How Child Care Benefits a Campus Community

Books, music, art, language, science, math, learning, and friendships: These are just some of the many things that are found in classrooms on college and university campuses all over North America and Europe. The twist is, these classrooms aren’t filled with college or university students, rather they are bustling with infants through 6-year-olds.

Market forces and recent trends within the higher education sector have propelled child care to the short list of concerns in presidents’ and provosts’ offices. Discussions and strategies around child care have become a bellwether for a menu of work/life issues centered around faculty and staff recruitment and retention.

There are hundreds of college- and university-sponsored child care centers throughout the United States. They are as diverse as the institutions they serve and include not-for-profit centers, parent cooperatives, lab schools, and centers managed by third-party child care providers. The majority (92%) operate as traditional child care centers or as combined lab schools/child care centers and are a well established and respected part of the campus community they serve.

The number of institutions of higher education that recognize the need to address child care issues is growing dramatically.

These institutions are motivated by some shared concerns:

- The shortage of female tenured faculty and senior administrators
- The loss of talented women — and men — who choose to pursue careers in private industry because of the perceived opportunities for faster career advancement, higher salaries, and better quality of work/life
- The competition to attract top undergraduate and graduate students
- A core commitment to lifelong learning and the cultivation of new generations of students with a passion for learning

Bright Horizons Family Solutions
The Tenure Clock Keeps Ticking

One of the leading competitive issues in higher education is the recruitment and retention of women faculty. The challenge is that the tenure clock coincides with the biological clock, forcing many female academics to make a very difficult choice: either career or children.

On average, doctoral candidates earn their degrees at age 33 and, ideally, enter a tenure-track position. Qualifying for a tenure position requires five to seven years of intense teaching, research, and service to the university. In academia, hours count.

Work hours are considered tangible proof of the candidate’s dedication to the university and to their academic calling. While most faculty average 54-hour workweeks, tenure track faculty often average 60–70 hours per week. Tenure is a “make or break” proposition. If not granted, the faculty member often must leave the institution.

The intensity of pursuing a tenure-track career results in a significant disparity between the numbers of men and women who achieve tenure. Mary Ann Mason and Marc Goulden of the University of California at Berkeley have authored several studies about the effect of families on the careers of academic men and women. One longitudinal study, based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, suggests that women who have a child during their tenure-track years are 25% less likely to achieve tenure than a man who has a child during those same years.

CASE STUDY

Educating Young Minds at Georgia Tech

More than 20 years ago, faculty at the Georgia Institute of Technology expressed interest in child care. As the number of female faculty members and the need to remain competitive in attracting top faculty and students grew, so too did the request for child care.

In 2003, to meet this demand, Georgia Tech opened the R. Kirk Landon Child Care Center, a full-time center on campus. It has the capacity to serve 120 children, ages 6 weeks through 5 years in a 10,600-square-foot building, supporting the child care needs for its nearly 6,000 employees, as well as the surrounding community.

A second child care center is currently planned in a new graduate housing complex on campus. The purpose of this center will be to serve graduate student families along with other members of the campus community.

“These centers are part of Georgia Tech’s commitment to strengthen and extend the scope and impact of our family-friendly policies and practices for the campus as a whole,” said Chuck Donbaugh, associate vice president for human resources at Georgia Tech. “They have resolved many child care concerns of parents who have a desire to be in close proximity to their children during the workday. Moreover, our child care strategy is a part of the Institute’s initiative to further improve the quality of work/life on campus for faculty and staff. The strategy also compliments Georgia Tech’s participation in a National Science Foundation ADVANCE Program grant to increase the participation of women in science and engineering, as child care is an important factor for recruitment and retention.”

To further enhance campus life for faculty, staff, and students, Georgia Tech has created a committee to work on ways to address the work/life issues within its community. In addition to child care, the committee is considering flexible work schedules, elder care, and pet care.
Over the past five years, Duke University and Health System in Durham, North Carolina, has doubled the capacity of the on-campus child care center and enhanced child care referral services to employees, in part as a response to increased need among faculty and staff for additional child care options.

“Our survey data indicate that work/life issues are very important to the majority of our people,” says Monica Pallett, manager of staff and family programs at Duke. “I have no doubt that Duke’s family-friendly benefits are instrumental in our ability to recruit and retain the best people in this highly competitive staffing environment.”

The institution has come a long way since 2002, the year in which Nan Koehane, then the president of Duke, challenged the university to understand the issues facing women at Duke and make recommendations that would enhance the quality of life for staff.

Many women who do pursue a career in academia consciously abandon the tenure track. They find themselves in a series of second-tier positions as lecturers and adjunct faculty with little job security and few benefits. Representative research conducted by Mason and Goulden among faculty at Berkeley demonstrated that women were 22% of the ladder-ranked (tenured and tenure-track) faculty at the university, but 66% of the non-ladder-ranked lecturers, instructors, etc.

Attracting Top Students

A college or university’s ability to attract top undergraduate and graduate students is dependent on recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty, including women, who can serve as role models and mentors.

When choosing a college or university, students also consider quality of campus life. They are attracted to campuses that offer a thriving student life program, attractive living and dining accommodations, new recreational facilities, and other amenities. The quality of these programs and facilities is sustained by talented and committed staff and service employees. Increasingly, colleges and universities consider the diverse needs of all of their employees as they develop portfolios of child care and work/life strategies.

CASE STUDY

Duke University: Balancing Work/Life Challenges

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Since that time, research\(^1\) conducted by Duke shows that managing household responsibilities and child care rank high as a source of stress on faculty members of both genders and that on-campus child care, emergency child care, and sick child care are ranked as very important to quality of life. Other surveys\(^2\) have shown that innovative benefits are viewed as highly favorable by staff.

Duke has also invested in the Duke Child Care Partnership, an innovative program that provides grant dollars to 30 community child care centers that benefit Duke families as well as the Durham community. Other work/life services include child and elder care consultation, nanny/au pair listings, and an online babysitting and elder care guide.

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1. 2005 Duke Faculty Survey
2. 2006 and 2007 Work Culture Surveys
New Models of Work/Life on Campus

A growing body of research — notably at Berkeley, Duke, Harvard, and Penn State — indicates that some colleges and universities are developing new models for the successful integration of work and family responsibilities. There is a movement toward developing specific policies that address a variety of work/life challenges, including the needs of new parents, child care, and elder care.

These new ideas include:

- Enabling faculty to choose “active service” status with “modified duties.” This is typically defined as giving faculty full or partial relief from teaching for one semester to care for a new child or family member.

- Giving faculty an option to choose “active service” status with “tenure clock relief” after the birth or adoption of a child, to extend the time granted to faculty members to develop their portfolio of work for review by the tenure committee.

- Granting staff enhanced access to flexible work arrangements, particularly during school holidays and vacations, which are often quiet periods on campus.

- Changing the culture on campus to enable faculty and staff to use institutional policies without fear of reprisal.

- Adding a variety of child care supports on campus, including: child care options both on and off campus, flexible child care enrollment schedules, subsidies or scholarships to ease the cost of care for lower-paid staff and students, and back-up and school-age child care solutions.

Bright Horizons is working with many institutions of higher education to develop child care and work/life strategies by:

- Bringing a fresh perspective that draws on best practices developed from managing more than 30 campus-based child care programs

- Facilitating discussions and consensus among diverse interest groups on campus as they craft strategies to respond to these critical issues

- Collaborating with institutions to create an actionable plan that builds on the core strengths, resources, and values of the college or university

A Partial List of Bright Horizons Higher Education Clients

- Cambridge University (UK)
- College of Saint Mary
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Iowa State University
- Metropolitan Community College of Kansas City
- The Robert Gordon University (UK)
- Roosevelt University
- University of California, San Francisco

Many thanks to all the Bright Horizons children and families who allowed us to photograph them for this brochure.