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### **CHILDCARE SHORTAGE AT PURDUE: FUNDING A RESOLUTION**

Today many universities are seeing an increase in enrollment of students ages 25 and older. A majority of these students have young children, and are having to research whether or not the school they are choosing has adequate child care to meet their needs. Many universities, including Purdue, lack this much needed resource, while most other Big Ten universities have recognized this need and provide a variety of care allowing “student parents” to attend class. The fact is, Purdue a Big Ten university, has such inadequate child care services for students and staff, blaming funding, that it does not even come close to comparing to other universities in its class.

The internal report “Expanding Childcare at Purdue,” illustrates 20 years of historical evidence behind the child care shortage, with very few results. In 1983 Purdue did open their first and only child care center with limited availability for 70 children between the ages of 2-5. The opening of this center did temporarily satisfy the needs of a few students and staff, while the issues of infant care and drop-in care existed and still exist today but in an even greater demand with nothing further being done about it. In turn resulting in an overwhelming dissatisfaction among 75 percent of the faculty (Worklife Committee of The Council on the Status of Women at Purdue 2).

Not only does this overwhelming problem affect the students and staff at Purdue, but it is affecting other universities across the country. An article published in the *Chronicle of Higher*

*Education* reports that the **childcare shortage** on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign leads students and staff, along with their infants and toddlers to protest, demanding results (12). This **childcare shortage** among universities is starting to have negative affects on “student parents.” As Ngaio Crequer reports, the “lack of child care, is preventing students from taking up college places.” He goes on to say that parents are put off and 2/3 of colleges report that students are dropping out (31).

These negative effects are truly being felt by the students and staff at Purdue, as seen through recent surveys according to Kelsey VanArsdall, campus editor. She writes that a recently compiled report indicates that 20 percent of employees, and 5 percent of students are in need of child care (1), and the document “Expanding Child Care at Purdue,” converts these percentages estimating that roughly 5000 students and staff have young children that are affected by the inadequate services provided at Purdue (6-7).

With an increasingly large number of student parents and staff being affected by this **childcare shortage** many have no choice but to suffer from the burden of stress this has created. The need for campus based child care facilities are crucial to the retention of students and staff in the growing need for the university to raise enrollment among non traditional students. This would increase the tuition and other fees brought in, that might have otherwise been lost due to students dropping out to care for their children. Author Nancy Gonchar writes that research has shown that it is essential for universities to have on-site child care to allow student parents an educational experience, and in turn boosting the universities retention of students, which is the bottom line for growth (226-35).

It is easy to blame a lack of financial support as the reason not to create or expand campus based child care facilities as authors Marybeth Kyle, William J. Campion, and William R. Ogdent write. They report that the rise in start-up costs, insurance problems, and dwindling

resources are forcing many administrators to “cut back” on such types of facilities, leaving a negative impact on students (482-85), but isn’t that just really an excuse for those not wanting to use funds for a facility of this kind, thinking that funds would be better used toward other educational opportunities, such as expanding laboratories for the health sciences department?

However, probably not to the surprise of many university officials, the federal government has created sources of financial support to help alleviate this specific problem for universities and colleges. The Childcare Access Means Parents in School or CAMPUS, is best described by author Charles Dervarics. He describes how this program was created under the Higher Education Act of 1998, to allow grant funding for 4 years to colleges and universities receiving anywhere from 50,000 to 200,000 dollars in grants, targeting low income students. This program is linked to the number of Pell grant recipients at a college, and must have a combined 350,000 dollars in Pell grants to qualify (3). This program may not have existed at all if it wasn’t for the campaigning efforts of the Director of Manhattan Community College’s Early Childhood Center. His college had been awarded more than eight hundred thousand dollars from CAMPUS, being disbursed over four years and to be used toward the expansion of child care services to assist “student parents” in attending and staying in college (“BMCC Director Leads”).

Another source of funding is the “Child Care Policy Research Discretionary Grants.” This federal funded grant program provides funds for 3 years up to 250,000 dollars for Child Care Research Scholars and State Child Care Data and Research Capacity Projects (Administration for Children). Since Purdue is known for the substantial amount of research preformed, this makes an even more reliable source for students that have to do research among children, through their school of study.

An additional source of federal funding is the “Child Care and Development Block Grant.” This program provides funds to states for the assistance of child care to low-income

families to promote and develop child care programs, including education to help parents make informed choices about child care. The range of financial assistance for states varies from \$8,600,000 to \$522,000,000 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services). With Purdue being a state funded educational facility, what better source of funds to be used, provided by the State of Indiana, for the expansion of this type of facility to not only take care of the children of students and staff, but allowing an educational experience for students in the School of Nursing and the School of Child and Family Sciences. It could even be an outreach tool for the Lafayette community to help parents develop skills, and become more informed of child care needs and development.

In addition to federal grant dollars, there are numerous other sources of funding that can be utilized as well, which Purdue has used in the past. In 2000 Megan Finnerty, Asst. Campus Editor wrote that Purdue had received a total of \$81.9 million dollars from corporations, foundations, alumni, friends of Purdue, various associations, companies and private foundations for 1999, reflecting a 2 percent increase from the previous year (1).

Receiving financial support in conjunction with any needed assistance from state representatives or senate leaders allows for sufficient funding that can and will be provided either on a federal or state level or through other financial supporters. Obtaining this financial support is the first step to the next phase of development. Gaining these available sources paves the way for “the next level in a quality university community.”

It is clearly evident that none of the above sources have been utilized for the expansion of a child care facility on campus. “Joe Bennett, Vice President for University Relations, said as of yet there is not a plan to increase child care services offered by the University” (VanArsdall 2). This is also confirmed by Professor Lorraine Kisselburgh, Director of Information Technology, School of Liberal Arts and Chair of the Worklife Committee of The Council on the Status of

Women, who stated in an email, “the funding of a much needed new facility is a problem right now.” She had also indicated that Executive VP Ken Burns is the person steering the committee that is investigating possibilities for facilities, programs, and funding.

An appointment scheduled for Friday August 1, with Mr. Kenneth Burns, Executive Vice President and Treasurer of Purdue University, is set to discuss the on going efforts of receiving an expanded child care facility on campus. Many unanswered questions will be addressed at that time regarding the facility’s status including funding, the recognized need, the audience that needs persuasion and overall if the purpose of this project is to gain the retention of older non traditional students.

With the existence of financial support through federal and state funds and cumulative donations, the problem can be resolved, showing end results. Allowing campuses to expand child care services not only relieves the burden of stress among students and staff but it allows an educational experience while increasing the retention of older students and gaining their tuition that might have otherwise been lost.

We must act upon this problem now, before it is too late! Simply applying or lobbying for financial support, will bring forth and provide the much needed money, in order to expand current child care services offered. Purdue already has the resources of University Development and the dedication of the Worklife Committee of The Council on the Status of Women, in order to implement this funding resolution. If no effort is made to secure these or other funds, the problem will continue to exist and lead to the loss of older non traditional students that Purdue wishes so much to keep.

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