

**Title:** Child Care Affordability and Accessibility for Cornell's Employees and Students

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**Topic summary:** The committee and the Human Resources office focused on the following issues:

- 1) Are all of Cornell's constituents well-served by the new child care center, i.e., is the center serving all employees and students? Are scheduling and cost barring some groups from accessing the service?
- 2) How is the Cornell parent population at large dealing with child care costs and availability?

In the future, the committee plans to explore solutions for underserved groups and for employees and students for which the burden of cost is overwhelming.

**Discussion summary:** Below are some of the concerns raised by the committee:

Financial Affordability:

- Staff, graduate, and undergraduate students face difficulty in affording the CCCC rate, even with the Child Care Grant
- As Tables 3 and 4 indicate, the grant is not sufficient for employees making less than \$24,999/year or students with incomes below \$39,000/year to reduce % of income spent on child care to 15%.
- Accessibility: Hours of operation do not meet the needs of non-exempt staff that work early mornings, evenings, and weekends or students that take classes in the evenings.
- Part time slots are essential for meeting the needs of students
- The center is less accessible to students because spots are not held over break, without the payment of full tuition.
  - Tables 1-2 in Appendix A describe employee and student category distribution for families expressing interest in the CCCC versus enrollment as of August 2008. The data indicate that enrollment generally reflects the interest in the center, although faculty families' enrollment was somewhat higher than their share in the interest forms. This may be a result of staff and student declining spots.
  - Assessment of reasons for declining offers from the center will be conducted when this information is received by the center.
  - As of April 2009, there are 223 children on the wait list.
  - The numbers in the Tables 1-2 do not offer much insight into the employees' socio-economic status. For example, we cannot assess whether the staff currently served are high- or low- earners.
- To better understand access to and affordability of care, we analyzed Cornell Child Care Grant information. Table 3 provides a summary of this analysis for employees. Table 4 provides a summary for students.

- The lowest earners at Cornell are also paying the highest proportion of their income on child care, but are also the ones who benefit the most from the child care grant, as can be seen by the difference in the proportion of child care cost to income before and after the award.
- Higher earners, although paying a lower share of their income on day care are accessing much more expensive care (on average they pay more than double than low earners).
- The numbers from the child care grant indicate that the median cost of care for families earning less than \$75,000 is around \$4,000- \$5,000. For families earning less than \$115,000, the median goes up to between, \$6,000 and \$8,000.
- Student families pay about the same for child care, regardless of their income bracket and the award received (around \$6500 on average).
- The relationship between cost and quality of care is not entirely clear, but some questions relating to this may be partially addressed in the next Child Care Grant Survey conducted by Mildred Warner from City and Regional Planning to be conducted in Spring 2009.
- In addition, the data indicate that only 20 employee families with income lower than 25,000 or 3% of the total recipient population access the grant. The Committee needs to explore whether there are others in this income category who are not accessing the grant, the reasons for it, and what can be done to increase their participation in this program.
- Why is this important? Table 5 provides the current cost at the Bright Horizons center; together with the figures above, the committee is concerned that if the grant information reflects the lower income population's ability to pay for child care, the tuition costs at the new daycare are higher than 15% of staff and student income and are too high for many of the low-earning employees and for the student population at Cornell; more affordable solutions must be explored.

**Recommendations:**

- The committee recommends that the Board of Trustees develop a sustainable plan to increase access to high quality child care for families of Cornell students, staff, and faculty, including child care grants and additional family and child care programs. This should remain a high priority for the University.
- University administration should agree to strive to provide support so that child care expenses are no more than 15% of household income for any Cornell family.
- Much more needs to be done to make high quality child care affordable to much of Cornell's community, specifically staff and students making less than \$40,000/year. We suggest Human Resources consider a new algorithm and cap for the child care grant to distribute more funds to lower income families.
- The University should conduct a needs assessment survey of the Cornell parent community identify needs and gaps in child care service
- The committee should continue to monitor accessibility of child care on Campus in the following ways:

- The committee will continue monitoring enrollment statistics at the Cornell Child Care Center to identify underserved groups.
- The committee will work with WDELQ office to address the shortage in child care solutions for these populations.
- The committee will use a child care grant survey to assess the link between quality and cost of care.

#### APPENDIX A

364 families participated in the lottery consisting of 539 employees/students. 435 children were included in the lottery for the Cornell Child Care Center (CCCC).

Table 1 provides the distribution for the people expressing interest in the Bright Horizons center, who were included in the lottery.

**Table 1: Lottery participants for the Cornell Bright Horizons Center, 2008**

	Percentage in Lottery	# in each category
<b>Faculty</b>	25.4%	137
<b>Staff</b>	49.4%	266
<b>Students</b>	25.2%	136
<b>TOTAL</b>		539

Table 2 provides BH reported enrollment. According to these numbers The CCCC will service 151 families consisting of 218 employees/students. The CCCC will provide care for 170 children based on the current enrollment (includes all part-time and full-time children).

**Table 2: Cornell Child Care Center Enrollment Statistics 2008:**

	Percentage Using The CCCC	# In each category
<b>Faculty</b>	32%	69
<b>Staff</b>	46%	101
<b>Students</b>	22%	48
<b>TOTAL</b>		218

**Table 3: Child care grant summary table -- employees**

Income Category		Total Income	Childcare Costs	Award	Out of Pocket Cost	Proportion Cost/Income before Award	Proportion Cost/Income after Award	Diff in proportion cost after award
<b>0-24,999</b> N=20	Mean	\$21,605.99	\$6,165.25	\$1,722.62	4342.50	28.59	20.14	8.45
	Median	\$22,475.50	\$5,124.00	\$1,344.71	3680.80	23.90	17.04	6.86
<b>25,000-49,999</b> N=146	Mean	\$38,466.56	\$6,673.68	\$1,828.37	4703.70	17.80	12.52	5.28
	Median	\$39,063.00	\$5,535.00	\$1,562.83	4039.25	15.04	10.41	4.55
<b>50,000-74,999</b> N=170	Mean	\$62,880.05	\$7,097.29	\$1,927.17	5087.38	11.42	8.18	3.24
	Median	\$63,612.00	\$6,285.00	\$1,593.00	4562.50	10.04	7.24	2.68
<b>75,000-94,999</b> N=173	Mean	\$84,071.24	\$8,689.52	\$2,011.82	6575.05	10.38	7.83	2.55
	Median	\$83,616.00	\$7,620.00	\$1,820.00	5655.00	8.57	6.59	2.17
<b>95,000-114,999</b> N=98	Mean	\$102,944.71	\$10,040.96	\$1,098.65	8886.52	9.78	8.63	1.14
	Median	\$101,500.00	\$9,695.00	\$893.36	8257.41	9.78	8.24	.88
<b>115,000-highest</b> N=65	Mean	\$130,577.88	\$11,855.11	\$940.34	10879.55	9.04	8.30	.74
	Median	\$130,496.00	\$11,201.00	\$833.90	10374.00	8.47	7.88	.65
<b>Total</b> N=672	Mean	\$74,193.92	\$8,276.92	\$1,705.13	6479.14	12.58	9.47	3.12
	Median	\$75,036.00	\$7,080.00	\$1,369.63	5419.00	10.47	8.16	2.16

**Table 4: Child grant summary table – Students**

Income Category		Total Income	Childcare Costs	Award	Out of Pocket Cost	Proportion Cost/ Income before Award	Proportion Cost/ Income after Award	Diff in proportion cost after award
<b>less than \$19,999</b> N=11	Mean	\$13,616.82	\$10,004.71	\$3,583.24	\$6,421.47	82.7487	54.61	28.14
	Median	\$15,680.00	\$7,786.00	\$2,335.80	\$5,450.20	75.8673	37.93	28.89
<b>\$20,000-\$39,000</b> N=31	Mean	\$29,201.64	\$8,671.28	\$2,528.80	\$6,142.47	31.0704	22.03	9.04
	Median	\$28,400.00	\$8,330.00	\$2,046.15	\$5,831.00	31.2359	21.87	7.41
<b>\$40,000 to highest</b> N=20	Mean	\$49,530.12	\$9,336.81	\$2,407.18	\$6,929.63	18.7104	13.91	4.80
	Median	\$47,763.00	\$8,292.00	\$2,071.25	\$5,642.70	15.8767	11.15	4.31
<b>Total</b> N=62	Mean	\$32,994.17	\$9,122.54	\$2,676.65	\$6,445.89	36.2520	25.19	11.06
	Median	\$30,248.00	\$8,292.00	\$2,086.82	\$5,821.75	25.6447	18.55	6.81

**Table 5: Current costs at the BH center**

	Weekly	Annual (52 weeks)
<b>Infant</b>	\$288	\$14,976
<b>Toddler</b>	\$250	\$13,000
<b>Preschool</b>	\$228	\$11,856