

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To: Members of the Columbia University Community
From: The Childcare Affordability Initiative, Student Affairs Committee
Subject: The State of Student-Parents at Columbia University
Date: March 6, 2020

I. Executive Summary

A childcare crisis grips Columbia University. In recent years, the Columbia Daily Spectator and other publications have released more than a dozen articles discussing the challenges faced by Columbia affiliates with children, many of whom report paying more than \$30,000 per year for full-time childcare. Meanwhile, University Senators have received consistent complaints from student-parents who report feeling overwhelmed by the high costs of childcare and abandoned by the University. Following years of complaints, the Student Affairs Committee formed an ad hoc subcommittee, the Childcare Affordability Initiative (“CAI”), as part of an effort to help make Columbia University more accessible to college students with dependent children. After several months of comprehensive research and consultation with policy experts, the CAI presents the following findings:

- Nationwide, an estimated 20% of students at private, nonprofit universities and colleges have dependent children. These students are disproportionately people of color and women.
- Columbia University offers far less financial and administrative support for students with dependent children than most of our peer and near-peer universities, despite the higher-than-average costs of childcare near campus.
- Student-parents have expressed continuous dissatisfaction with the low levels of support offered by the University, with many stating that they would not recommend the University to other students with children.
- The childcare crisis and concomitant lack of support by Columbia University undermines our commitment to higher education diversity and accessibility.

Drawing from higher education best practices, the advice of policy experts, and steps taken by our peer universities, the CAI urges the University to adopt the following recommendations:

Short-Term, Low Investment

1. Hire or redesignate an employee at the Office of Work/Life to focus on student-parents, modelled on the stellar work of the Office of Military & Veteran Affairs. The employee will be responsible for surveying and maintaining a database of student-parents, administering benefit programs for student-parents, directing student-parents to existing resources at Columbia, creating family-friendly programming, preparing a new student guide, directing students to relevant state/federal assistance programs, and other key tasks to better meet the distinct needs of the student-parent population.
2. Seek federal funding through available grant programs, such as Child Care Access Means Parents in School (“CCAMPIS”), which provides an average award of \$159,028 (FY2019) for eligible University childcare partnerships.

3. Follow the recommendations of the Government Accountability Office (“GAO”) regarding the need to advertise the availability of the dependent care allowance for student-parents, who may not be aware that they can receive additional federal student loans.
4. Work with the Columbia Affiliated Early Learning Centers to make their admissions processes more transparent and accessible for student-parents.
5. Encourage Bright Horizons and other childcare organizations to open near-campus, no-frills childcare centers servicing Morningside Heights.

Short-Term, Medium Investment

6. Fund a University-wide childcare grant program for all student-parents, modelled on the Student Child Care Grant at Cornell, which provides an average award amount of \$3,428 per student-parent per academic year based on financial need.

Long-Term, High Investment

7. Establish an on- or near-campus, at-cost or subsidized childcare center, modelled partly on The School at Columbia University.

Ultimately, the ability of Columbia University to attract and retain a diverse body of talented students and faculty depends on our capacity to accommodate the needs of a modern University community. In the 1980s, University leaders recognized that we needed to greatly expand the number of subsidized housing spots so that we could continue to attract exceptional students. In 2003, University leaders helped open The School at Columbia University, so that we could continue attracting world-class faculty. In recent years, the University has committed \$185 million to support efforts to diversify the faculty and better support minority doctoral students. On childcare, however, Columbia University has been plagued by apparent apathy and decades-long delays—seemingly perplexed by a basic human need.

Today, Columbia University purports to stand for diversity, fairness, and accessibility—and yet the state of childcare tells a different story. In a country where 33% of Black students, 29% of American Indian/Alaska Native students, and 21% of Latinx students have dependent children, we cannot continue to tolerate a status quo where those with children are effectively excluded from our educational programs. Moreover, even as Columbia University purports to stand for reproductive rights, we have created a reality where parenthood threatens to end the education of dozens of student-parents who cannot afford the prohibitive costs of childcare.

Today, we ask Columbia leaders, trustees, and administrators at all levels to uphold our commitment to diversity, and recall our past boldness in opening the doors of higher education. It is finally time to act on childcare.

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II. Introduction: Student-Parents and Why They Matter

In the United States, approximately one out of five college students have dependent children. They are disproportionately people of color (51%) and women (70%)—most of whom are single mothers.¹ They contribute significantly to the vitality, diversity, and perspective of universities and colleges across the country, where they tend to earn higher GPAs than their non-parent peers,² despite the fact that they are more likely to work part-time and live below the poverty line.³ Indeed, many former student-parents have gone on to become world-renowned scholars, advocates, and leaders, such as our own alumna, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, CLS '59,⁴ and U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren.⁵

Yet, student-parents must contend with a host of unique challenges and costs that come with parenthood. In a country where the costs of childcare frequently surpass the costs of college tuition,⁶ students with children are frequently pushed out of higher education and are burdened with excessive student debt. As such, student-parents take longer to graduate on average, and graduate at lower rates than non-parents.⁷ Moreover, student-parents—particularly single mothers—are disproportionately targeted by predatory, for-profit colleges.⁸

Many scholars and activists argue that universities should take a more proactive role to promote college success among student-parents, especially as the federal government threatens cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and other programs that help vulnerable families.⁹ In addition to supporting student body diversity and creating educational opportunities for underserved populations, these efforts can even help reduce generational poverty.

Investments in the postsecondary success of parents with young children can increase attainment of credentials leading to good jobs, bring children the benefits of high-quality learning environments, promote later college-going among children, and improve family economic security across generations.”¹⁰

¹ Lindsey R. Cruse et al., *Parents in College by the Numbers*, Inst. Women's Pol'y Res. (Apr. 11, 2019), <https://iwpr.org/publications/parents-college-numbers/>.

² *Id.*

³ Elizabeth Noll, Lindsey Reichlin & Barbara Gault, *College Students with Children: National and Regional Profiles*, Inst. Women's Poly' Res. (Jan. 2017), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/C451-5.pdf>.

⁴ See Ruth Bader Ginsburg, *Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Advice for Living*, N.Y. Times: Opinion (Oct. 1, 2016), <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/02/opinion/sunday/ruth-bader-ginsburgs-advice-for-living.html> (explaining how parenthood “gave [her] . . . a sense of proportion that classmates trained only on law studies lacked”).

⁵ Korey Lane, *Elizabeth Warren Revealed How She Struggled as a Working Mom*, Emily's List (Oct. 19, 2017), <https://emilyslist.org/news/entry/elizabeth-warren-revealed-how-she-struggled-as-a-working-mom-finding-child->.

⁶ Claire Zillman, *Childcare Costs More Than College Tuition in 28 U.S. States*, Fortune (Oct. 22, 2018), <https://fortune.com/2018/10/22/childcare-costs-per-year-us/>.

⁷ Claire Wladis, Alyse C. Hachey & Katherine Conway, *No Time for College? An Investigation of Time Poverty and Parenthood*, 89 J. Higher Education 807 (2018).

⁸ See Julie Anderson, Lindsey Cruse & Barbara Gault, *Single Mothers Overrepresented at For-Profit Colleges*, Inst. Women's Pol'y Res. (Sep. 6, 2017), <https://iwpr.org/publications/single-mothers-overrepresented-profit-colleges/>; Astra Taylor & Hannah Appel, *Subprime Students: How For-Profit Universities Make a Killing by Exploiting College Dreams*, Mother Jones: Politics (Sep. 23, 2014), <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/09/for-profit-university-subprime-student-poor-minority/>.

⁹ See, e.g., Maggie Dickinson, *The Ripple Effects of Taking SNAP Benefits From One Person*, The Atlantic: Family (Dec. 10, 2019), <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/12/trump-snap-food-stamps-cuts/603367/>.

¹⁰ Cruse et al., *supra* note 1.

However, the benefits of making higher education accessible for student-parents are not merely limited to the student-parents and their children. Rather, students with children bring a valuable array of life experiences and perspectives to their coursework and academic programs. They provide their peers with a second-hand perspective of the demands—but also rewards—of parenthood, thereby normalizing a life-changing event which most students will not experience until after graduation, or at all. These positive connections with parenthood are especially critical for the many young Columbians who will go on to become the business leaders, politicians, and scholars who will shape workplace cultures and leave policies throughout the world.

Universities also have a deeper obligation to make college accessible for student-parents—one borne of a commitment to diversity. In the landmark affirmative action case of *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003), the respondents—leaders and regents of the University of Michigan—argued that the mission of the University “requires a broadly diverse mix of students with varying backgrounds and experiences who will respect and learn from each other.”¹¹ Before the district court, the same parties argued that “the quality of the intellectual experience that our students enjoy is improved by bringing together . . . students with a broad array of perspectives, experiences and insights, including those derived from experiences related to race.”¹² These assertions ring hollow so long as elite universities remain out-of-reach for the thousands of student-parents who are members of racial and ethnic minorities. If “[d]iversity in education is transformative—enriching individuals as it enriches the community and society as a whole,”¹³ Columbia University has an obligation to be a place where diversity can flourish; where qualified students with children or without can access the opportunities of a world-class education.

In this endeavor, we believe Columbia University has resoundingly failed.

III. Childcare at Columbia University and Peer Universities

A. The Childcare Affordability Initiative

The Childcare Affordability Initiative (“CAI”) was formed by a vote of the Student Affairs Committee (“SAC”) in September 2019 after University Senators were made aware of years-long complaints over the state of childcare at the University. Indeed, over the past decade alone, more than a dozen articles have been published by the Columbia Daily Spectator discussing the childcare crisis faced by Columbia affiliates. The CAI hopes to address these concerns by advocating for changes that will make Columbia more accessible for students with children, particularly those who are first-generation, low-income (“FGLI”).¹⁴

¹¹ Brief in Opposition, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003) (No. 02-241), 2002 WL 32101026, at *1 (internal quotations omitted).

¹² Defendants Motion for Summary Judgment, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, No. 97-75928 (E.D. Mich. Oct. 10, 2000).

¹³ <https://undergrad.admissions.columbia.edu/learn/studentlife/diversity>

¹⁴ In particular, we note that Columbia University has a much higher rate of “upper-tail success” than many other universities, such as the public universities that typically cater to student-parents. See, e.g. Raj Chetty et al., *Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility*, NBER Working Paper No. 23618 at *25 (Jul. 2017), <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23618.pdf>.

It is no secret that childcare is expensive in New York City, but for graduate students . . . the expenses can be particularly difficult. . . . According to the Graduate Student Advisory Council's Quality of Life Survey, which was compiled in the spring of 2009, 91 percent of graduate students with children classified Columbia's support of student-parents as average to poor.¹⁵

B. Current Resources and Benefits for Student-Parents at Columbia University

Average Cost (NYC)	In 2015, the NYC Office of the Public Advocate estimated the average cost of childcare at \$1,354 per month, \$16,250 per year. ¹⁶ Today, the average likely exceeds \$1,891 per month, \$22,698 per year, with higher costs throughout Manhattan and Brooklyn. ¹⁷
On-Campus Childcare	<p><u>Barnard Toddler Center</u> runs a <u>four-hour per week</u> toddler program, with morning and afternoon options. Tuition ranges from \$2,000-\$11,000 per academic year, depending on eligibility for financial aid. In all, the program has capacity for approximately 40 toddlers.¹⁸</p> <p><u>Hollingworth Preschool</u> provides a part-time, on-campus preschool program, 8:30-11:30am for children ages 3-4 (with extension up to 1:15pm) and 8:45am-1:15pm for children ages 4-5 (with extensions up to 3pm). Annual tuition costs \$23,874 for children ages 3-4 and \$25,630 for children ages 4-5. Each group has a capacity of approximately 15-19 children.¹⁹</p> <p><u>Rita Gold Early Childhood Center</u> provides full-time childcare for children ages 2 months to 5 years, Monday-Thursday from 8:45am-5pm and Fridays from 8:45am-3pm. Full-time, full-year tuition costs \$29,394 for Columbia affiliates.²⁰ While Rita Gold does not publicly disclose its capacity, the program is quite small, probably numbering less than 60 children. The program has been described as having “waitlists for the waitlist” due to its low tuition and high quality of care.²¹</p>

¹⁵ Elizabeth Vance, *Graduate Students Struggle to Find Affordable Childcare*, Columbia Daily Spectator: Student Life (Mar. 8, 2010), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/2010/03/08/graduate-students-struggle-find-affordable-child-care/>.

¹⁶ See Office of the N.Y.C. Pub. Advocate, *Child Care in New York City: Investing in Child Care* (Nov. 2015), <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/calendar/2016/Child%20Care%20Report.pdf>; Durkin, *Average Cost of Daycare in NYC Tops \$16G*, N.Y. Daily News (Nov. 9, 2015), <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/average-cost-daycare-nyc-tops-16k-article-1.2428709>.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Darla Mercado, *Annual Child-Care Costs Exceed \$20,000 in These States*, CNBC (Aug. 28, 2018), <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/08/28/forget-college-tuition-annual-childcare-costs-exceed-20000-here.html>; Kendra Hurley, *New York's Tale of Two Child Care Cities*, The New School: Ctr. for N.Y.C. Affairs, <http://www.centernyc.org/ny-tale-of-two-child-care-cities>.

¹⁸ <https://toddlers.barnard.edu/>

¹⁹ <https://www.tc.columbia.edu/hollingworth/preschool/>

²⁰ <https://www.tc.columbia.edu/ritagold/>

²¹ Devika Bhushan, *For Graduate Students, Childcare Woes Create Weighty Financial Burden*, Columbia Daily Spectator (Nov. 29, 2005), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/2005/11/29/graduate-students-childcare-woes-create-weighty-financial-burden/>.

<p>Off-Campus Childcare</p>	<p>In addition to these on-campus centers, Columbia has nine “Affiliated Early Learning Centers,” seven of which offer full-time childcare and five of which accept children under the age of 17 months.²² These programs are all very competitive due to their proximity to the University and quality of care. Full-time tuition ranges from \$2,500 (Red Balloon) – \$4,000 (Montessori) per month, or around \$30,000-\$48,000 per year.</p> <p>Columbia affiliates can receive “optional early notification of their admissions decision” at the affiliated centers, and even financial aid. However, some students reported that they did not request financial aid because they “did not want to reduce their chance of admission.” Application fees range from \$50-\$200, such that applying to all centers would cost approximately \$1,000. Indeed, many students reported spending hundreds of dollars on childcare applications, only to be rejected or waitlisted at most or all centers. In 2011, the last year we have data, only 6% of GSAS students reported using affiliated centers.²³ The few student-parents whose children were admitted with financial aid still report spending upwards of \$20,000-\$30,000 per academic year on childcare, and must also find coverage for evening hours given that many Columbia classes are held after 5pm.</p> <p>The Office of Work/Life also offers a school and childcare search service for Columbia affiliates,²⁴ and works with the Office of Government and Community Affairs to host an Annual Early Education and Child Care Fair each fall. As of February 2020, the Work/Life had recently created an “Expectant and New Parents’ Guide for Students.”²⁵</p>
<p>Financial Resources</p>	<p>Post-docs, doctoral students, and teaching fellows at Columbia University receive 150 hours of subsidized back-up care per fiscal year through Bright Horizons. GSAS Ph.D. and D.M.A. candidates also receive a \$2,000 subsidy per academic year for each child who is under the age of five and has not yet started kindergarten. Columbia Law School students receive 60 hours of subsidized back-up care per academic year through Bright Horizons.</p> <p>Currently, the overwhelming number of student-parents at Columbia—such as General Studies (“GS”) undergraduates and non-Ph.D. graduate students—do not receive any back-up care benefits or subsidies.</p>

²² <https://worklife.columbia.edu/content/child-care-schooling>

²³ Naomi Cohen, *With Few Resources, Child Care a Burden for Many Graduate Student-Parents*, Columbia Daily Spectator: Student Life (Apr. 26, 2012), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/2012/04/26/few-resources-child-care-burden-many-graduate-student-parents/>.

²⁴ <https://worklife.columbia.edu/content/school-and-child-care-search-service>

²⁵ <https://worklife.columbia.edu/content/expectant-and-new-parents-guide-students>

Karen Hajdu, a mother whose husband is a full-time professor at the School of Journalism, has used the school search program to “navigate the treacherous world of school placement.” She expressed doubts about finding a preschool when her family moved here last June, but she said that the Office of Work/Life, full of people that were “immensely helpful and comforting,” helped her find “a lovely, competitive one in our neighborhood.”²⁶

C. State of Peer Universities²⁷

Whereas most public universities offer some form of state-subsidized, on-campus childcare or grants,²⁸ private universities’ support for student-parents fluctuates from robust to non-existent. Many top universities, such as Yale and Princeton, have comprehensive, on-campus childcare networks, coupled with generous subsidies for student-parents. By contrast, both Columbia and Harvard have childcare networks that are out-of-reach for most students, and provide financial subsidies to only a small minority of student-parents. Still other peers, such as the University of Chicago and University of Pennsylvania, have gone so far as to create fully-staffed, on-campus Family Resource Centers, offering drop-in childcare and family-friendly programming for student-parents.²⁹ In all, several conclusions can be gleaned from the wide array of childcare resources offered by our peers:

- (1) Most offer some form of financial subsidy to graduate and/or Ph.D. students ranging from \$2,000 (Columbia) – \$10,000 (Stanford) per year.³⁰
- (2) Most have multiple on-campus childcare centers, capable of supporting 100-500 children at a cost that generally exceeds the statewide average by around 35%.
- (3) Most have a consolidated website for student-parents that provides an overview of relevant university resources and contacts.
- (4) Around half offer some form of back-up care for Ph.D. students and—less frequently—graduate students, generally administered through Bright Horizons.
- (5) **Most offer more resources and support for student-parents than Columbia, despite having lower statewide childcare costs.**

Yale University

Average Cost (Connecticut)	\$1,292 per month, \$15,501 per year. Currently ranked 5 th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for the most expensive childcare. ³¹
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²⁶ Shane Ferro, *Office of Work/Life Helps Professors Keep It Together*, Columbia Daily Spectator (Oct. 10, 2007), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/2007/10/10/office-worklife-helps-professors-keep-it-together/>.

²⁷ We thank our staff member, Kazuel Bailey, for dedicated dozens of hours researching the state of childcare at peer universities and consolidating hundreds of useful links/reports on behalf of the CAI.

²⁸ Elisa Garcia, *College Students with Children Need Campuses with Child Care*, Inst. Women’s Pol’y Res. (May 3, 2011), <https://femchat-iwpr.org/2011/05/03/college-students-with-children-need-campuses-with-child-care/>.

²⁹ See, e.g., <https://grad.uchicago.edu/life-at-uchicago/family-resources/>; <https://familycenter.upenn.edu/>.

³⁰ See, e.g., Stanford Fin. Aid, *2018-2019 Graduate Family Grant Program Guidelines*, <https://financialaid.stanford.edu/pdf/gradfamilygrant1819.pdf>.

³¹ Econ. Pol’y Inst., *The Cost of Child Care in Connecticut* (Jul. 2019), <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/CT>.

On-Campus Childcare	<p>Phyllis Bodel Child Care Center provides full-time, multi-lingual childcare for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. Tuition ranges from \$1,475-\$1,790 per month for full-time (7:30am-5:30pm) enrollment, however scholarships and financial aid are available. It has capacity for 100 children.³²</p> <p>Bright Horizons at Yale West Campus provides full-time (7am-6pm) and drop-off childcare for children of all ages. Tuition ranges from \$1,521-\$1,916 per month for full-time care. It has capacity for 144 children.³³</p> <p>Yale has additional on- or near-campus childcare partnerships through the YLS Early Learning Center (Yale Law School), The Nest at Alphabet Academy (Yale Divinity School), Edith B. Jackson Child Care Program (Graduate Housing), Calvin Hill Day Care Center, and others. Overall, we estimate that Yale has capacity for approximately 500 children <u>on-campus</u>, all costing under \$2,000 per month for full-time (+) care.³⁴</p>
Off-Campus Childcare	<p>In addition to the on- or near-campus partnerships, Yale maintains a comprehensive directory of 88 childcare centers located within a short drive of New Haven, complete with faculty-child ratios, monthly costs, registration fees, etc.³⁵ Yale also hosts a babysitting service.³⁶</p>
Financial Resources	<p>Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences offers Ph.D. student-parents with an annual subsidy of \$4,700 for the first child under the age of 18, and an additional \$1,000 for each additional child under the age of six.³⁷</p>

Harvard University³⁸

Average Cost (Massachusetts)	<p>\$1,743 per month, \$20,913 per year. Currently ranked 2nd out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for the most expensive childcare.³⁹</p>
On-Campus Childcare	<p>Harvard has six on-campus childcare centers at the Cambridge and Allston campuses, operated by Campus Child Care, Inc., an independent, non-profit corporation.⁴⁰ These childcare centers support children ages 2 months to 5 years, and charge anywhere between \$1,950-\$3,150 per month for full-time care, depending on the age of the child.</p>

³² <https://medicine.yale.edu/bodelchildcare/about/?locationId=432>

³³ <https://your.yale.edu/bright-horizons-yale-west-campus>

³⁴ <https://wff.yale.edu/child-care-yale>

³⁵ <https://your.yale.edu/work-yale/benefits/worklife/child-care/child-care-directory>

³⁶ <https://babysitting.yale.edu/>

³⁷ <https://gsas.yale.edu/resources-students/finances-fellowships/funding-phd-students/phd-student-family-support-policy>

³⁸ Second perhaps only to Columbia University, Harvard lags behind the Ivy League, and currently faces calls from student-parents to expand childcare support. *See, e.g.,* Luke A. Williams, *Graduate Student Parents Face Steep Costs, Social Isolation*, The Harvard Crimson (Apr. 5, 2019), <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/4/5/student-parenthood-feature/>.

³⁹ Econ. Pol’y Inst., *The Cost of Child Care in Massachusetts* (Jul. 2019), <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/MA>.

⁴⁰ https://campuschildcareinc.org/about/#what_we_do

Off-Campus Childcare	Harvard can connect student-parents with different childcare registries supported by non-profits and the Massachusetts Department of Education, as well as nanny placement services and a Harvard babysitter directory. ⁴¹
Financial Resources	Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences offers Ph.D. student-parents an annual subsidy of \$6,624. ⁴²

Princeton University

Average Cost (New Jersey)	\$1,082 per month, \$12,988 per year. Currently ranked 15 th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for the most expensive childcare. ⁴³
On-Campus Childcare	University NOW Day Nursery provides full-time (8am-6pm) childcare for children ages 3 months to 5 years. Tuition ranges from \$1,925-\$2,200 per month depending on the age of the children. Academic year and full-year contracts are available. ⁴⁴ University League Nursery School provides part-time and full-time, academic year childcare for children ages 2-4 years. Tuition costs \$7,180 for 10 months of full-time care for a child over the age of three. ⁴⁵
Off-Campus Childcare	In addition to the on-campus childcare centers, Princeton has partnerships with 10 nearby centers that offer tuition discounts to Princeton affiliates. ⁴⁶
Financial Resources	Princeton offers eligible graduate students with awards up to \$6,000 per child per year with a maximum annual award of \$12,000. The award fluctuates based on household income, such that students earning less than \$80,000 per year will be eligible for the full award. ⁴⁷ Additionally, Princeton provides graduate students with 100 hours of back-up care per academic year through Bright Horizons. ⁴⁸

Cornell University

Average Cost (New York)	\$1,283 per month, \$15,394 per year. Currently ranked 6 th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for the most expensive childcare. ⁴⁹
On-Campus Childcare	Bright Horizons Cornell University Child Care Center provides full-time (7am-6pm) and part-time childcare for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. Tuition for the full-time program ranges from \$1,477-\$1,866 per month depending on the age of the children. It has capacity for 170 children. ⁵⁰

⁴¹ <https://hr.harvard.edu/finding-child-care>

⁴² <https://gsas.harvard.edu/student-life/harvard-resources/parental-accommodation-and-financial-support>

⁴³ Econ. Pol’y Inst., *The Cost of Child Care in New Jersey* (Jul. 2019), <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/NJ>.

⁴⁴ <https://unow.princeton.edu/>

⁴⁵ <http://www.ulns.org/>

⁴⁶ <https://hr.princeton.edu/thrive/well-being-resources/child-care-resources>

⁴⁷ <https://gradschool.princeton.edu/costs-funding/sources-funding/loans-and-assistance/gcap>

⁴⁸ <https://gradschool.princeton.edu/life-princeton/support-resources/family-focused-initiatives>

⁴⁹ Econ. Pol’y Inst., *The Cost of Child Care in New York* (Jul. 2019), <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/NY>.

⁵⁰ <https://child-care-preschool.brighthorizons.com/ny/ithaca/cornell>

Off-Campus Childcare	Cornell helps student-parents find childcare by providing access to the Care@Work search program. ⁵¹
Financial Resources	In 2004, Cornell became one of the first universities to offer a childcare grant program for all student-parents, providing maximum awards of \$4,100 per academic year. In 2018, the program provided \$350,000 worth of funding to student-parents across the university. ⁵²

D. Student-Parent Town Hall

As a means of better understanding the childcare crisis, the CAI hosted a student-parent town hall on November 8, 2019, which was attended by several University Senators, the Executive Vice President of University Life, and student-parents from across the University. Attendees expressed considerable frustration with the lack of affordable childcare, resources for student-parents, and child-friendly spaces on campus.

The Office of Work/Life was seen as largely unhelpful and even unwelcoming toward student-parents looking for guidance on how to navigate the complicated childcare landscape. One graduate student, the single mother of a three-year-old, contacted the Office of Work/Life asking for assistance finding 3K programs and was given the following response:

Although your income is very limited due to your status as a student you will not qualify for 3K because you are a student. All other early childhood programs are privately funded and parents pay a tuition of more than \$500 per week. I am not aware of any other opportunity for funding and although I wish it not so, I think coming to Columbia to pursue studies while being a parent of a young child will be very challenging.⁵³

At the time, she had already accepted her offer of admission and turned down other offers at top-ranked universities, and thus felt that she had made a critical mistake. Unfortunately, she was not offered any additional assistance or guidance by the Office of Work/Life.

Another attendee was dismayed by the fact that many of the affiliated childcare centers recommended by the Office of Work/Life require applications and even in-person visits months before most prospective students are even notified of their admission to the University.⁵⁴ Moreover, student-parents also reported that these childcare centers are prohibitively expensive, frequently costing well over \$30,000 per year per child, and suffer from nearly ubiquitous waitlists. Without adequate support from the University, these students—particularly those from other countries—felt that they had no choice but to enroll their children at unaffiliated childcare centers located an hour or more away from the University, or hire a part-time nanny at a cost that exceeded their own cost of tuition.

Even for those student-parents who were able to secure nearby, center-based childcare, they complained that the lack of a back-up care program meant that they frequently had to miss classes when children were sick or when their childcare center closed on a non-university

⁵¹ <http://studentswithfamilies.cornell.edu/students-with-children/childcare-and-school/>
⁵² <http://studentswithfamilies.cornell.edu/students-with-children/student-child-care-grant/>
⁵³ This e-mail excerpt was shared by the recipient to members of the CAI, and we have been generously granted permission to include it in our report to demonstrate the challenges felt by student-parents.
⁵⁴ <https://worklife.columbia.edu/content/early-education-child-care#/text-1359>

holiday. Students with older children also noted that public schools will close—often for entire weeks—when the University still has classes, meaning they must pay hundreds of dollars for babysitters during peak demand for back-up care. Additionally, student-parents stated that they were generally unable to attend the many afterhours networking events and receptions hosted by University programs and departments. Consequently, they felt that they were paying thousands more than non-parents to attend the University through added cost-of-living expenses, and yet were unable to realize the full benefits of their educational programs. Several recalled the various times they had to take their child with them to class or other University events, which oftentimes ended with temper tantrums, distracted classmates, embarrassment, and exasperated professors.

*At the town hall, the Initiative asked attendees whether they would recommend Columbia to other student-parents. **The answer was a resounding no.** Many, such as Jazgul Kochkorova, SIPA '21, said they may not have come to Columbia if they knew how little it would do for them.*

“It makes me question whether I made the right decision . . . to have so much debt and not that much support when it comes to back up care [at Columbia].”⁵⁵

However, the student-parents’ frustration extended beyond the mere lack of childcare resources and went to the very core of University administration. In addition to the general dissatisfaction with the Office of Work/Life as a resource for student-parents, they noted that the cost-of-living calculations for financial aid are grossly out-of-touch with the present realities of parenthood, thereby understating the “needs” of those under consideration for scholarships and grants.

Overall, the town-hall served as an effective outlet for exacerbated student-parents, who expressed appreciation that the University Senate was finally recognizing the challenges and even *existence* of student-parents. The discussions and testimonials drove home the magnitude of the problems facing student-parents, and the near-universal consensus on the top concern of student-parents: childcare affordability.

E. Results from Student Surveys

After consulting with the CAI, SAC leadership had several new questions added to the annual Quality of Life Survey, which are specific to student-parents’ concerns. Based on our research, this will be the first attempt to get feedback from student-parents across the University. Moreover, the survey will allow the University to better estimate the number of students with children across the different schools and programs.⁵⁶

While the CAI awaits the results of the 2020 Quality of Life Survey, we are nevertheless able to draw upon a trove of ad hoc surveys conducted by student associations and councils over the past decade. These surveys, though conducted with varying levels of scope and formality, reveal an overwhelming trend: student-parents are strongly dissatisfied with the level of university support.

⁵⁵ Griffin Jones & Valeria Escobar, *University Senate [Student Affairs Committee] Launches Childcare Affordability Initiative to Support Student-Parents*, Columbia Daily Spectator: Student Life (Nov. 11, 2019), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2019/11/11/university-senate-launches-childcare-affordability-initiative-to-support-student-parents/>.

⁵⁶ At present, the University does not collect or disclose data on the number of students with children.

Year	Key Findings	Source
2009	91% of graduate students with children classified Columbia’s support of student-parents as average to poor . 58% of respondents gave it the lowest two ratings possible.	Graduate Student Advisory Council’s Quality of Life Survey ⁵⁷
2011	Two-thirds of graduate student parents rated Columbia support poorly . Strikingly, 18% of the over 1,400 respondents had considered having children but decided against it while in school—with the majority citing financial concerns as the main reason for postponing parenthood.	Graduate Student Advisory Council’s Quality of Life Survey ⁵⁸
2014	40% of GS students paying for childcare reported paying over \$2,500 per month for it. Nearly 92% reported that they struggled to afford this cost. 64% of those who reported having children also reported that they missed 3 or more days per semester due to lack of childcare.	Columbia University Family Support Network ⁵⁹
2019	84% of student-parents surveyed at SIPA listed affordable back-up or full-time childcare as their top policy priority for parents at SIPA. Nearly 42% of respondents reported missing a class or exam and 59% reported missing a group meeting due to childcare issues. Nearly 90% of parents reported missing school-sponsored extracurricular activities and networking events.	SIPA Space Gender Audit, Fall 2019 ⁶⁰

F. Selected Testimonials⁶¹

How has the childcare situation affected your experience at Columbia?

“My childcare situation means that I attend virtually no evening events. Even if they’re going to feed me, it’s not worth the price of a babysitter. I was lucky enough to have a classmate’s wife watch [my baby] during weekly TA sessions for a while, but that was after I brought him to one and spent the entire time trying to keep him from unplugging computers. . . . [Last semester,] I actually started looking into transferring to George Washington, and I only stopped because I realized we’d already locked in the next year’s NYC daycare.”

- R.S. / Independent Mother of a 2-Year-Old

⁵⁷ Vance, *supra* note 15.

⁵⁸ Cohen, *supra* note 23.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Sedran, *Student Group Looks to Expand Child Care Resources for Undergraduates*, Columbia Daily Spectator: Student Life (Mar. 25, 2014), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2014/03/25/student-group-looks-expand-child-care-resources-undergraduates/>.

⁶⁰ Jazgul Kochkorova et al., SIPA Fall 2019 Space Gender Audit (Dec. 2019) (unpublished results of an audit conducted as part of the Mainstreaming Gender course at SIPA) (on file with the CAI).

⁶¹ The following testimonials were generously offered by student-parents at Columbia University following the CAI Student-Parent Town Hall.

“Unavailability of on-campus childcare and unaffordability of the affiliated child-care centers has put me and my family under a lot of emotional and financial stress. . . . I came with an assumption that such a renowned Ivy League university wouldn’t have problems with basic student needs like childcare. To my disappointment, Columbia is not inclusive of student-parents; neither academically since most of [my] classes and recitations take place after 6pm or on the weekends, nor . . . physically as I struggled to access the campus with a stroller and [trying to find] . . . lactation spaces in many of the schools on campus. Feeling physically and emotionally left out . . . I don’t feel like I belong at this university.”

- J.K. / Independent Mother of a 3-Year-Old

What do you wish Columbia administrators knew about attending Columbia as a parent?

“Mostly, I wish administrators knew we exist. . . . I e-mailed the Registrar before school even started, back when [my baby] only had an 8am-3:30pm daycare spot. I asked to be put in a section that maximized classroom hours during that time period. . . . I got back a ‘we’ll try,’ and was assigned to a section that met outside those hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. His school ended up coming back with an 8am-6pm spot, but I have no idea what I would’ve done had that not happened.”

- R.S.

“As an international student, who has never done childcare applications in the U.S., I found myself frustrated . . . as the orientation week drew closer [and I was] unable to find daycares that were still accepting children and wouldn’t cost me another Columbia-equivalent tuition. Upon reaching out to the work-life office, they simply suggested that ‘coming to Columbia . . . will be very challenging’ instead of helping to alleviate some of the challenges like securing slots for students or advocating for back-up care.”

- J.K.

“I wish I was provided relevant information early on. [A]dmissions . . . should help students with partners and children become aware of the opportunities and deadlines, instead of referring to the University Work Life Office which only helps staff and PhD students. If there was an office that would be specifically helping student-parents in advising about the deadlines, applications to different city-run programs such as 3-K and Pre-K for All, helping especially international students to settle in on campus, advising them on healthcare services and referring them to clinics and pediatricians, and many other services, they would ease the burden of these students and help them make their studies at Columbia productive and worthwhile.”

- J.K.

What do you think about Columbia University's attitudes on parenthood, childcare, and work/life balance?

“Every faculty member has been so understanding when I have to show up with a baby, or when I have to miss class to get him vaccinated. Old ladies in the building think he’s just the greatest thing and give him wide latitude to explore, or they give him cookies. But the institution seems perplexed by him.”

- R.S.

G. Past Advocacy Efforts

A cursory glance through relevant articles published by the Columbia Daily Spectator and University Senate records reveals an unfortunate history of failed advocacy efforts around childcare affordability, dating back decades.

2004-2006: The Former Childcare Initiative⁶²

In the fall of 2004, the Commission on the Status of Women (“CSW”) designated childcare as its top priority for the academic year. It started working with the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity to gather preliminary data on childcare cost and availability near the Morningside and Medical campuses, as well as comparative data from peer universities. After reviewing the data, the CSW decided to submit a proposal to the Office of the Provost to contract out a formal childcare needs assessment for the University.

Provost Alan Brinkley agreed to the request, and Bright Horizons Families Solution Consulting Practice was subsequently retained to conduct a three-part analysis of the childcare needs and options for Columbia University. Bright Horizons conducted two years’ worth of analysis, and finally released an “options report” for review by the University.⁶³ According to later Spectator reporting, “[t]he company’s results revealed a need for a child care option, among other services, in order to improve recruitment, retention, and productivity at the University.”⁶⁴ Moreover, the Spectator noted that “[m]any of Columbia’s peer institutions offer an on-campus option, and the report recommended following suit.”⁶⁵

“In the summer of 2006, the Vice Provost for Diversity Initiatives, working with Roxie Smith, Vice Provost, formed a small working group to analyze the outcomes of the Bright Horizons study and to recommend to the Provost and the President a series of phased initiatives that could be taken in response to that study.”⁶⁶ In the words of the CSW, the two Vice Provosts had

become quite familiar with the Directors of Columbia’s Affiliated Child Care Centers and had begun, on an ad hoc and informal basis, to untangle the complex maze of subsidies and special arrangements that governed their relationship to the university . . . [and] provided support for them in their requests for specific maintenance projects and modest facility upgrades.⁶⁷

By the end of 2007, the President and Provost accepted several recommendations, including: (1) the expansion of two existing affiliated centers to accommodate infants and toddlers; (2) adding up to four new centers to the affiliated network; (3) sequestering spots at affiliated centers for faculty who are hired after the application windows have closed; and (4) adopting the Bright Horizons *Back-Up Care Advantage Program*® for all non-union faculty and staff, Ph.D.

⁶² The following section draws primarily from Christia Mercer & Carolyn Mutter, *Annual Report from the Co-Chairs of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2006-2007*, http://senate.columbia.edu/archives/reports_archive/06-07/annual_report_women2007.html.

⁶³ Unfortunately, the CAI has been unable to locate the 2006 Options Report produced by Bright Horizons, despite reviewing archived University Senate files, and reaching out directly to Bright Horizons. Thus, we rely on second-hand reporting by the Columbia Daily Spectator and the CSW.

⁶⁴ Cohen, *supra* note 23.

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ Mercer & Mutter, *supra* note 62.

⁶⁷ *Id.*

students, and post-docs. CSW records suggest that other recommendations, such as an on- or near-campus childcare center, were tabled.⁶⁸

Ultimately, the CAI greatly appreciates the work of the 2004-2006 CSW, and the foundation of support that they set for future parents affiliated with Columbia University. However, the record gives us some grounds to question the overall transparency, neutrality, and prudence of the 2004-2006 childcare push.

#1. We question the decision to hire a self-interested party, Bright Horizons, to conduct the childcare needs assessment. If the University ever contracts out another childcare assessment, the CAI would advise contracting with an uninterested party, rather than the self-described “leading provider of high-quality child care, early education and other services designed to help employers and families better address the challenges of work and family life.”⁶⁹ The appearance of conflict is only exacerbated by the fact that the University ended up adopting a Bright Horizons benefit program shortly after the assessment was completed. Moreover, contemporary records suggest that Bright Horizons spent most of the first year repeating the steps taken by the CSW—by all accounts, an able body of accomplished researchers, scientists, and policy experts.

#2. The CAI has several questions concerning the relationship between Columbia University and the “Columbia Affiliated Early Learning Centers.” In 2007, the CSW characterized the affiliated centers as a “complex maze of subsidies and special relationships” that sometimes receives support “for specific maintenance projects and modest facility upgrades.” Based on CSW records, University administrators consulted with the directors of these *independently-run* childcare centers “on an ad hoc and informal basis” before drafting their own childcare recommendations. Subsequently, the University decided not to pursue one of Bright Horizons’ purported recommendations: on- or near-campus, no-frills childcare—an offering that would have competed with the affiliated centers. In the future, these directors should certainly be consulted, but we believe that these contacts should be part of an open notice-and-comment process, rather than “ad hoc and informal” *ex parte* contacts.

#3. While the 2004-2006 efforts yielded only partial relief for faculty with children, they did virtually nothing to address the challenges faced by most student-parents. Undergraduate student-parents were not even consulted by Bright Horizons during the assessment, even though GS students make up one of the largest constituencies of student-parents at the University. Additionally, the *Back-Up Care Advantage Program*® was not extended to any graduate, professional, or undergraduate students; nor were students given access to the arrangement that allowed new faculty members to receive sequestered slots. By 2011, surveys revealed that only 6% of GSAS student-parents were using the Affiliated Early Learning Centers for childcare, demonstrating that they were still well out-of-reach for most student-parents.⁷⁰

Today, these efforts represent the most recent University-wide attempt to systemically address the childcare needs of faculty, staff, and students.

⁶⁸ Report from the Commission on the Status of Women: Some Projects Undertaken by Jean Howard, Vice Provost for Diversity Initiatives (Mar. 30, 2007), http://senate.columbia.edu/archives/reports_archive/06-07/women_diversity_report_3-30-07.html.

⁶⁹ <http://investors.brighthorizons.com/news-releases/news-release-details/company-profile-bright-horizons-family-solutions>

⁷⁰ Cohen, *supra* note 23.

2006-2014: The Crazy Quilt Childcare Strategy

In 2007, the Office of Work/Life was founded as part of an effort led by Vice Provost Jean Howard to attract and retain minority and women faculty.⁷¹ In collaboration with the CSW, Vice Provost Howard hired Carol Hoffman, an administrator from UC Berkeley, as the first Associate Provost and Director of Work/Life. During the same year, the responsibility for University childcare policy was finally shifted from the over-worked Office of Government and Community Affairs to the Office of Work/Life.

It did not take long for the deficiencies of the 2004-2006 childcare efforts to come to light, and the newfound Office of Work/Life struggled to address these challenges. As noted above, the 2009 GSAC Quality of Life Survey revealed overwhelming discontent with the level of University support for student-parents, as well as low usage of the Affiliated Early Learning Centers—the cornerstone of the Columbia’s new childcare strategy.⁷² In 2010, Hoffman reported that the Office of Work/Life was “currently looking into group family care options, among other initiatives, in which a parent or other University affiliate could offer to host day care services in their home.”⁷³ Perhaps due to the fact that most student-parents barely have enough square footage and spare time for their own children, let alone enough to run a makeshift childcare center, Hoffman’s proposal failed to gain traction. It is also likely that the program would have faced challenges with state and city regulatory requirements for in-home childcare centers.⁷⁴

After the release of another damning GSAC survey, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (“GSAS”) finally decided to act. In 2011-2012, GSAS followed the lead of our peer universities by extending the amount of time-off doctorate students could take for parenting and offered an annual \$1,000 childcare subsidy for Ph.D. and D.M.A. candidates.⁷⁵

“It’s a significant benefit, but it’s no benefit at all,” said Bob Neer, Core lecturer and father of two, in reference to the \$1,000 subsidy. “I consider it to be a gesture.”⁷⁶

2014-Present: The Childcare Crisis

In early 2014, nearly a full decade after the start of the flawed 2004-2006 childcare push, student-parents made clear that the University needed to put together a coherent childcare strategy, and finally catch up with the rest of the Ivy League. Under the leadership of numerous women, such as Katharine Celentano (GS ’17),⁷⁷ Francine Kershaw (GSAS ’15), and Amber Erwin (GS ’15), students petitioned the undergraduate student councils to adopt a resolution calling for the University to extend the back-up care and subsidy benefit to all student-parents.

⁷¹ Report from the Commission on the Status of Women, *supra* note 68.

⁷² Vance, *supra* note 15.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ See, e.g., <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/regulations/>.

⁷⁵ Jenny Davidson & Maya Tolstoy, *Commission on the Status of Women: 2011-2012 Academic Year Final Report to the Senate* (Apr. 25, 2012), http://senate.columbia.edu/archives/reports_archive/11-12/csw_2011_2012_ann_report.pdf.

⁷⁶ Cohen, *supra* note 23.

⁷⁷ For her stellar advocacy work on behalf of student-parents and other populations across Columbia University, Katharine Celentano received the Columbia University Service Award, Silver Crown, and Spirit Award.

The resolution passed all four student councils with unanimous support.⁷⁸ The following semester, the Spectator Editorial Board published a rare staff editorial calling the situation “unacceptable,” and urging University administrators to act.⁷⁹

Given the financial strain on GS students, which leaves many students with hefty debt loads and the stress that accompanies them, the added financial and logistical burden of taking care of young children can be academically crippling. This can range from student-parents missing a high number of classes to choosing not to attend Columbia.

*This is unacceptable. Students with children should be aided, not ignored and left to handle everything on their own.*⁸⁰

Unfortunately, despite all the promise and energy of the 2014 advocacy efforts, the University did not act. Meanwhile, the childcare costs and waitlists near the Morningside, Manhattanville, and Medical campuses continued to skyrocket.⁸¹ In response, the Office of Work/Life increased the number of subsidized back-up care hours to 150 hours per year for faculty, staff, and doctoral students, whereas GSAS doubled the annual childcare subsidy for eligible Ph.D. and D.M.A. candidates from \$1,000 to \$2,000. For hundreds of undergraduate, graduate, and professional student-parents across Columbia, however, the only resource granted was access to the elusive “Affiliated Early Learning Centers” and an Office of Work/Life fixated on faculty concerns.

Indeed, even faculty members earning a paycheck had plenty of cause for concern over the state of childcare. In 2018-2019, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences’ Policy Planning Committee received extremely negative survey results from faculty parents: 40% reported that their salaries were insufficient to meet childcare needs, 23% reported that they went into debt to cover the costs of childcare, and 38% reported that they had considered leaving Columbia to alleviate the strain of childcare.⁸²

“We’re burning through our savings very quickly,” [English Professor Eleanor] Johnson said. “People just cannot afford to have their families at Columbia.”

...

⁷⁸ Amber Erwin, *CUFSN Resolution Provides Equal Academic Opportunity for Students with Children*, Columbia Daily Spectator: Op-Eds (Apr. 24, 2014), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/opinion/2014/04/24/cufsn-resolution-provides-equal-academic-opportunity-students-children/>.

⁷⁹ Editorial Board, *University Can Do More to Support Student-Parents*, Columbia Daily Spectator: Staff Editorials (Oct. 9, 2014), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/opinion/2014/10/09/cufsn-requires-more-support-university/>.

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ Office of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, *Child Care Costs Rising \$730 [on Average] Each Year in New York*, <https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ChildCare.pdf>.

⁸² Noah Percy, *Your Professors Pay More for Childcare Than You Do for Tuition, 4 of Them Explain What This Means for Their Lives, and Your Education*, Columbia Daily Spectator: Administration (Apr. 25, 2019), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2019/04/25/your-professor-pays-more-for-childcare-than-you-do-for-tuition-4-faculty-explain-what-this-means-for-their-lives-and-your-education/>.

*“We have to ask ourselves if we want a third of us to be so strained that we go into debt, we seek other jobs, we take our research leave as cash, we seek outside offers—that’s not a good environment. Intellectually, it’s not a good environment, let alone politically.”*⁸³

In late 2018, students at Columbia Law School petitioned Dean Gillian Lester for access to the Bright Horizons *Back-Up Care Advantage Program*®, something that was already offered by nearly every other top law school. CLS responded quickly, launching a pilot program the very next semester and then making the benefit official by the fall of 2019.⁸⁴ Under the arrangement with Bright Horizons, law students currently receive 60 hours of subsidized back-up elder/childcare per academic year.⁸⁵ In a spring 2020 group meeting with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Petal Modeste, one new father described the back-up care program as the only resource keeping his life together after his wife gave birth to their first child. He humorously asked whether he could petition other students to donate their back-up care hours to help him get through the rest of law school.⁸⁶

H. A Call to Action

For more than a decade, students with children have pleaded with University leaders and administrators to expand childcare resources, and thus make our phenomenal educational programs accessible to student-parents. And yet, the University has consistently failed to deliver a comprehensive, or even remotely adequate solution. Rather, we have expanded an “Affiliated Early Learning Center” network that costs thousands more than most can afford and stops accepting applications months before most students are even admitted; granted back-up care benefits and paltry subsidies to Ph.D. students, while leaving hundreds of other student-parents without any support whatsoever; and perhaps most disturbingly, we have created an environment where student-parents feel physically and emotionally excluded from the University. **The message emanating from Columbia University is clear, and it is undeniable: students with children need not apply.**⁸⁷

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ <https://finance-admin.law.columbia.edu/content/back-up-care>

⁸⁵ It is important to note that the Bright Horizons Back-Up care is not free, but it is highly subsidized. For example, the average cost of a babysitter costs between \$20-25 per hour, whereas the at-home co-pay for back-up care is only \$7 per hour.

⁸⁶ Here, it is important to look at the numbers behind what this student was requesting. His newborn was not old enough to attend most childcare centers, so he was paying \$7 per hour for the at-home co-pay. If we multiply \$7 x 40 hours per week x 52 weeks per year, we get an annual childcare cost of \$14,560—several thousand dollars more than the national average. See Zillman, *supra* note 6. Indeed, the childcare situation at Columbia has become so dire that most student-parents feel grateful to pay only ~45% more than the average U.S. parent.

⁸⁷ See also *supra* note 52.

In a country where women make up less than 25% of Congress,⁸⁸ 30% of tenured university faculty,⁸⁹ and 7% of Fortune 500 CEOs,⁹⁰ we simply cannot afford to close off higher education pathways for young mothers.⁹¹ In the U.S., the average age of a first-time mother is 26 years old⁹²—the same average age of students at the School of General Studies and many of our graduate programs.⁹³ As a University, we decry the loss of reproductive rights for women across the country, and yet when those same women exercise the right to have children, we all but close the doors to our phenomenal educational programs. When we severely limit the number of women who can access these doors, how do we ever expect them to break down glass ceilings?

And yet, we are no stranger to bold action when it comes to the interests of diversity and accessibility in higher education. We have long recognized that our location—Columbia University in the City of New York—comes with many advantages, but also some responsibilities. In 1988, under the leadership of the late President Michael Sovern, Columbia greatly expanded the number of guaranteed housing spots for undergraduates—particularly Columbia College and Engineering students—thereby “allowing the university to recruit the best students from around the nation.”⁹⁴ In 2003, the University helped open The School at Columbia University, an exceptional K-8 school that administers need-blind admissions for the children of Columbia employees and neighborhood families.⁹⁵ At the time, Columbia leaders noted that they needed The School “to be competitive with other universities and attract the best faculty in the world.”⁹⁶ In October 2017, Columbia committed \$100 million as part of an effort to “support recruitment and career development for professors, doctoral and post-doctoral students who traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education.”⁹⁷

Today, we ask Columbia leaders, trustees, and administrators at all levels to uphold our commitment to diversity, and recall our past boldness in opening the doors of higher education. It is finally time to act on childcare.

⁸⁸ Drew Desilver, *A Record Number of Women Will be Serving in the New Congress*, Pew Research Center: Fact Tank (Dec. 18, 2018), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/18/record-number-women-in-congress/>.

⁸⁹ Bridget T. Kelly, *Though More Women are on College Campuses, Climbing the Professor Ladder Remains a Challenge*, Brookings: Brown Center Chalkboard (Mar. 29, 2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2019/03/29/though-more-women-are-on-college-campuses-climbing-the-professor-ladder-remains-a-challenge/>.

⁹⁰ Claire Zillman, *The Fortune 500 Has More Female CEOs Than Ever Before*, Fortune (May 16, 2019), <https://fortune.com/2019/05/16/fortune-500-female-ceos/>.

⁹¹ Indeed, by entering these critical fields as the parents of older children, student-parents may actually be less likely to leave the workforce. Moreover, they can offer much-needed advice and guidance to their colleagues who are experiencing the challenges of new parenthood. See Denise Valenti, *Women Most Likely to Leave Labor Force After First Child, Not Later Births*, Princeton University (Oct. 22, 2018), <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2018/10/22/women-most-likely-leave-labor-force-after-first-child-not-later-births>.

⁹² Quoctrung Bui & Claire C. Miller, *The Age That Women Have Babies: How a Gap Divides America*, N.Y. Times: The Upshot (Aug. 4, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/04/upshot/up-birth-age-gap.html>.

⁹³ <https://gs.columbia.edu/content/mission>

⁹⁴ Anthony Depalma, *Columbia’s Chief is Stepping Down*, N.Y. Times (Jun. 7, 1992), <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/07/nyregion/in-troubled-time-columbia-s-chief-is-stepping-down.html>.

⁹⁵ <https://www.theschool.columbia.edu/about/mission>

⁹⁶ Anemona Hartocollis, *School for Children of Faculty Brings Criticism of Columbia*, N.Y. Times (Jun. 28, 2000), <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/28/nyregion/school-for-children-of-faculty-brings-criticism-of-columbia.html>.

⁹⁷ Columbia News, *University Commits Another \$100 Million to Faculty Diversity* (Oct. 6, 2017), <https://news.columbia.edu/news/university-commits-another-100-million-faculty-diversity>.

IV. Recommendations⁹⁸

A. Short-Term, Low Investment

#1. Hire or redesignate an employee at the Office of Work/Life to focus on student-parents.

Although the Office of Work/Life serves a much-needed role for faculty and staff at Columbia, the one-size-fits-all approach does not work for student-parents. Rather, student-parents require an advocate-administrator that can serve as a University-wide resource for student-parents. The role should be modeled based on the stellar work of Anne Marie Kromidas and Marion Concilio at the Office of Military & Veterans Affairs, or David Keefe, the Senior Assistant Dean of Veteran Initiatives. However, rather than supporting student-veterans, the role should focus on students with children. In particular, the *Associate Director for Student Family Life* should:

- a. Help administer childcare benefits and programs for student-parents.
- b. Assist new and prospective student-parents with their search for childcare, specifically with a focus on finding low-cost, no-frills programs for students.
- c. Connect student-parents with outside scholarships, resources, and relevant state/federal assistance programs.
- d. Manage a consolidated website and new parent guide for student-parents.
- e. Direct pregnant students to the Title X coordinator.
- f. Audit the Affiliated Early Learning Centers to confirm that they are fairly administering financial aid and accepting student-parents at a rate commensurate with other University affiliates.
- g. Liaise with the Office of University Life to provide family-friendly programming for student-parents and their children.
- h. Liaise with family-focused student groups to provide administrative support for student-led events.
- i. Prepare a monthly newsletter for student-parents, providing information on family-friendly activities near the Columbia University campuses, childcare resources, and other pertinent updates.
- j. Deliver an annual report to the Student Affairs Committee, detailing, *inter alia*, the number of self-identified student-parents, the percentage of student-parents who have children enrolled in the Affiliated Early Learning Centers, and efforts taken by the Offices of Work/Life and University Life to support student-parents.

#2. Seek federal funding through available grant programs, such as CCAMPIS.

In FY2019, CCAMPIS provided \$42.3 million to more than 266 colleges and universities where the total amount of all Federal Pell grant funds awarded to enrolled students equaled or exceeded \$350,000 for FY2018. Under CCAMPIS, these funds can be “used to support or establish campus-based childcare programs primarily serving the needs of low-income students.”⁹⁹ Despite the longstanding childcare woes at Columbia University, our research suggests that Columbia administrators have not taken full advantage of CCAMPIS, even as many other

⁹⁸ While the CAI has contemplated dozens of actions—big and small—that can be taken by the University to better support student-parents, we have decided to present only our top 7 recommendations to address the childcare crisis—the most prominent complaint from student-parents. If these recommendations are taken, we are confident that Columbia University will set the example for our peer universities to follow.

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of Education, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/campisp/index.html>.

private, nonprofit universities have received thousands of dollars' worth of grants. To the extent Columbia University meets the \$350,000 threshold, the University should aggressively pursue critical federal funding through CCAMPIS—as well as other relevant state, local, and federal programs that can help offset the financial demands on the University and student-parents.

#3. Follow the recommendations of the GAO regarding the need to advertise the availability of the dependent care allowance for student-parents, who may not be aware that they can receive additional federal student loans.

Under Department of Education (“DOE”) policies, student-parents qualify for a dependent care allowance that allows them to receive additional federal student loans. In a 2019 study, however, the non-partisan GAO found that more than two-thirds of college websites did not mention the availability of the dependent care allowance, and recommended that the DOE “encourage schools to publicize potential loan increases to cover childcare.”¹⁰⁰ Based on a survey of relevant Columbia University financial aid websites, we were unable to find any mention of the dependent care allowance.

#4. Work with the Columbia Affiliated Early Learning Centers to make childcare admissions more transparent and accessible.

In 2007, the CSW described the affiliated network as a “complex maze of subsidies and special arrangements.”¹⁰¹ We are troubled by this characterization of the *de facto* cornerstone of Columbia’s childcare strategy, but alas, we do not disagree. In conversations with dozens of student-parents across the University, the Affiliated Early Learning Centers were regularly derided for their excessive costs, lengthy waitlists, and labyrinthian application processes. Specifically, student-parents have highlighted the centers’ expensive application fees, in-person visitation requirements, and application deadlines that make it nearly impossible for incoming students to secure placement. Although we do not know the extent of the “subsidies and special arrangements” owed by the University, we do know that the University endorses these childcare centers with a coveted “Columbia Affiliated” endorsement and provides free advertising through the Office of Work/Life. As such, the CAI recommends the Office of Work/Life:

- a. Audit the Affiliated Early Learning Centers to confirm that they are fairly administering their stated financial aid policies and accepting student-parents at a rate commensurate with other University affiliates. *See associated Recommendation 1(f).*
- b. Publish the financial aid policies and expected tuition costs by income level for each affiliated childcare center, so that student-parents can accurately gauge the cost of tuition before applying.
- c. Negotiate with affiliated childcare centers to waive application fees for student-parents, as well as in-person visitation requirements for incoming students.
- d. Sequester at least two spots at each affiliated center (18x) for incoming student-parents, with priority given to undergraduate and international students. The sequestered spots should be made known through outreach to all admitted students—preferably through the *Associate Director for Student Family Life*.

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid*, GAO-19-522 (Aug. 20, 2019), <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-522>.

¹⁰¹ See Mercer & Mutter, *supra* note 62.

#5. Encourage Bright Horizons and other childcare organizations to open near-campus, no-frills childcare centers servicing Morningside Heights.

With over 18,000 full-time employees and 4,000 full-time faculty, Columbia University has significant standing as a Bright Horizons' client and should receive customer service that is proportionate with our purchasing power. Currently, the nearest Bright Horizons childcare center is located at West 96th Street and Columbus Avenue—20 blocks away from the University. Thus, eligible student-parents, faculty, and staff who seek to use center-based childcare through the *Bright Horizons Back-Up Care Advantage Program*[®] must walk 20-30 minutes or more to drop off their children. For a company that has nearly 20 childcare centers in Manhattan and dozens more located throughout the New York City Metropolitan Area, this is unacceptable.

While we acknowledge that a nearby Bright Horizons childcare center will possibly compete with the Affiliated Early Learning Centers, this is exactly the point; Columbia should be doing everything in its power to encourage healthy competition in the local childcare market, not protecting the market share of a high-cost, *independently-run* network.

B. Short-Term, Medium Investment

#6. Fund a University-wide childcare grant program for all student-parents.

Here, the program administered by Cornell University can be a helpful reference. Cornell has 24,027 students and budgeted \$350,000 toward the program for FY2018. In 2017, the program awarded 54 grants totaling \$185,100 for the fall 2017 funding cycle, offsetting the childcare costs for 62 children with an average grant amount of \$3,428 per student-parent.¹⁰² Columbia University, with approximately 40% more students than Cornell, should budget at least \$490,000 for the grant program. The program should generally follow the award levels and eligibility requirements of the Cornell program, with priority given to undergraduate student-parents. Although surely no small sum,¹⁰³ we anticipate that the *Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Grant*—or other named fund—will help alleviate the financial burdens of student-parents. Moreover, the grant will further open critical pipelines for those student-parents—predominantly people of color and women—who have been barred from entry due to prohibitive childcare costs. In turn, we believe that the childcare fund will enhance our efforts to “support recruitment and career development for . . . doctoral and post-doctoral students who traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education.”¹⁰⁴

C. Long-Term, High Investment

#7. Establish The Daycare at Columbia University. The Daycare should be generally modelled after The School at Columbia University, and offer at-cost or subsidized childcare for faculty, staff, and students at an on- or near-campus location. The Daycare should make use of the large population of Columbia University student-workers to provide high-quality childcare for Columbians by Columbians. Moreover, The Daycare should offer priority enrollment for

¹⁰² Daniel Aloï, *Student Child Care Grant Funding to Increase \$100,000*, Cornell Chronicle (Feb. 8, 2018), <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2018/02/student-child-care-grant-funding-increase-100000>.

¹⁰³ As a frame of reference, \$490,000 is roughly equivalent to the cost of 1.6 students completing the three-year J.D. program at Columbia Law School. See <https://www.law.columbia.edu/admissions/graduate-legal-studies/tuition-fees-and-financial-aid>.

¹⁰⁴ Columbia News, *supra* note 97.

undergraduates, followed by other student-parent populations, faculty, and staff. However, The Daycare should also have enough capacity to avoid the “waitlist woes” that plague the Affiliated Early Learning Centers. While we acknowledge that such an endeavor will probably take many years and millions of dollars, we believe that it is critically necessary to maintain our competitiveness as an employer and place of higher learning. It would become yet another example of a bold, though prudent step undertaken by the University to address the unique challenges and opportunities of our New York City location.

V. Addenda

A. 2012-2013 Synthesis Report on Graduate Student Families, Presented by the Family Support Network to the CSW.

2-page document detailing the challenges faced by GSAS student-parents, along with six proposed recommendations.

B. 2016 Graduate Student Childcare Funding: Current Status and Future Needs

1-page document detailing the current costs of affiliated early learning centers, when compared with the graduate stipends and subsidies received by GSAS student-parents.

C. Additional Testimonials from the Columbia University Family Support Network

2-page document providing additional testimonials received through an open submission survey conducted by CUFSN.

Brief: Synthesis Report on Graduate Student Families

The Issue:

- Attrition of female GSAS students is higher compared to male students, and occurs both early and late in the graduate career.¹ Having a child while in school further increases the chances of attrition.
- GSAS commits approximately \$300,000 to each fully funded student. It makes poor economic sense to allow an increase in attrition that could be remedied for far less.²
- Among new student parents, only 35 percent of men and 16 percent of women think that tenure-track faculty careers at research-intensive universities are family friendly.³

Key Findings:

- **7.8%** of GSAS graduate students have children: there are an estimated 200 children of GSAS students in the Columbia community.
- **18%** of GSAS graduate students have considered becoming parents while in school, but decided against it due to challenges of:
 1. Access to health insurance
 2. Adequate, Affordable and Available Housing
 3. Financial Support, Time Commitment and Discrimination
 4. Child Care Options

Recommendations⁴:

1. Special Task force on Student Parent Issues
 - a. Comprised of representatives from SAC, Work/Life & GC
 - b. Conduct further research, investigate university-wide initiatives
2. Financial Support
 - a. Subsidies, loans and flexible spending accounts available to student parents
 - b. Reconsidering the stipend cap for fully funded students*
3. Child Care
 - a. Work to insure affordability and availability of child care for students
4. Awareness
 - a. Orientation on family issues for students*
 - b. Website to centralize information about relevant resources and policies*
 - c. Policy information sessions for faculty and staff on student rights*
5. Housing and Space
 - a. Designate a single building to house student families
 - b. Reserve library carrels for student parents*
6. Administrative Position
 - a. Shared between Work/Life, GSAS, interested Deans
 - b. Management of website, organizing orientations, liaising between parents and administration, ongoing research and development of resources
 - c. Improve relevance of Work/Life resources to the student body

¹ “Advancement of Women Through the Academic Ranks of the Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Science: Where are the Leaks in the Pipeline?” The Commission on the Status of Women, November 2001.

² “We train and educate young people—an expensive undertaking—with the intention that they will increase the pool of people performing high-quality science. If we do not simultaneously keep those people in the full-time labor pool, we undercut our intentions.” Valian, Virginia. “Beyond Gender Schemas: Improving the Advancement of Women in Academia”. *NWSA Journal* Vol. 16 (1), 2004, p. 214

³ Perceptions often become reality. Nationwide, women in the sciences who are married with children are 35% less likely to enter a tenure track position after receiving a PhD, and 27% less likely to achieve tenure upon entering a tenure-track job, than their male counterparts. See: Mason, M.A. et al. 2011. “Keeping Women in the Science Pipeline”. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 638(1): 141-162.

⁴ (*) indicate short-term, low investment solutions

Graduate Student Childcare Funding: Current Status and Future Needs

Prepared by Sen. Andrea Crow (GSAS/Humanities) : Situation as of Oct. 7, 2016

Basic Facts:

GSAS Graduate Student Stipends (2016-17):

- Humanities and Social Sciences: \$30,770
- Natural Sciences: \$36,360

Childcare Support:

- \$2,000 / yr. for PhD students
- Limited number of packages for affiliated Columbia centers (brings costs to around \$23,000 on average)

Childcare Costs at Affiliated Columbia Centers:

Center	Age Range	Tuition (full-time)	Average Financial Aid Award (limited availability)
Children's Learning Center	6 months to 5 years	\$31,000 / yr.	\$4,000 / yr.
Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School	2 to 5 years	\$18,500 / yr.	Information not available
Family Annex	17 months to 4.5 years	\$22,930-\$25,618 / yr.	Information not available
Lamont-Doherty Child Development Center	6 weeks to 5 years		Information not available
Medical Center Nursery School	2 to 6 years	\$26,976 / yr.	\$500 to \$6000 / yr.
Red Balloon Day Care Center	2 to 5 years	\$25,200-\$26,400 / yr.	Information not available
Tompkins Hall Nursery and Childcare Center	3 months to 4 years 8 months	Approximately \$30,000 / yr.	Information not available
Twin Parks Montessori School	3 months to 6 years	\$24,620-\$28,860	\$3500 / yr. on average

What is Needed:

1. Fundraising for scholarships to help students pay for child care.
2. More options for infant and early toddler care.

Testimonials from Members of the Columbia University Family Support Network
(“CUFSN”)¹

“When I reflect on my time as a student-parent at Columbia, I consider how radically different my experience would have been had I had access to affordable, local childcare for my toddler. Being able to drop my son off at a childcare center near campus and free myself up for a couple hours of study time would have made a world of difference.

—Will Veitch, General Studies '19, Former CU Family Support Network President

“I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to study at Columbia, but have struggled continuously with childcare the entire time at Columbia. I have often had to miss class when my children were sick, or bring them to classes (professor willing) when they were out of school. In general, the public school days off do not coordinate with Columbia days off so I've had to take loan money out to pay for rent and the occasional sitter. Because getting recommendations from faculty is important in the graduate school application process, and the employment seeking process, I feel that my situation as a single mother has compromised my credibility in the eyes of my professors and the scientists I work under at my internship. If Columbia had any kind of support system for emergency days off, I feel my situation would be different. I will be graduating with much debt and strenuous employment seeking conditions.”

—Oh Prema, General Studies '20, Single Mother of Twin Eight-Year Olds

“Childcare in the area around Columbia was extremely difficult to secure. Not only was it hard to get a spot (we had a contract cancelled at Chabad of the Upper West Side and ended up at Little Rays of Sunshine on 143rd and Broadway) but, once we did have a spot, the financial burden was enormous. We were spending \$400 cash each week to have our daughter in school, but we did not see another way to make it work. We tried to piecemeal together Columbia and Barnard undergraduates with our schedules, but school vacations, exam seasons, and sickness made this so difficult. There was a subsidy available through Columbia but because my husband was a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary and I was a Visiting Scholar at Columbia, we were not eligible for the subsidy. In the end, when we had a second child this past summer, we moved back to Toronto—in part because we have free full-time childcare here. My husband continues to commute to New York for his last semester of classes.”

—A.L., Ph.D. Candidate

“I have had to miss class or school functions or my spouse has had to miss work when either our regular childcare was closed or the timing would not work out. Furthermore, I have missed numerous events and or had to choose between not going or going alone because childcare wasn't available. This meant that important community building events and organization functions were effectively closed to me and/or me with my spouse because there was no reasonable childcare solution. Example-I sat on a panel, on Veteran's day, when my wife was off and our childcare was closed, and my wife wanted and could not come see me speak because she

¹ These testimonials were collected by CUFSN through an open submission process in early February 2020, and were turned over to the Childcare Affordability Initiative on March 1, 2020 for consideration.

couldn't take our 3 year old and there was no easy option. Even short duration hourly care, where I could have taken my daughter just while I attended class or a meeting, would have greatly reduced strain on the family.”

—M.D, SIPA, ‘20

“My spouse and I moved to New York City when our daughter was 2 months old. My spouse travelled many weekends for work and I was alone with our daughter. As a first time mom without a local network, I felt very isolated. I tried to join a few playgroups but never found them to be a good fit; for example, one playgroup on the Upper East Side was composed of moms that did not work and another in Harlem was all nannies who were carting little ones from program to program. As a PhD student and a mother, I didn't feel like these playgroups matched my lifestyle. Somehow, I came across the CUFSN student-parent playgroup in an email. The group met on Saturday mornings and I attended. I LOVED the group—I loved that everyone was like me, a parent whose days were filled with teaching and research. Other parents—both moms and dads—would bring their kids of all ages, from just born to tweens. People would bring snacks and toys and dogs. They would come and go. We had a blast. We also understood each other's day-to-day struggles—the precarity of graduate stipends, the anxiety of sending out a manuscript, and the uncertainty of the academic job market. When one person got a job, we all celebrated him and his family. I felt so comfortable and understood in that community, and it had a big impact on my capacity, my parenting style, and my mood. Later, when we were ready to put our daughter into full-time childcare, I asked other members of the group about their experiences, which really helped me. I also loved that the group continued on Saturdays, which made it possible to attend even while all of our kids were in school.”

—Anonymous

“Until this past year, I felt like the only one. I didn't know about CUFSN in my first year but this year some SIPA students really stepped up to help integrate the family community at SIPA and with CUFSN. Everything CUFSN I've attended has been great and the direction is extremely positive. Takeaway: There was nothing in my orientation that was designed to bring in family or even significant others, aside perhaps from a mention of the student group. I doubt there is much focus in other schools and it would be great to build the community starting with acknowledging and including that essential aspect of many students' lives.”

—M.D, SIPA, ‘20