March 7, 2024

Andrea Kasko, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Emergency Childcare Access for UCLA Faculty

Dear Chair Kasko,

At its March 5, 2024, meeting, The Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC) reviewed the attached letter from Assistant Professor Liz Koslov, dated February 13, 2024, concerning childcare availability and emergency childcare. FWC also reviewed the UCLA Child Care Strategy Committee report prepared in January 2022, focusing on the childcare needs of UCLA faculty, staff, and students with dependents five years and younger. FWC members support the recommendations. Members voted unanimously in favor of a motion to have the Academic Senate Executive Board review the concerns outlined by Professor Koslov.

On behalf of FWC, we request a response to the matters outlined and guidance on how best to support the academic mission (including the needs of faculty and the UCLA community children).

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at butlersj@ucla.edu or via the Committee analyst, Renee Rouzan-Kay, at rouzankay@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Samantha Butler, Chair
Faculty Welfare Committee

Encl.

cc: Kathleen Bawn, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
Jessica Cattelino, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Renee Rouzan-Kay, Senior Policy Analyst, Faculty Welfare Committee
Members of the Faculty Welfare Committee
February 13, 2024

Dr. Samantha Butler, Chair
UCLA Faculty Welfare Committee
610 Charles E Young Drive East
Los Angeles, CA 90095

Dear Chair Butler and Members of the Faculty Welfare Committee,

I am writing to propose that you review and address the issue of childcare availability and emergency childcare access for UCLA faculty. I am an assistant professor with appointments in the Department of Urban Planning (50%), the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability (50%), and the Department of Sociology (0%). I joined UCLA in July 2018 and had my first child in June 2020. Based on my experience, below I offer several recommendations for the committee to consider.

Like many other UCLA faculty, staff, and students, my research productivity, health, and finances have been significantly and adversely affected by gaps in support for caregivers on campus. A January 2022 report from the UCLA Child Care Strategy Committee found that infant care at UCLA early childhood education centers is 232% more expensive than in-state college tuition, and even more expensive in surrounding areas (p.4). 80% of surveyed UCLA caregivers spend more than the federal standard (7-10% of income) on childcare (p.7). The report documents the extreme financial and mental health challenges experienced by caregivers at UCLA, and the resulting toll on our work.

I am not aware of any actions that are being taken in response to the UCLA Child Care Strategy Committee’s findings. I am certain that members of that committee would have a number of recommendations to share with the Faculty Welfare Committee. In addition to the recommendations listed on p.16-25 of the Child Care Strategy Committee report, I suggest the FWC consider:

- **Emergency backup care for all UCLA employees.** This is a benefit for faculty at other University of California campuses including Berkeley, UC Irvine, and UC Santa Cruz. I believe it may also be a benefit at the medical school, in partnership with Bright Horizons.

- **Childcare travel grants.** To be most accessible and equitable, create an automatic allocation of $1000 per year and allow faculty members to opt out. At the very least, create a standing childcare travel grant system that is easy to navigate. At present, childcare is not an allowable expense for UCLA research funds – even, ironically, the pandemic recovery grant for caregiving faculty – making it difficult to travel for fieldwork, talks, and conferences.
- **Subsidizing childcare costs.** Set on-campus childcare costs at a fixed percent of a faculty member’s salary (for instance, no more than 7% of income in line with federal recommendations). Recognizing that many UCLA faculty are also rent-burdened, paying more than 30% of income on rent, and/or live far from campus in order to access housing, create a fund to subsidize or offer vouchers for off-campus childcare options.

- **Expanding childcare options, including part-time care.** Full-time childcare options when my son was born, including at UCLA centers, amounted to more than my family’s rent. There was a nonrefundable fee to join the waitlist for UCLA childcare, and only one program offered a part-time option. After months on the waitlist, my son received a Tuesday/Thursday spot at IDP when he was 18 months old. However, part-time care is only available on campus until a child turns three, one year before they are eligible for transitional kindergarten in the public school system. After he aged out, I spent significant time searching for part-time options at off-campus centers – many of which have closed in the aftermath of the pandemic. To make childcare more accessible for faculty, offer a greater variety of options, including in terms of number of days, times, location (on/off campus), and price points.

- **Explicit and consistent parental leave policies.** At present, parental leave policies are opaque and inconsistent across departments, as well as among different faculty members in the same department. Departments also do not always follow existing policies. I had my baby in the summer, and returned to a full service and advising load in the fall. I was not offered any parental leave during the academic year, despite being on an academic-year contract. While I did receive ASMD in the form of teaching releases that first year, I was told by one senior faculty member that this was not leave but time to use to write my book.

- **Advocating for the UCLA Child Care Strategy Committee’s existing recommendations.** See pages 16-25 of the committee’s final report (January 2022).

The insufficient support for caregiving faculty at UCLA has widespread negative impacts. This is exacerbated by the fact that many faculty are recruited from geographically distant places and do not have family nearby or established local support networks. When I raised the question of how my colleagues were accessing and affording childcare in a meeting of all junior faculty in the Luskin School, I do not recall a single faculty member saying that they were able to do so on their paycheck alone. Some said that they relied on the income of a higher-paid partner; some received money from parents or grandparents to help pay for care; one said she commuted two hours each day to leave her toddler with her mother outside Los Angeles, because she could not afford other care; others said that it was necessary to take out loans.

There are a number of family-related factors that have made the last four years profoundly difficult for me personally, and perhaps prohibitive in terms of my ability to stay at UCLA despite my strong desire to do so. However, these are not solely personal or pandemic-related difficulties. They are connected to widespread problems of childcare availability, accessibility, parental support, and support for caregiving faculty on campus. Thank you for taking up this issue and for considering my recommendations and those of the Child Care Strategy Committee.

Sincerely,

Liz Koslov
Assistant Professor of Urban Planning, Environment and Sustainability, and Sociology, UCLA
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917-576-5274