before I was surprised with a family. It means financial stability and security because I can get a job that will pay the bills. It means a busy mama and a lot of debt because school with child care is ridiculously expensive.*

*- Student parent*





## Appendix B: A Framework of Recommended Practices

Parenting Program or Services	Characteristics or Examples
A1: Goals/ philosophy	Clear goals and philosophy for services and programming for parenting students and their children
A2: Program/office	Separate office and programming specifically for parenting students
A3: Staffing	Qualified staff providing services exclusively for student parents who are trained in their issues and needs, with sufficient time to meet the needs
A4: Program/office space	Space for private conversations, group meetings, informal hang out area, nursing/feeding and changing space, child play area
A5: Social support	Easily available informal social support from staff or peers
A6: Core/priority needs	Program ensures that student parents who utilize their services have access to: Safe affordable housing, Quality child care, Sufficient food, Necessary transportation, Health care for their families
A7: Services provided directly to parents	Services provided by program staff directly to parenting students could include, but are not limited to: formal and informal counseling, assistance to meet child care needs, parenting help and information, special classes (i.e. life skills, transitioning into/out of college), information about wide range of topics and services, help with obtaining all available institutional subsidies, emergency grants/resources, laptop loans/ computer access, mentoring, leadership development opportunities, and referrals to additional resources
A8: Referrals and assistance with on campus services	Referrals (and monitoring of outcomes) to other service providers on campus, including providers of academic support, financial aid, mental health services, campus safety, health, housing, financial aid, etc.; playing advocacy role when necessary
A9: Referrals and assistance with off-campus service providers	Referrals (and monitoring of outcomes) to off-campus resources, including providers of public assistance, childcare, housing, food pantries, etc.; actively helping students navigate and negotiate public assistance using a social work model
A10: Services for youngest, other most at-risk students	Youngest and other most at-risk student parents identified (least supported, most isolated, disconnected); extensive support, supervision, and tracking provided
A11: Community building	Deliberate opportunities and space(s) for student parents provided by program so they can build community with each other, including family social activities
A12: Children	Help with access to high quality early childhood and other educational options; special programs on campus that encourage future college attendance by children
A13: Advocacy	Advocacy for student parent needs on campus, with faculty and administration; support for student parents to advocate for own needs
A14: Advertising of services	Adequate publicity of services for parents through a variety of means on campus and online so that all parents know what services and activities are available and how to access them
A15: Relationship and coordination with other campus providers	Good relationships and regular communication with other campus providers of services to student parents, including parent-run organizations, childcare providers, academic support, financial aid, mental health services, residence life, campus security, etc.
A16: Data collection	Data collection that will enable tracking of usage of services, retention, academic success, numbers and demographics, etc. Administer short surveys to assess needs, student satisfaction with services and campus environment, etc.
A17: Self-evaluation	Review of data collected to assess current status of services and campus environment annually

Institutional Supports	Characteristics or Examples
B1: Program champion	Program has a champion with political clout on campus who proactively advocates for services for student parents
B2: Administrative support	Relevant administrative offices are responsive to requests and often proactive around the needs of student parents
B3: Financial aid	The institution offers additional financial aid specifically for student parents, such as for tuition, child care, or housing
B4: Academic policies	Institutional policies deliberately and specifically support student parents and take parenting issues into account, such as priority registration, accommodation for sick children in absence policy, flexible course options, ability to obtain full-time privileges when unable to take full load
B5: Policies about children on campus	Institution has a clear policy about welcoming children on campus; reasons for any restrictions are clearly explained
Data collection	Institution collects and provides data points on basic information about student parents on campus, and that will enable reporting on student parent outcomes
B6: Faculty/staff awareness efforts	Institution initiates efforts to make faculty and staff more aware of the needs of student parents
B7: Title IX enforcement	Institution ensures that all pregnant and parenting students, as well as faculty and staff, understand the legal requirements of Title IX re: pregnant and parenting students
B8: Student success	Student parents are retained and graduate at rates comparable to similar non-parenting students
B9: Family housing	Institution makes (affordable) family housing available to undergraduate student parents
B10: On campus childcare	On campus, quality child care is available and affordable for undergraduate student parents, both during the day and the evening
B11: Meal plans for children	Institution negotiates free or subsidized meal plans for children

Campus Culture	Characteristics or Examples
C1: Campus approach to parenting students	Institution and campus acknowledge unique needs and situation of parenting students, with parenting center, policies, activities, etc. that reflect this
C2: Family-friendly spaces	Campus includes spaces where parents feel comfortable bringing their children; also spaces specifically for parent and family interaction, lactation/ pumping, changing diapers, child-friendly study spaces, playgrounds, etc.
C3: Encouragement and support for campus engagement	Specific encouragement and support for parenting students to engage with college life outside the classroom, including free childcare at campus events, events open to children, evening childcare options, gym childcare
C4: On campus family activities	Sponsored activities on campus specifically for families; activities for all students that are appropriate and inviting for parenting students to attend with their children
C5: Faculty and staff	Faculty and staff are aware and supportive of the needs of pregnant and parenting students
C6: General atmosphere	Pregnant and parenting students and their children are visible, and feel comfortable and welcomed on campus

Wider Community	Characteristics or Examples
D1: Partnerships	Formal or informal relationships exist with organizations outside of the institution, such as: healthcare agencies, Head Start/other child care centers, United Way, Food assistance, public assistance agency, mental health provider, mentorship organization, low-income housing providers, etc.
D2: Outreach	Programs exist for reaching out to young parents (in high schools and elsewhere) and others for mentoring, inspiration, and recruiting for college
D3: Funding	Successful, targeted fundraising efforts
D4: Connection with other student parent programs	Part of a network/community of student parent programs

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