



**The Graduate Professional Council  
University Of Missouri**

**OFFICIAL REPORT:**  
*FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE OPEN FORUM ON CHILDCARE FOR  
GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS*

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## -BACKGROUND-

On 22 February 2014, a structural failure occurred at the University Village apartment complex causing a concrete walkway to collapse. The collapse killed one person, a firefighter responding to the structural failure, Lieutenant Bruce Britt of Columbia Fire Station No. 1. Shortly thereafter, the students living in that building were evacuated and the entire complex was inspected for structural safety.

The University Village apartment complex houses the Student Parent Center (SPC), a daycare facility at which at least 16 graduate or professional students had their children enrolled. The building where the Student Parent Center was located was declared safe, but overall concerns for the building's age promoted many families to withdraw their children.

On 12 March 2014, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin announced that both the University Village apartment complex and the Student Parent Center housed within it will be shut down and demolished shortly after 30 June 2014.

The Graduate Professional Council (GPC), hearing concern from many students about where they can get affordable childcare, hosted an open forum on 2 April 2014 to take graduate-professional student feedback on the issue.

This report outlines the findings and conclusions gained from the forum.

## -FINDINGS-

This section will be devoted to summarizing the comments made by students in attendance at the forum.

### Dustin: Master's Student, Political Science

Dustin had a child at the Student Parent Center. He was admitted to the University in Spring 2012 under probationary status when he also discovered he was expecting a daughter. He didn't know where to find good daycare but eventually found the SPC which met his needs. He liked the flexibility the SPC offered allowing him to send his daughter only 3 days per week for \$2000 per semester. He feels that the decision to close the SPC is unfair as it puts graduate students in a bind. Daycare is expensive and he is selling his car to help pay for it. His cost has now gone up to \$1000 per month. He is frustrated that the University spends so little funds on childcare and feels GPC needs to find a solution.

### Summer: Freshman

Summer had a child in high school. She still wanted to go to college but needed childcare. She found that a lot of daycares were already full for the fall semester and had long waiting lists. She is disappointed with the decision to close the SPC and has offered some suggestions: A building at the Tara Apartment Complex appears to be suitable for childcare if it could be made available; she also suggests the University look into other spaces on campus to find a suitable place. She feels that it needs to be very close and have flexible scheduling/ payment options. She does not want to pay for non-needed days and is now forced to do so which is very inconvenient for her. She is also upset with Heath Immell, Associate Director of Student Auxiliary Services for telling local media that he had provided students with resources when, in fact, he had only provided a list of local daycares which was not helpful.

### Naomi

Naomi Clark has been trying for the past five years to have discussions with University Administration about the SPC and its future, to no avail. She noted that Mizzou will be losing a 40 year standing program which has been instrumental in achieving enrollment due to its flexibility. She has the following suggestions: (1) The Chancellor should invite the parents at the SPC to a private meeting with him to discuss the issues; (2) University Administration should take seriously the proposal from the Family Friendly Campus Committee to create an Office of Family Life (she noted the Chancellor has been supportive of this idea); and (3)

Reopen the daycare taken away from the control of Student and Auxiliary Services because the fees SAS was charging are far too high and she questions how money has been managed under SAS (she noted a total of 1383 students on campus have dependents). She also notes that enrollment at the SPC has dropped from 44 to 16 students and that SAS has been unresponsive to the needs of student parents. She noted that she feels SAS is not invested in the SPC's success.

#### Mia and husband: PhD students

Mia noted that she chose Mizzou specifically because of the availability of childcare. They are currently expecting their second child and very concerned about what will happen to them. For now, her grandparents are helping to pay for childcare. She feels there is a disparity between services available to those who do versus those who don't have children. She feels the University's values are not appropriate in this regard as student parents are not valued and not considered a part of the campus's diversity. She also notes the importance of research to the University and that graduate students drive much of research so the University needs to show graduate students they are valued.

#### Alison

Alison is not a parent, but has a lot of friends who are parents. If the University values the work, research, and teaching done by student parents they need to take care of them. She feels GPC should advocate for them.

#### Sarah

Not a student parent but she has colleagues who need the SPC. She notes that these colleagues had very valuable research. She notes that having children is a choice but that it is a significant choice. She also notes that having daycare close by is necessary.

#### Dorothy

Dorothy is a student parent, international student, and fullbright scholar. She was allowed to choose between four schools that the program matches you with according to your needs. One of Dorothy's needs was childcare. Her department, advisor, the Student Parent Association, and the SPC helped greatly in her transition. Since the announcement of University Village and SPC closing, she has become very depressed. She noted that most PhD students have families.

Kim: PhD Student, Psychology

Kim has an infant son who was at SPC until the collapse. She had a friend who was able to provide childcare. She feels the SPC should not be in that building at all anymore due to the collapse. She noted that the SPC was productive, communicative, and allowed her to be very successful. She also noted that waitlists in community daycares are very long and those daycares without waitlists are not good. She noted that students worked at SPC and got training on site for childcare. She said that a petition had been started online to get more daycare with 1119 signatures at the time. She also noted that this is a service that students don't know they need.

[name not given]: PhD, Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology

He and his wife are both PhD students in ESCP and they are first time parents. SPC was a great help and allowed him to focus on his dissertation. His son learned a lot at SPC including learning how to walk. The structural failure has greatly worried them as it is hard to find childcare quickly. He notes that taking care of a child is hard when going to graduate school and that he has had to extend his visa to stay longer. He also notes that a lot of community daycares have long waiting lists but he was able to find a good local woman to provide care. He asks that the University keep the SPC because it will be helpful and that they should find another site on campus to house it.

Danielle: Senior starting graduate school in the fall

Danielle is grateful that attention is being brought to this issue and feels it is very necessary. She is a parent of a 4 year-old daughter. She notes that Early Childhood Education is a strong necessity and that, while having a child is a choice, it is a good choice. She would like to know why the child development lab is not being expanded and why cubhub through ParentLink is not being expanded. Know that children are safe and taken care of is a great relief to a parent. The University should be on the forefront of childcare for student parents and student parents should be considered equal to all other students. She notes the SPC should stay and the price should be made more affordable. She also notes that students are taking out more loans to help pay for childcare.

Greg

Greg values the daycare and wants it to continue. He notes that the SPC provided him with unbelievable support and that he would not have been able to come to Mizzou without it. Also, he notes it is very hard to find new housing.

### Natalie: PhD Student, Theatre

Natalie is currently pregnant and four weeks away from her due date. She was hoping to use the SPC as she lives in University Village and wanted the convenience of being so close to the center. She notes that daycare needs an on-campus or very close location. She wonders how much of the student fees go to childcare. She notes that having the SPC in University Village is an embarrassment to the University and that there is a disparity in services for family students versus non-family students.

### Johnathan

Johnathan has a 9-month-old son who was at the SPC. The SPC was wonderful for him. He notes that Mizzou is not ahead of the curve when it comes to childcare. He also notes that many other colleges and universities provide childcare. He also notes that the SPC childcare fees go to cover textbook costs of SPC employees and questions the financial viability of SPC.

### Chris

Chris feels that this issue is broader than daycare. He feels it is a women's rights issue, particularly in regard to women's access to higher education. He notes that women are able to obtain higher degrees due to childcare and that, if the University eliminates childcare, they are creating a glass ceiling for women. He also notes that current SPC employees are being relocated to other positions on campus that they are not passionate about and that this is unfair to them. Chris feels that there needs to be a financial incentive to use the SPC so her offer the following as incentive: the number of degrees conferred because of the SPC; the number of international students enrolled because of the SPC; the amount of intellectual capital produced by the University because of the SPC. He feels it is inappropriate to use the current number of students enrolled to judge success, especially provided it is so close to the shutdown. He also notes that the University only providing links to other childcare facilities is unacceptable. Chris presented GPC with a petition requesting that SPC continue to exist and be moved to a safe, accessible, and on-campus location highlighting certain comments within it.

### Danielle on behalf of a friend no longer at the University

Friend was a junior at Mizzou and got pregnant. She looked to the community for childcare but the waiting lists were too long, especially for infants. She had to return home because of the lack of available care and affordable care. Danielle notes that not all students have the resources to travel to the SPC. She also

notes that her friend would seek the opportunity to return and graduate from Mizzou is SPC was related and improved.

Caroline: PhD Student, Anthropology

Caroline started a family while in graduate school largely based on Mizzou being a family friendly campus. She appreciated the flexibility of scheduling with the SPC and the opportunity to come and nurse her daughter; however, her husband is University staff. They had to remove their daughter because they were being charged the full-time fee and childcare eventually took up 90% of their income. She feels the SPC prices were always more expensive than other centers in the community.

Autumn: PhD Student, History

Autumn is not a mother but she feels the SPC has provided a much needed service for students. She feels the University needs to acknowledge the needs of budding academic including family needs. The SPC provided flexibility that only a university program could and the University's continuing support of the SPC would be an affirmation of graduate needs and family support structure. She also notes that it provides a means for students in childcare to get experience.

Heather: PhD Student

Heather is a student parent. She found out that she was pregnant after thinking that she could not have children. Trying to find care for infants is very hard. She also notes that bad weather would close most community daycare centers but that the SPC followed university closing schedules. Using the SPC, she was able to make classes work and it was especially convenient for nursing mothers to use. She notes that many R-I schools have childcare facilities like University of Washington which offers students four childcare options. She also notes that we would be the only SEC school without childcare if the SPC closes permanently.

Tiffany

Tiffany firstly feels that it is discouraging to have meetings with no outcome. She is hopeful something will come of the forum. She has a daughter who attended the SPC for a year and a half. She also lived at University Village and did not have a car. There are not a lot of options close to campus that she could walk to. She notes that at the Women's Center she feels accepted as a parent while other places she does not. She also notes that the SPC was able to bill her student account which was convenient. She feels that future student parents need to be able to rely on the University to help them.

## -CONCLUSIONS-

The following conclusions have been derived based on the findings from the forum:

Conclusion: If the University is to continue support for the Student Parent Center, significant action will need to be taken by University Administration to ensure the center functions to the highest possible standard.

Conclusion: Graduate and Professional students, especially student parents, strongly feel that they are not valued and their needs are being willfully ignored by University Administration.

Conclusion: The following aspects are most beneficial to graduate and professional student success in terms of childcare:

- Close location – not all students have a car and nursing mothers are able to visit their children
- Price – affordable, flexible to student needs, and billable to student accounts
- Schedule – flexible to student needs, same schedule as the University

Conclusion: Seeking childcare in the Columbia community is problematic for a number of reasons:

- Long waitlists, especially for infant care
- Not all centers are safe, clean, and affordable
- Usually operate on Columbia Public Schools schedule

Conclusion: Lack of childcare on campus is and ought to be viewed as an issue of women's' right to higher education. Women should be afforded the necessary resources to pursue higher education including childcare.

Conclusion: Availability of childcare on campus has been a significant factor in some Graduate and Professional students' decision to attend the University of Missouri.

Conclusion: Some students have left the University of Missouri due to inadequate and/or unaffordable childcare on campus.



This report is designed to serve as a guide for understanding the needs of Graduate and Professional students, as directly reported by those students. The conclusions herein are not necessarily reflective of the views of the Graduate Professional Council. However, GPC is committed to ensuring that Graduate and Professional students have safe, affordable, and convenient childcare facilities to suit their needs. GPC will continue to advocate for Graduate and Professional student needs in regard to childcare.

This report was prepared by Eric A. Hucker, Vice-President of GPC and submitted to the GPC Executive Board for review. Any questions or comments regarding its content may be directed to [gpcvicepresident@missouri.edu](mailto:gpcvicepresident@missouri.edu).

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