

Care for the Whole Family: Meeting the Needs of Xavier's Student Parents

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Budget Requested: \$1,204

Abstract

Student parents make up more than a fourth of the undergraduate population, where women make up 70 percent of single parents in higher education (NCES, 2000). Student mothers more satisfied with child care arrangements and social support on-campus report higher satisfaction with school and other educational experiences (Gonchar, 1995). The Xavier University Women's Center and a student club on-campus, Proponents for Parents, have already implemented programs to assist parents with their daily needs. Not only do parents need social support to succeed as a student and parent, but the necessary material resources. Currently, Xavier University does not offer changing stations in the Gallagher Student Center. The provision of this resource will not only provide material and emotional support to parents on-campus, but evince that Xavier University and the Women of Excellence Giving Circle promotes the advancement of women in education and considers the needs of the whole person.

Budget Request

Koala Changing Stations (KB101-00 KB101-00 Cream)		
	\$180 x 4	\$720
Liners for Baby Changing Stations (KB150-99)		
	\$38 x 8	\$304
	TOTAL	\$1,204

Narrative

At the turn of the century, women made up more than 50 percent of U.S. undergraduates but that same year, they also made up 70 percent of single parents (NCES, 2000). According to the U.S. Department of Education, 27 percent of undergraduates are student parents, and 13 percent of student parents are single parents (NCES, 2000). As the numbers of non-traditional students continue to grow, specifically student parents, higher education institutions should look at the needs of the student parent population. For a student parent to thrive in an academic environment, that parent needs child care resources and the social support of the institution.

Not only do institutions like universities need available child care resources for student parents, but an increased awareness of student parent needs. A lower perception of support services on-campus increases the likelihood that a student will experience conflict between school and family life (Hammer, Grigsby & Woods, 1998). Student mothers more satisfied with child care arrangements and social support on-campus, in turn, report higher satisfaction with the school and their educational experiences (Gonchar, 1995). As a university that respects the whole person, Xavier University should acknowledge that student mothers with available support on-campus report lower levels of psychological distress (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006). In focus group sessions held at the Xavier University Women's Center in the Fall of 2008, faculty and employees reported wanting more than just an available child care facility. For one participant with child care needs, it is important that the University "look at the needs of the employees and students and support those needs completely." Overall, participants expressed the need for social support on-campus.

Currently, parents in the U.S. spend, on average, more than 600 dollars a month on day care. For powder formula, they spend about 1200 dollars a year and for disposable diapers, more than 2500 dollars. The average college student spends about 500 dollars on textbooks per semester. Not only must parent students find a suitable child care facility and work to financially support their families, but they must combat the expenses and workload of a higher education. With the challenges of being a student and a parent, Xavier can help relieve some of the stress associated with a student parent's multiple responsibilities.

The Xavier University Women's Center and Proponents for Parents have implemented programs to assist parenting students with their every day needs. Proponents for Parents is a student-run club on-campus that strives to accommodate, advocate and provide resources for parenting students, faculty and staff in order to promote a family-friendly atmosphere and increase student retention rates. They provide links to resources on and off-campus, and are in the process of facilitating workshops that will assist parents in managing their time and stress and provide a network of social support on-campus. The Women's Center and P4P will also sponsor the Grand Unveiling of the Women's Center as a nursing and lactation friendly place for mothers to nurse or pump at their convenience. Examples such as these on-campus, whether big or small, help decrease the student parent's stress level, therefore contributing to the development of the child and the advancement of the student's education and depicting the amount of appreciated and available support from the University as an institution and a community

While the Women's Center, P4P and other organizations on-campus attempt to assist parenting students with their academic and child care needs, there remain gaps in the service provisions on-campus. Student parents need more than financial and social resources, but also the convenience of material resources such as changing stations on-campus. Just as the Women's Center will provide a private nursing facility on-campus, the main center for students on-campus, the Gallagher Student Center, should provide changing stations in the public restrooms.

Instead of having to be an inconvenience to other students or having to find a private bathroom on-campus, students can use the availability and ease of changing stations in Gallagher. The availability of this simple resource will demonstrate Xavier's support of their child care needs. Xavier will fall in

line with its university mission by providing respect for the whole person. As a representative of higher education, Xavier should open its doors to all students and allow them the opportunity to receive an equal education amidst a community of diverse and welcoming individuals. The availability of changing stations will add to Xavier's culture as an opening and supportive community and raise awareness for the needs of parents on-campus. It will also be an example of one of Xavier's family-friendly resources accessible to not just students, but faculty, employees and visiting families.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2000, more than half of student parents were women. Single parents, especially women, are at a higher risk for being unable to attain a four-year degree. In order to promote and advance the achievements and legacy of women in higher education, we must provide them with the same educational opportunity. Women at Xavier, whether traditional or non-traditional students, deserve access to the necessary resources to succeed. Even the provision of changing stations in the student center will demonstrate the support of Xavier University and the Women of Excellence Giving Circle for student parents in higher education, specifically women. Alumni in future years will come back to this institution in honor of its mission and the achievement of the Women of Excellence Giving Circle because they provided the necessary resources for all women in the field of higher education.

Just because one raises a family does not mean one should not have the opportunity to receive a higher education. By providing resources such as changing stations in Gallagher, Xavier University and the Women of Excellence Giving Circle demonstrate to those in higher education and students nationwide that as a part of the Jesuit identity, the Xavier community respects the whole person including one's child care needs.

References

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Hammer, L.B., Grigsby, T.D., & Woods, S. (1998). The conflicting demands of work, family and school among students at an urban university. *The Journal of Psychology, 132*, 220-227.

Quimby, J.L. & O'Brien, K. (2006). Predictors of well-being among nontraditional female students with children. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 84*, 451-460.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999-2000.