

Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Work
and Family
2020 - 2021 Briefing

Executive Summary

The mission of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Work and Family (CACWF) is to promote an environment for faculty, staff, non-Senate academics, post docs, and students that enhances their ability to meet their responsibilities to the University and their responsibilities to children, elders, partners and others. CACWF does this by advising the Chancellor and other campus administrators on strategies, practices, programs, policies and benefits that further this goal. Priorities for a given academic year are set at the annual retreat, held during the fall semester.

CACWF focused on the following projects during the 2020-2021 academic year:

- Rapid Response Ad Hoc Working Groups (new with COVID to be more flexible)
- Adoption Benefits
- APM 760
- COVID Response to Dependent Care Issues
 - Advocated to get SCRA open to non-essential staff/faculty
 - Worked on making COVID testing family friendly
 - Established Care Bubbles
 - Created Caring for Families website
 - Increased Dependent care access
 - Participated in conversations about the Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP)
 - Monitored FSA changes to ensure they remained family friendly
- Fire Season Preparedness
- Future of Work Committee
- Paid Family Leave
- UC Berkeley Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP)
- Undergraduate Student Parent Protections

CACWF Recommendations in Response to New and Changing Dependent Care Needs

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, individual members of our committee have been working within their subcommittees, and departments, as well as collaboratively across campus to respond to the increasing challenges that have arisen for our constituents. The global health crisis we've experienced through 2020 and currently, has heavily impacted working families and students in areas such as dependent care, basic needs, health, and well-being, all while managing an increasing and oftentimes overwhelming work and home life. This committee is deeply concerned about the disparate impact that COVID-19 has had on individual university affiliates as categorized by their gender, race, and socio-economic status. This committee has, and continues to advocate for our campus community through our involvement in the creation of policies and administrative responses that support UC Berkeley in its efforts to be a family-friendly and equitable campus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the campus community's resilience, strength, and receptiveness in supporting each other and UC Berkeley. New policies, dependent care benefits, and updated administrative leaves have demonstrated to working families that UC Berkeley is concerned about the difficulties experienced this year. We must acknowledge, however, that there is much more to be done. Families are struggling, mental health is declining, and with so much uncertainty in the future, we must recognize that the transition back to campus will continue to be arduous and complicated for families. Flexibility and transparency are vital to a successful transition and to ensure that all our campus constituents' needs are included in the conversations and policies. In light of this, we have developed recommendations recognizing new and emerging dependent care needs.

The Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Work and Family will address recommendations from the following subcommittees in this briefing:

1. COVID Response
2. Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP)
3. Fire Season Preparedness
4. Student Parent Protections
5. Paid Family Leave Benefit Policy

COVID Response

To say that COVID-19 put work family challenges in the spotlight is a tremendous understatement of the problems and challenges this year. Listening sessions with community members highlighted again and again the stress the pandemic put on working families at the university. Many of our constituents continue to be overwhelmed by challenges related to work, dependent care, children's education, elder care, and individual and household well-being, with a disproportionate burden being placed on womxn. The stress and uncertainty of the transition back to schools and the workplace exacerbate these challenges.

This subcommittee met frequently throughout the year to identify, research, and respond to how work and family challenges related to the pandemic affected university community members. We learned about ongoing challenges through collaboration with campus partners, faculty, staff and student organizations. We often needed to be proactive and move quickly to find solutions. Below we describe COVID related projects the committee completed this year, recommendations for the current pandemic situation, and our role in the *Future of Work* committee in planning for challenges that lie ahead.

Covid response achievements in 2020-2021

[Caring for Families](#). This website, linked from the main Berkeley coronavirus resources and support website, compiles information on dependent care policies, programs, and other resources for different campus community constituents.

[Care Bubbles](#). Carebubbles is a parent-to-parent web-based resource for finding and sharing dependent care during the pandemic. Since we launched this site in summer 2020 we have expanded it to include UCSF and UC Davis, creating a large geographic web of support for UC families looking for support and ways to share care with one another.

[Back-Up Care](#). The Bright Horizons back-up care program was expanded to all Berkeley employees for the 2020-21 fiscal year. Although use of the program has been lower than anticipated it could be increasingly important as schools and daycares open and close over the remainder of at least 2021. We also note that some constituents have experienced barriers when registering and using the program.

[Cal Youth Programs](#). We worked with Sharon Inkelas and the Office of Legal Affairs to clarify how City of Berkeley health orders were applied to Cal Youth Programs. This allowed those programs to be expanded to non-essential staff and faculty, allowing many Berkeley staff and faculty parents to have another supportive option for their children while schools were closed.

[Campus covid testing](#). We worked with University Health Services to ensure that campus constituents who need to bring children with them for testing would not be turned away.

[Monitored changes to Flexible Spending Accounts](#). UCOP extended the deadline by when employees must use FSAs from 2020 (health care and dependent care) to acknowledge impacts of covid. Our committee monitored this situation because UC waited until nearly the deadline to announce their decision to opt into the extension as allowed by law.

Recommendations

- 1. Communicate clear and stable policies for transitioning to post-COVID work patterns.** Although we may discuss the return to campus as a return to “normalcy,” the reality is that a return to the worksite, even in a hybrid model where many employees work part of the time at home, will result in many transitional challenges for working families. We recommend that communications explicitly refer to these challenges and acknowledge that in reality, few families are or will be “back to normal” for quite some time. Clarity and transparency about what is expected, permitted, and encouraged are necessary so that families can plan and supervisors have a norm to follow.
- 2. At least for the next six months, because of the tremendous uncertainty about the future and the transition back to campus, we recommend continued flexibility in workplace location and schedule.** During this year of unprecedented challenges, the University provided paid leaves and dependent care benefits that have greatly assisted employees with dependent care needs. We learned that despite these challenges, many employees can work successfully and productively from home. Unfortunately, not all schools have reopened, many are open only on a hybrid, short day schedule to reduce density, and schools will likely toggle between open and closed with periodic COVID exposure and community transmission rates. In addition, some childcare centers have

permanently closed, making caregiving resources scarce. Employees who are responsible for dependents with disabilities are also struggling to obtain vaccinations for their dependents and family members, which often requires long waits or the ability to take appointments on short notice. It is vital that UC Berkeley provide employees flexibility to cope with these dependent care uncertainties, especially since many employees have long commutes that prevent them from picking up and dropping off dependents on unusual schedules.

3. Continue to offer the Bright Horizons Back-Up Care Program to all Berkeley employees and students during FY 2021-22. Although use of this program was lower than expected this fiscal year because of covid fears and lack of awareness, we expect that having access to back-up care will be critical for employees with dependents given the “predicted unpredictability” of care availability and potential school closures. Every dollar invested in this program can be clearly measured against staff and faculty work days saved for the university, making it a wise choice for the post-pandemic transition year.

Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP)

We understand that the campus leadership is well aware of the fiscal challenges currently facing the Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP), as well as the history of these challenges. While pre-existing financial issues became significantly more pronounced as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the conditions caused by the pandemic also illuminated and exacerbated dependent care issues for working families and made more clear the critical role that ECEP plays for the campus community. Fundamentally, ECEP supports a diverse group of disproportionately underrepresented undergraduate and graduate student parents who would not be able to attend Berkeley without the financial subsidy they receive for their children; and plays a major role in the campus' ability to recruit and retain first-choice faculty candidates and staff. Although serving 250 children at any one time may seem like "a drop in the bucket" in terms of overall dependent care needs, its importance to the campus cannot be overstated.

Recommendations

1. Commit to providing short term support so that ECEP can return to pre-COVID levels of service as soon as possible and avoid the long term consequences associated with service reductions. This would include providing additional central campus financial support to ECEP for FY 2021-2022, lifting the ECEP hiring freeze and ensuring that administrative support is available to help ECEP return to pre-COVID staffing levels.

The current proposals to reduce the hours of operation and temporarily eliminate infant and toddler slots, while *increasing* parent fees, is short sighted and will have a significant negative impact on the program now and into the future. Berkeley staff and faculty with children at ECEP cannot fulfill their work obligations if they do not have care for their children that matches their work hours. Other community early childhood programs are planning for full operational hours and fully functioning programs. Additionally, closing infant and toddler slots will significantly reduce the campus' ability to recruit new faculty and staff who need care for very young children, and also break the existing preschool pipeline of families, making it more difficult to have a sustainable preschool program.

This situation is urgent because ECEP families are currently in the process of choosing childcare providers for the coming year. Some families have said that they do not feel comfortable committing to ECEP given the current uncertainty about ECEP's operating hours. If UC affiliated families do not take spaces at ECEP and they are filled by non-UC

affiliated families, this could result in a reduction in the number of UC Berkeley families served by ECEP that will last multiple years.

2. By the end of FY 2021-2022, change the administrative “home” and funding models for ECEP to better match the campuswide populations served by the program and benefits provided. Berkeley’s current model is clearly problematic and unsustainable, a fact that has become only more apparent during the pandemic. We recommend that a current assessment be conducted to learn the funding and organizational models most successfully employed at colleges and universities around the country. An assessment of other institutions will allow the campus to implement best practices that are aligned with our campus values: providing equity of experience for students; and recruiting and retaining the most talented faculty and staff.

3. Develop a long term vision to make ECEP the model laboratory school on the west coast. Given its storied history as one of the first lab schools in the country, Berkeley can re-envision its current program to become a preeminent lab school. In addition to being more financially sustainable by attracting significant philanthropy, this approach would create synergy with the study of childhood by current and new world renowned faculty; train future experts in early childhood through an undergraduate major and minor in early childhood education, and professional masters programs; and benefit from the application of research findings to address major societal challenges and opportunities. Crises often create opportunities that could not previously be imagined. We feel that this is one of those moments. The committee stands ready to support the campus in creating a sustainable future for early childhood education at Berkeley.

Fire Season Preparedness

2020 saw the largest wildfire season recorded in California's modern history, with the 2018 and 2017 seasons being the previous record holders. As the reality of longer and more destructive fire seasons becomes the new normal, administrators must take necessary steps to ensure that UC Berkeley is annually prepared to respond to wildfires, poor air quality, and planned public safety power shutdowns. The campus response and protocols must also sufficiently address the needs of students, staff, and faculty who may be balancing risks to their own health, or are caregivers who may be contending with sudden school closures and/or disruptions to regular care for their dependents.

Although campus has released brief communications to its constituents which addressed limiting exposure to poor [air quality](#), historically, it has been left to the discretion of an individual and their supervisor or manager to determine flexible work arrangements during wildfire red flag days. This forces individuals to expend their own negotiating capital and may lead to unequal treatments between units, programs, and divisions.

We therefore recommend that campus develop a comprehensive "Red Flag" protocol that incorporates principles of flexibility and inclusion that also considers the needs of caregivers, and that this protocol is adequately communicated to the campus community on an annual basis.

Recommendations

1. Develop a standard flexible work policy that leverages remote work and learning technology to reduce the number of people coming to campus on Red Flag days. Make it as inclusive as possible and identify tiers of employees, instructors, etc. who may be eligible for remote transitions in advance.

This accomplishes two things:

- Allows individuals who have health or caregiving needs to better balance their personal obligations while still fulfilling their work responsibilities.
- Reduces the number of people on campus, which in turn lessens the risks of overcrowding and traffic congestion during a potential campus evacuation.

2. Expand access to administrative leave options in recognition that wildfires and poor air quality are now a commonplace disruptive phenomenon that may limit

people's ability to perform their job functions, even if allowed to work remotely.

Options may include creating a new type of administrative leave akin to “snow days” in northern climates or allowing a more expansive definition of catastrophic leave. This accounts for people who are unable to work remotely due to evacuation orders, a power outage or other disruption at their residence, or who may have to keep dependents at home due to disruptions at their school or regular care facility. It is also more accommodating for employees who may be unable to work due to underlying health conditions that are exacerbated by poor air quality.

3. Advocate for campus buildings to be adequately equipped with air quality sensors so that employees and community members can have accurate information to inform their decisions.

Student Parent Protections

Despite the progress made in making vaccines more widely available, it is not guaranteed that public health conditions will improve enough such that local school districts and childcare centers will return to full capacity in-person childcare and education this Fall. There may be additional challenges if schools close due to air quality concerns from wildfires. It is highly likely that regular, uninterrupted dependent care may continue to be a challenge for our student parents and student caregivers. Student parents are a particularly vulnerable group, disproportionately including low income, first generation, and students of color. Other student caregivers face additional hardships, especially those attending to the needs of high-risk seniors or other family members who have lost employment during the pandemic.

The needs of student parents and caregivers should be taken into consideration when making plans for a return to in-person instruction in the Fall.

Recommendations

1. Extend flexible academic and attendance policies and practices at the school and college level. Student parents have benefited from accommodations recently made by schools and colleges during the COVID-19 crisis. We recommend that schools, colleges, and the Graduate Council consider the extension of policies including, but not limited to (1) Extended add/drop deadlines, (2) Extended deadlines for P/NP and S/U grading options, and (3) Reduced course loads for student parents.

We also recommend that faculty and instructors also incorporate accommodations for student parents that will allow them to more fully participate in classes. This could include options such as:

- Opportunities for asynchronous participation via message boards, Piazza, etc.
- Flexible deadlines for assignments
- Flexible absence policies for caregiving
- Recording lectures to allow for making up missed class time

2. Prior to the start of Fall instruction, send a CalMessage to instructors and advisors in support of student parents and caregivers. Such [a message](#) should convey support for our students while also serving as a reflection on our values of inclusivity, flexibility, and instructional resilience in our recovery.

Paid Family Leave

Members of this committee were part of a working group sponsored by the UC Office of the President, which advocated for and recommended the introduction of a new paid family leave policy. We are pleased to note that a new paid family leave benefit will be available to faculty and staff beginning July 1st, 2021. However, we must also recognize that eligibility for this leave is directly tied to FMLA eligibility and qualifications, and therefore excludes many of our part-time and new employees. These exclusions reinforce inequalities which will directly impact womxn and lower wage part-time employees and will not make UC competitive with private employers.

Recommendations

- 1. Advocate with UCOP to update and expand eligibility requirements for Paid Family Leave to include all UC employees without time in service or full-time hours requirements.**

Closing

Our committee recognizes the need to emphasize that COVID-19 has impacted and challenged all aspects of work and family life for faculty, staff, and students. However it has also confronted us with areas that needed improvement pre-pandemic, resulting in added pressure and stress. As we continue to advocate for a more family-friendly environment at UC Berkeley and across the UC system, we must also look to the future to identify gaps in our system that fail to recognize the needs, opportunities, and experiences of our campus community.

To that end, we recommend that a proposal be made to UC President Drake to create a UC Systemwide Advisory Committee on Work and Family (SACWF), with membership from the chairs of campus CACWFs. This will provide a clear mechanism to elevate and raise dependent care and other work and family concerns across the UC system, and encourage other campuses to create their own CACWF if they do not already have one. Berkeley's CACWF committee would be available to consult with other campuses regarding mission and charge, membership, and goals.

The Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Work and Family recognizes the willingness of the campus leadership to address work and family challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe that attention to these issues has had a positive impact on members of the campus community who have to balance work and family obligations every day. We look forward to continuing our committee's important work in the 2021-2022 academic year.