

Child Care Proposal and Work-Life Balance Issues at CCSU

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For the last two years, Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven has hosted a “Women and Work-Life Balance” Conference, but the “Work-Life Balance” movement has been growing for over a decade. University campuses across the country have participated in this trend and many of those campuses have begun programs and initiatives in support of “Family-friendly” policies and culture. They have coordinated their efforts through the College and University Work Family Association (CUWFA) which maintains an active website and listserv and holds an annual conference each year. The association essentially provides advice and support for Work-Life initiatives at institutions of higher learning. As a public university that includes non-traditional students and a diverse faculty, the Child Care Committee of the Committee of the Concerns of Women (CCW) recommends that this trend is something that Central Connecticut State University should seriously consider.

Other universities in the state have begun to pursue such family-friendly policies. Yale University has hired a part-time employment to maintain and develop program consistent with Work-Life needs. For the third semester, Southern has awarded a faculty member reassigned re-assigned time to work with Human Resources for the third semester this fall in order to bring SCSU closer to other universities with work-life balance policies and programs. This person as well as the Director of the campus Women’s Center both participate in a new University Work-Life Committee, and they serve on committees that are taking a closer look at child care and related issues.

Nationally, universities have also instituted programs. In 1987, the City University of New York System led the way in recognizing and supporting on-campus childcare programs as essential to supporting the education mission of its institutions. In 2005, the University of Connecticut formed a committee to investigate Childcare and Work/Life Issues on campus. The committee report made several recommendations that included a babysitting service that included part-time or drop-in childcare. Just this past March, the University of Georgia has initiated a similar review of their institutions in the last two years. Even campuses that do not have coordinated mandates when it comes to Work-Life issues have initiated some kind babysitting services for faculty and students with childcare needs including Yale University, Williams College, Barnard College, and MIT. These schools cater to largely traditional students who would actually have fewer childcare needs than a school like CCSU for childcare. Each university has tailored their recommendations to the particular needs of each institution. Each cites the issue as critical to maintaining a campus community, supporting faculty, and retaining students. Not all campuses have made these kinds of decisions. It is the policy of Trinity College in Connecticut, for example, to exclude children from campus. We do not think this is a wise policy for CSU campuses in consideration of our status as a public university and our student body demographics, which include far more non-traditional students than these other institutions. We offer the following to indicate a broad support and need for this kind of service on campus.

Child Care Needs on CCSU Campus

The Committee for the Concerns of Women Child Care Sub-Committee has been working for several months to create a plan and proposal for on-campus child care services. In order to create such a proposal, it was first necessary to assess the needs for such services on campus. Through the combined efforts of various groups on campus, the following points must be addressed:

- 1) According to the President's Executive Summary issued March 2008, a report from the AAUW stated that the university should "increase students' options by supporting high-quality child care in conjunction with other family-friendly policies. For instance, provide child care for children of all ages for students."
- 2) Under the issues of Education, the President's Executive Summary also stated that the university should recognize "that families are a source of strength, a Family Advisory Council and family web-site are being discussed."
- 3) Based upon a report issued by the CCSU Retention and Graduation Council in February 2008, one of the committee's recommendations for improving retention and graduation rates for part-time students would be to "offer day care and other services to address the needs of older/married students."
- 4) The CCW Child Care sub-committee conducted a campus wide survey to gauge the interest and needs of childcare services on campus. We received a significant response to this survey, with 486 respondents. According to the results of this survey:
 - 48% of all respondents (students, staff, faculty) say they have missed an on-campus event or class due to lack of child care
 - 64% say they would be interested in using short term and/or immediate childcare if it were available on campus
 - 80% say they know people on campus who could use an on-campus childcare service
 - 96% think on-campus, short-term childcare is a good idea
 - 93% think creating on-campus, short-term childcare is important

Based on all the fore-mentioned issues, we believe that it is clear if the university is truly committed to the enhancement of diversity on campus, as well as the recruitment and retention of underrepresented populations, then students, faculty and staff with children comprise one such population. Students with children are clearly negatively impacted during their academic career. For example, during finals weeks, when their schedule is not the same as during the regular semester, they have a pressing need for child care. Additionally, during elementary school breaks over the course of the school year, our parent-students also have a pressing need for immediate child care. These students also miss out on participating and attending events and therefore feeling like a part of the larger campus community. Our staff and faculty with children often have the same needs during the same situations. Furthermore, our junior faculty members are faced with the pressing demands of meeting the tenure clock while often simultaneously trying to meet child care needs. For both junior and tenured faculty, attempting to meet all the demands of a full time faculty position - such as teaching four classes, conducting research,

advising, and serving on committees – can often conflict with the immediate child care issues that can surface during the regular semester.

Proposal for CCSU On-Campus Babysitting Service

As a first step, the Child Care Sub-Committee of CCW is recommending that we establish a clearinghouse for on-campus and/or drop-in babysitting services. CCSU does not currently provide adequate support for childcare needs. The campus is affiliated with a pre-school facility, but that facility cannot accommodate all who need childcare services. The Early Learning Program only admits pre-school age children. Its licensing agreements limit it to twenty-six children in accordance with the current size of the facility. The Early Learning Program is looking to expand its physical space to accommodate infants and children under the age of three as well as establish a before and after-school program for older children. However, they will need considerable funding for such an expansion. Additions to the Early Learning Program might also one day accommodate drop-in babysitting, but again, it would require more space.

CCSU Career Services has a job site where babysitters can advertise, but it is difficult for faculty to access and it is not exclusively devoted to childcare so job announcements are extremely difficult to locate. In the past, some people have tried to set up a babysitting program to provide care for students' children as needed through the student employment office, put up signs, and set up a bulletin board with the Women's Center, but nothing ever came of it. Interested babysitters and parents need an accessible, simple, reliable, supported network to coordinate care.

CCW would like to pursue setting up a babysitting service on the model of Williams College and Yale University. This essentially requires the establishment of a website that will serve as a clearinghouse to match and coordinate babysitters with campus parents. All participants, babysitters and parents, must be affiliated with CCSU. Ultimately, **parents will sign a disclaimer to accept all matters of risk and will be responsible for evaluating the babysitters**, but the Child Care Committee proposes to require babysitters to submit resumes and references and the childcare committee can ask each babysitter will be interviewed. Jobs arranged through the service must be short-term (1-3 hours), will stay on campus, and parents must also stay on campus or within five miles of campus. Ideally, the campus could provide a safe, accessible space for babysitters to watch children. This space would have donated books and toys to provide activities.

We recommend that the Babysitting Service would include the following components:

- A website clearinghouse with job postings and supporting advice materials re: on-campus childcare. The website would cross-link to the Career Services Site: Central Connections.
- The administrator of the website or an appointee (see Work-Life Concerns below) will validate references before posting available sitters. Parents (faculty or students) are responsible for following-up on checking references before hiring a sitter.

- Parents must agree to sign liabilities and disclosures releasing the university and related personnel from any lawsuits resulting from the service.
- The service will be available year-round (when school in session), on-campus babysitting *only* with *only* CCSU students, between 8am-8pm, for no more than 3 hours (babysitters not allowed to take children off campus). Parents will have to provide a letter giving permission and liabilities to take children off campus or hire for off-campus babysitting which will be kept on file.
- Babysitters must have proof of CCSU student status and be in good academic standing or will be removed from the list.
- Babysitters can only take and/or watch children in approved areas on campus: Classrooms, the library, and construction areas are off-limits. Examples of acceptable places to watch children might include a faculty office, women's center, the student center, outside on-campus on warm days in pedestrian areas only.
- Designated care areas will provide appropriate and safe toys and books
- All babysitters must have a cell phone
- All babysitters must have 3 non-family references
- All babysitters must have experience
- 1: 2 caregiver-child ratio
- Babysitters must earn *at least* \$10/hour minimum to be paid by the parent to the sitter directly
- Each babysitter must attend a child care workshops conducted by the Women's center.
- Babysitters must cancel at least 2 hours before appointment—or be tossed off list?

Budget

- Website set-up and updating
- Advertising and recruiting
- Used toys and books?
- Insurance for tending to children's medical needs on campus (see supporting materials)
- Part-time Work-Life Coordinator of Faculty member with course release-time

Long -term Recommendation for Promoting a Campus Commitment to Work-Life Balance Policies and Programs

CCW is willing to do much of the work to get this program off the ground. However, CCW is an advocacy group and would plan to pass the program duties to a campus Work-Life Coordinator. Therefore, the Child Care committee makes the following long-term recommendations:

- Change "Childcare committee" of the CCW to the "Work-Life Balance Committee"
- Model off of a program like Yale's or Southern's, but accommodating CCSU's particular needs

- Designate a work-life contact at CCSU to work with Human Resources or Women's Center. This person would also serve on the Work-Life Balance Committee of the CCW
- Join the **College and University Work Family Association (CUWFA)** as an institution
- Attend annual national conferences as well as the CSU one at SCSU
- Expand Early Learning Center beyond pre-school to infant care
- Allow more spaces for student parents and faculty
- Move beyond childcare to other areas as well
 - Work with the AAUP, DECs, and the administration to address "tenure clocks vs. biological clocks"
 - Provide additional emotional support and resources for women with Work-Life Balance issues that involve children and medical needs of older family members
 - Explore ways to expand FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) protections and support beyond requirements of law
 - Advocate for convenient and equipped nursing stations on campus (purchase new or old breast pumps, supply storage bags, magazines)

Please see attached materials and documentation regarding child care issues and programs nationwide.