Child care at OSU

In 2006, The Childcare & Family Resources office was created to support parents at OSU using student fee funds collected from 1997-present; originally intended for the creation of a student owned and operated child care center. The office is advised by a board of Students, Staff and Faculty; the Student/Parent Advisory Board.

The Childcare & Family Resources office oversees the operations of OSU’s two full day contracted child care services and one short-term drop-off child care center:

* Beaver Beginnings can care for approx. 150 children (ages 6 weeks-6 years)
* Growing Oaks can care for approx. 55 children (aged 6 weeks-5 years)
* Our Little Village, located in the Valley Library, is a student fee funded service, providing drop-off child care to children, ages 6 months- 10 years of OSU students. Parents must remain in the library while their children are cared for.

OSU also has programs for pre-school and school aged children of students, staff, faculty and community members out of the College of Health & Human Sciences:

* OSU Child Development Lab, a part day pre-school program.
* KidSpirit offers programming such as gymnastics, archery, Chefs in Motion and non-school day care throughout the school year. They also offer all day summer camps during the summer. Most programming is for children ages 5 and up.

The Childcare & Family Resources office also manages child care subsidy programs for both students ($65,000 annually and student fee funded) and employees ($10,000 annually and endowment funded).

In 2010, Larry Roper, Vice Provost of Student Affairs commissioned the Child Care Task Force with a charge to create a sustainable future for child care at OSU, specifically exploring possibilities for consolidating efforts, providing a focused direction and maximizing the use of resources.

Task force members: Bobbie Webber, Roger Rennekamp, Joanne Sorte, Suzanne Gray, Karen Swanger, Brock McLeod, Linda Nelson, Jennifer Maguire, Stephanie Duckett, Kristi King, Mamta Accapadi, and Mirabelle Fernandes-Paul.

The recommendations are laid out in the following report. In summary the task force recommends:

1. Build an additional child care center with a capacity for 100+ children.
2. Create a licensed drop-off child care center for students, staff and faculty.
3. Provide additional subsidy dollars for students and employees to offset the high cost of childcare.
4. Create academic and employment policies and programs that support retention of employees and students with families.

Child Care Task Force Report

# Charge

To support child care at OSU this task force has been formed to create a sustainable future for child care at OSU, specifically exploring possibilities for consolidating efforts, providing a focused direction and maximizing the use of resources.

Our vision is to have a campus culture that supports the personal wellbeing and professional development of all community members and their families.

To do this we must collaborate with partners to create a flexible, sustainable network of child care options and policies that support the OSU community in their pursuit of professional excellence, personal wellness and healthy families.

To accomplish this, this task force recommends focusing efforts in the three distinct areas of Facilities, Finances, and Policies for cultivation and development.

# Facilities

Principles

* Children are part of the OSU community and will be planned for in the development of campus spaces, facilities and policies.
* Child care will be flexible and varied so OSU community members can engage in the full spectrum of University experiences including co-curricular, extracurricular, social, physical and professional development opportunities.
* Child care provided or sponsored by OSU will meet or exceed national standards of excellence including staffing and physical facilities.

## Recommendations

1. OSU will provide varied forms and duration of care that provide summer, evening, short-term and crisis care on campus and/or in the community.
	* Using the successful model for drop off care exemplified by the Our Little Village center in the library, create a space that allows students, staff and faculty to drop-off their children on campus to meet short-term, off-hours or back-up child care needs.
2. Build sustainable physical facilities for care.
	* OSU needs to plan for the replacement of the Growing Oaks facility by the end of the next contract cycle ending in 2016.
	* New space will meet or exceed national child care facility standards and allow for profitable business operations while meeting the continuing demand for infant & toddler care.
3. OSU will plan for children when creating facilities on campus. Attention to child care and children will be given in development of new facilities on campus – changing tables, lactation rooms, play grounds, child care spaces, access issues, etc.

## Justifications/Research

* All OSU parents agree that days when their children are off from school are the most challenging / stressful – 57 percent say it is stressful. *(2007 Parent Needs Assessment)*
	+ This is a significant challenge / problem for faculty parents, single parents, parents with more than one child, and parents using child care that is off-campus.
	+ Finals week is a problem primarily for students – 75 percent of whom say this is stressful.
	+ Holidays, break periods, and summers are primarily an issue for staff parents – 47 percent of whom say these periods are stressful.
* Overall, all parents, student, staff and faculty alike agree that flexibility of child care options is a high priority. *(2007 Parent Needs Assessment)*
* When asked to rate the availability of space for children in OSU’s child care facilities – 50 percent rated “poor.” Correspondingly, availability of child care for infants –was also 50 percent “poor” rating. *(2007 Parent Needs Assessment)*
* When asked if OSU was a family friendly place, the lack of adequate child care and child care policies was identified widely as a concern; even faculty with no young children expressed this as a concern. (*2006 Faculty Satisfaction and Areas of Concern Report)*
* The Growing Oaks facility does not meet current standards of excellence for child care facilities either in available space, or quality of the space.
	+ The size limitation of the Growing Oaks facility does not support a sustainable business model, one in which a minimum of 100 children are enrolled.
	+ Parents using Growing Oaks rated them low in the areas of indoor space and outdoor space:
		- Satisfaction with indoor space at Growing Oaks was 37%, compared to 75% at Beaver Beginnings.
		- Satisfaction with outdoor space was 33% compared to 70% at Beaver Beginnings. *(2010 Parent Satisfaction Survey)*
* The availability of accommodating child care hours that parents can count on for support when they have classes, work or need to study have been found in other research to be an important support factor of campus child care for student parents.  *(Dr Carey-Fletcher, The Voice for Children on Campus Journal, winter 2008)*

# Finances

Principles

* Child care funding will be stable and provide adequate support to meet the needs of a changing demographic over time.
* Child care options will be affordable and accessible for all members of the OSU community.

## Recommendations

1. OSU will allocate additional funds for the maintenance of the Growing Oaks facility so it may be supported in providing high quality child care, otherwise choose to not renew the contract for Fall 2011.
	* Rough estimates from facilities services indicate the Growing Oaks facility needs approximately $46,000 annually for building maintenance.
	* Currently maintenance funds are provided for Beaver Beginnings, but not for Growing Oaks, causing the fund currently maintaining the Growing Oaks Facility to be operating in the red.
2. Child care costs will be at or below 10% of a household income for OSU members, with the balance to be subsidized. (The affordability goal of 10% is drawn from the state of Oregon benchmark for child care costs *Oregon Child Care Economic Impact Report 2010*)
	* Implement a pilot program whereby students and employees with child care costs exceeding 10% of their income can apply to have any amount in excess subsidized.
		+ Preliminary numbers from the limited employee child care subsidy and robust data from the student child care subsidy indicates both would need an average of $350 per month subsidized to meet this need.

## Justifications/Research

* Currently, no funds have been allocated to maintain the Growing Oaks facility. Any emergent building needs are financed by the funds allocated for the maintenance of the Beaver Beginnings site.
	+ Cornell University created a new employee benefit of child care subsidies for employees (Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program or CCCGSP) in 2001. The 2009 evaluative online surveys collected in-depth information on Cornell employees’ ideas regarding the CCCGSP, both those who had received grants and those who had not. *(Cornell University Child Care & Child Care Grant Survey, 2009)*

Key findings:

* Approximately 70% of respondents indicated that receiving a child care grant positively influenced their decision to continue working at Cornell. One in five responded that the program allowed Cornell parents to return to work after the birth of their child. Numerous comments indicate that the CCCGSP helps to recruit and especially retain employees.
* Furthermore, three-quarters of respondents (74.2%) report that receiving the grant has increased their dedication or loyalty to Cornell.
* Portland State University conducted an evaluation of a financial assistance program in the early 1990s (*Lawson, 1991*). The University administered a legislatively funded child care subsidy program, surveyed parent recipients, and found positive impacts including the following:
* Student parents decreased hours in employment and increased credit load (41%) and study time (65%)
* Eighty percent of participating parents reported decreased stress due to receipt of financial assistance
* Parents also reported less dissatisfaction with child care.
* When asked to rate affordability, Beaver Beginnings had a satisfaction rate of 41% Growing Oaks had a satisfaction rate of 26%. *(2010 Parent Satisfaction Survey)*

# Policies

Principles

* OSU supervisors and policies will give parents and caregivers appropriate flexibility and support to care for their children, particularly in times of greater need (e.g. infancy, illness) or to those that have the greatest need.
* Child care will be accountable and adaptable to the needs of the OSU community - no single model of care will meet these needs, and needs will change over time.
* A strong partnership with Corvallis and surrounding communities is essential to meet the needs of the OSU community. OSU will support collaborations by maintaining experienced staff that can lead ongoing discussions about developing needs and issues, as well as referral services.

## Recommendations

1. OSU will create employment policies that support parent and caregiver choices about caring for their own children such as leave, workplace flexibility and assistance.
2. OSU will plan for increasing subsidy allocations with the addition of new jobs, department expansions, and increased enrollment.
3. OSU will commit to providing training and education about family accommodations and flexibility options to supervisors, department heads and professors.
4. Information about child care services will be made available to all OSU members at appropriate times during their affiliation (examples: new hire packets, FMLA leave requests, advising appointments, New Student Orientation)

## Justifications/Research

* Placing a high value on a balance between work/school and family is named as the single most important issue facing OSU parents today– 69% of parents surveyed say this is a major issue facing them personally. *(2007 Parent Needs Assessment)*
* Oregon State University has stated guidelines to supervisors regarding work/school flexibility: *(LifeBalanceOSU statement from President Ray and Provost Randawa)*
	+ - “Recognize the importance of family and personal responsibilities and work with employees and students to respond to these needs”
		- “To the extent possible, provide flexibility while maintaining academic or performance standards and meeting operational needs and goals.”