

## Office of the President

### TO MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASIC NEEDS:

#### DISCUSSION ITEM

*For Meeting of January 21, 2020*

### APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING THE BASIC NEEDS OF PARENTING STUDENTS

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This item provides a profile of undergraduate and graduate parenting students at the University of California. It examines their financial concerns, challenges and successes at UC. This item also includes a discussion of ongoing efforts to support parenting students' basic needs at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz.

#### BACKGROUND

##### UC Parenting Students Profile

Response data to the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) in 2016 and 2018 and to the Graduate Wellbeing Survey (GWS) in 2016 show that (Figure 1):

- 1.3 percent of undergraduate students responded they are parents living with children. About 12 percent of graduate respondents to GWS self-reported as parents.\*
- Proportionally, UC Berkeley and UC Riverside have more undergraduate parenting students and UC Irvine has more graduate parenting students than other campuses.
- Parents are more likely to be underrepresented students. Among undergraduate parenting students, 39 percent are members of underrepresented groups (URGs), compared to 29 percent for other undergraduate students. Among graduate parenting students, 28 percent are students from URGs, compared to 21 percent for other graduate students.
- Over half (52 percent) of undergraduate parenting students are over 30 years old, while over half (53 percent) of other undergraduate students are between 20 and 22 years old.
- Eighty percent of undergraduate parenting students are transfer students, compared to 20 percent for other undergraduate students.
- Undergraduate parenting students are slightly less likely to be first-generation students (45 percent) than are other undergraduate students (49 percent).
- UC has often identified the unique needs of parenting students in tandem with the development of Women's Resource Centers and related services, reflecting the fact that up to 80 percent of single parenting students nationally are women.

\* UCUES asks undergraduate students to report whether they are a parent living with children. Thus, if they are a parent but do not live with their children, they would not self-identify their parenting status. As a result of this issue, it is important to note that the number of undergraduate parenting students presented here is likely underestimated. GWS asks graduate students to report whether or not they are a parent. The estimate should be more accurate than that of undergraduate parenting students.

## **The UC Campus Context**

Overall, there is no systemwide coordination of resources for parenting students, either at the graduate or undergraduate level. Beyond state- and federally-mandated services and programs, UC campuses range widely in their programming to support parenting students. The campuses offer a varying mix of resources and services, some mandated by Title IX (e.g., parental leave) or Title V (e.g., childcare), and others that may have evolved from responsive campus cultures.

## **Undergraduate Parenting Students**

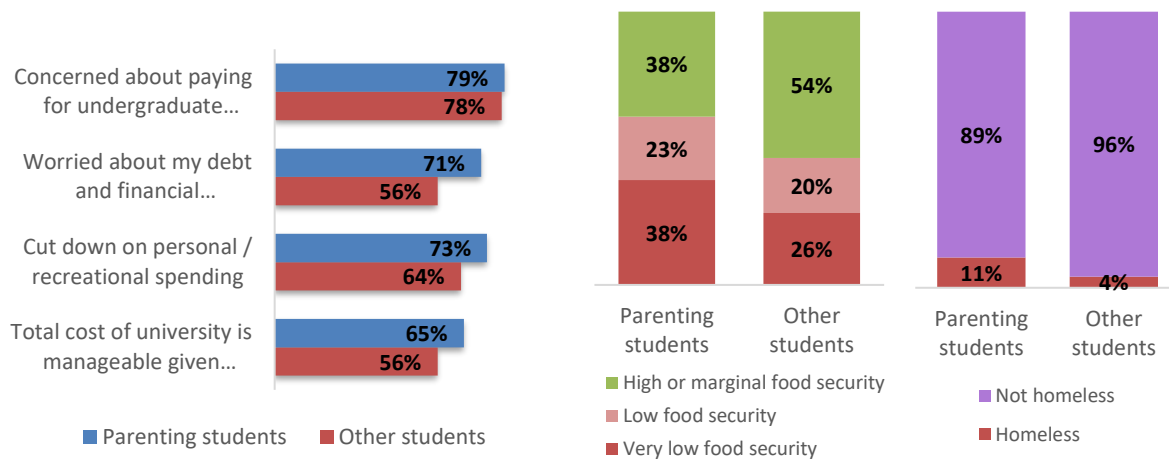
### Summary

Survey findings reveal that undergraduate parenting students are more likely to be transfer students over 25 years old and enrolled in STEM fields. They often live farther from campus than other undergraduates and report spending more time working and having family responsibilities that impede school and work. Undergraduate parenting students are as concerned as other undergraduates about paying for their education up to now, but they are more concerned about debt and financial circumstances and have a higher proportion reporting food insecurity and homelessness.

### Affordability and basic needs

- Similar to other undergraduate students (78 percent), a large majority of undergraduate parenting students (79 percent) reported being concerned about paying for their education.
- Undergraduate parenting students are more worried about their debt and financial circumstances (71 percent) and more likely to cut down on personal/recreational spending (73 percent) than other undergraduate students (56 percent and 64 percent, respectively). However, given the grants and scholarships received, proportionally more undergraduate parenting students (65 percent) than other undergraduate students (56 percent) agreed that the total cost of the university was manageable.
- Undergraduate parenting students are more likely to have basic needs challenges than other undergraduate students. Eleven percent of undergraduate parenting students reported ever being homeless compared to four percent for non-parenting students.
- About two-thirds (61 percent) of undergraduate parenting students reported having experienced food insecurity, 15 percentage points higher than for other undergraduate students (46 percent).

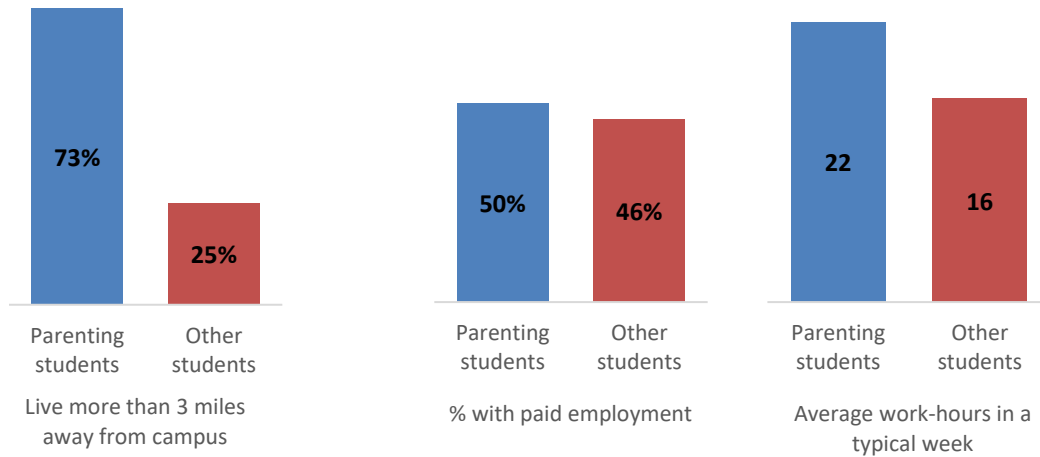
*Figure 1: Undergraduate parenting students' financial concerns and basic needs, 2016 and 2018*



Undergraduate parenting students generally live farther away from campus and spend more time working (Figure 2).

- A large majority of undergraduate parenting students (73 percent) lived more than three miles from campus, while only a quarter of other undergraduate students did so.
- Half (50 percent) of the undergraduate parenting student respondents reported having paid employment during the current academic year, compared to 46 percent for undergraduate non-parenting students. On average, those undergraduate parenting students with paid employment worked 22 hours in a typical week, six hours more than other undergraduate students with paid employment.

*Figure 2: Undergraduate parenting students’ living situation and employment, 2016 and 2018*



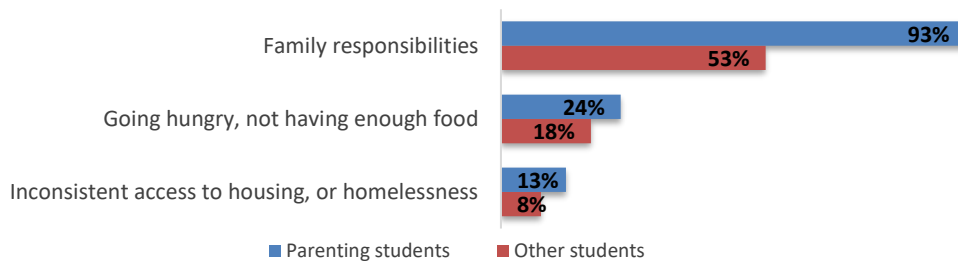
*Note: Responses over 84 hours were excluded.*

Experience and challenges

Undergraduate parenting students’ obstacles to academic success are more related to their family responsibilities (Figure 3).

- Ninety-three percent of undergraduate parenting students reported that family responsibilities were at least occasionally an obstacle to their schoolwork or academic success, 40 percentage points higher than that of other undergraduate students (53 percent).
- Although a lot more undergraduate parenting students reported that they experienced food and housing insecurity than other students, only about one-quarter (24 percent) of them said that going hungry or not having enough food was an obstacle to their academic success. Thirteen percent said that homelessness was an obstacle, compared to 18 percent and 8 percent, respectively, for non-parenting students.

*Figure 3: Obstacles to academic success of undergraduate parenting students experienced at least occasionally during the academic year, 2016 and 2018*



Success and post-graduation plan

Among all of the transfer parenting students responding to the UCUES 2016 survey, the first-year cumulative GPA for parenting transfer students was 3.23, slightly higher than that of transfer non-parenting students at 3.13. The two-year graduation rate for 2015 transfer entrants who were parenting students was 54 percent, six percentage points lower than that for other transfer students, but higher than the national average completion rate of 33 percent for all parenting students enrolled in college.

**Graduate Parenting Students**

Summary

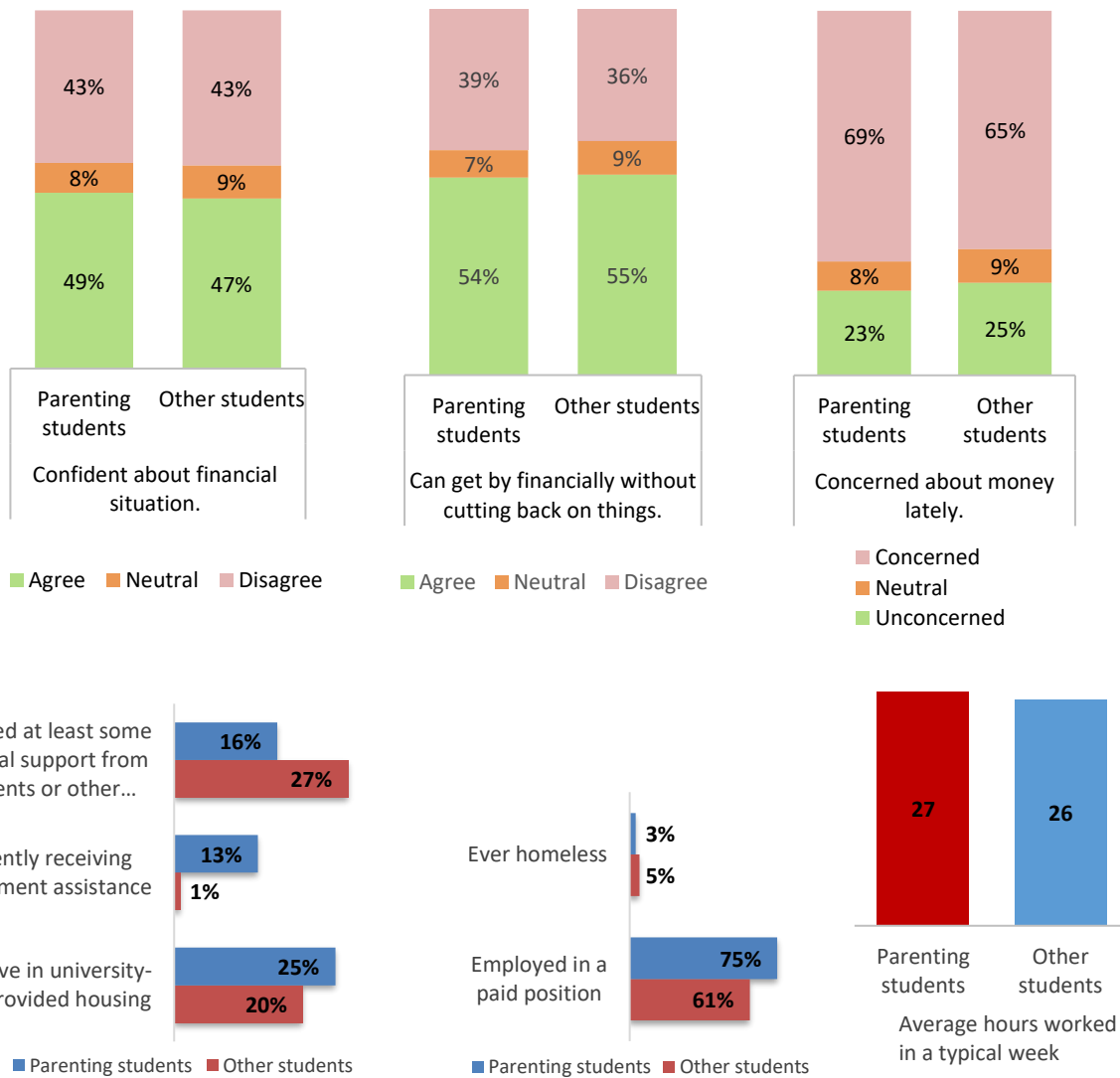
Graduate parenting students are more likely to be in debt than are non-parenting graduate students. Their confidence about their financial situation and concerns about money are similar to other graduate students. They are less likely to get financial support from parents or other relatives and more likely to receive government assistance.

Affordability and basic needs

Though graduate parenting students have more debt than do non-parenting students, they are just as likely as non-parenting students to report not being confident about their financial situation (43 percent).

- A small proportion of graduate parenting students received financial support from parents or relatives (16 percent), compared to 27 percent for other graduate students. A similar percentage of graduate parenting students receive government assistance (13 percent), much higher than for other graduate students (1 percent).
- A quarter of graduate parenting students lived in University-provided housing, and only a few of them experienced homelessness (three percent), compared to 20 percent and five percent, respectively, for other graduate students.
- On average, the reported total debt of graduate parenting students was \$43,894, compared to \$28,748 for non-parenting students, despite graduate parenting students having a much higher monthly income after taxes (\$6,319) than non-parenting students (\$2,511). Graduate parenting students reported a higher average monthly rent or mortgage than did non-parenting students (\$1,672 versus \$987).

*Figure 4: Financial situations of graduate parenting students, 2016*



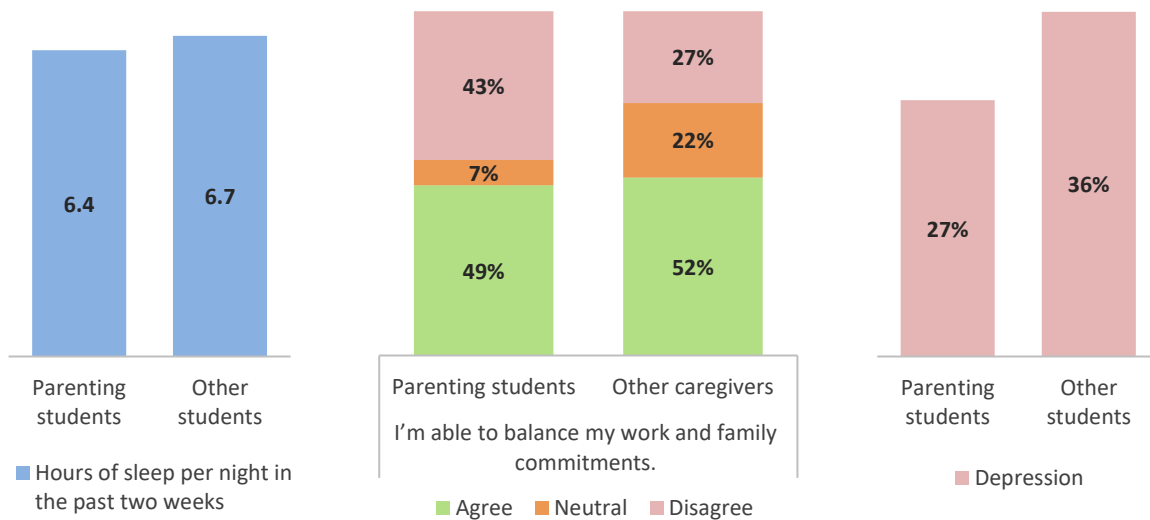
Experience and challenges

A large majority of graduate parenting students are satisfied with their life, their living conditions and the mentorship and advising they received in their program. Graduate parenting students are more likely to feel satisfied with life (76 percent) and living condition (85 percent), compared to other graduate students (at 72 percent and 80 percent, respectively).

- Graduate parenting students slept 6.4 hours per night in the past two weeks, compared to 6.7 hours for non-parenting students.

- Less than half (49 percent) of the graduate parenting students agreed that they were able to balance work and family, while a little over half (52 percent) of other caregivers had similar challenges.
- Graduate parenting students (27 percent) are less likely to report being depressed than non-parenting students (36 percent).

*Figure 5: Sleep hours, balance between work and family, and depression of graduate parenting students, 2016*



### **CAMPUS BASIC NEEDS RESOURCES AND INTERVENTIONS**

Endeavors to include parenting students in existing basic needs structures varies by campus. The two campus examples below from UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz provide insight into parenting students’ challenges and campus efforts to support the basic needs of parenting students.

#### **UC Berkeley**

Over the past year, the Basic Needs Center served parenting students through campus basic needs resources, including case management, CalFresh enrollment assistance, Food Assistance Program, Emergency Rental Assistance, Emergency Housing Protocol and Housing Security Deposit Award.

#### Greatest challenges for parenting students at UC Berkeley

- Most expensive on-campus housing prices and high-cost off-campus housing market
- Limited availability and high cost of child care

- Ambiguity of campus policies regarding application of Title IX law and ethics to students in need of academic accommodation
- Time and work intensiveness of applying for and maintaining/sustaining public assistance (e.g., CalWORKs)

Basic Needs services for parenting students offered by UC Berkeley

- The UC Berkeley Financial Aid and Scholarships Office offers the Student Parent Grant, which is provided to undergraduate student parents with dependent children under the age of 18.
- The University Village student parent and family housing offers Bear Pantry, a food pantry designed to serve low-income parenting students.
- Most recently, the Student Advocate's Office launched the Students with Dependents Fund, which provides short-term emergency financial resources to students with children or dependents.

**UC Santa Cruz**

A variety of UC Santa Cruz programs and departments have initiated basic needs services for parenting students in a region where affordable housing is especially difficult to attain.

Greatest challenges for parenting students at UC Santa Cruz

Some of the largest barriers that parenting students face include food insecurity and lack of available and affordable family housing and childcare (the childcare program on campus always has a standing waitlist).

Basic Needs services for parenting students offered by UC Santa Cruz

Slug Support:

- Offers gift cards for groceries, a food pantry, meal swipes for the dining halls and referrals to apply for CalFresh.
- Covers the cost of short-term housing at a hotel for parenting students in an emergency and issues direct financial awards to help cover the costs of other basic needs such as medical or mental health costs.
- Assists parenting students in advocating and identifying resources both on campus and in the community.
- Plans to implement a data collection system to track the demographics of parenting students served and the types of issues dealt with.

Other programs at UC Santa Cruz:

- The Services for Transfer and Re-Entry Students (STARS) program at UC Santa Cruz has collaborated with Dining Services to launch a pilot plan for parent meals. The



Student Parent Meal Plan is a supplementary meal option for parenting students and their family members that provides a limited number of free entries to the dining hall.

- UC Santa Cruz is set to launch an online resource site in early January 2020. The Student Parent Website will provide a hub for on- and off-campus resources relevant to parenting students. The website will have information for basic needs such as food and housing, as well as information about childcare and lactation rooms available around campus. The goals are to increase access to resources for parenting students and reduce the need to visit multiple spaces on campus to search for what they need, which adds to their already demanding schedules.

### **NATIONAL RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES**

There is a growing collection of national research and best-practice models for parenting students and the institutions that host them. The National Center for Student Parent Programs, which cites UC Berkeley as an institutional partner, has a wide-ranging mission that includes research, networking, advocacy and programs. The Center, which is funded through the Kellogg Foundation and the Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) program, distributes a Family Friendly Campus Toolkit, which they describe as a "self-assessment tool for campus providers" to establish a task force, collect and analyze data, create an action plan and advocate for change.

Additionally, the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) hosts the Student Parent Success Initiative, which includes "research, tool-building, technical assistance, public education, and networking with advocates, policymakers, and practitioners invested in the success of student parents in postsecondary education." American Council on Education's (ACE) Higher Education Today blog identifies a number of success-oriented interventions:

- Connecting student parents with financial support and education
- Targeting academic support to student parents' needs
- Making child care accessible and affordable
- Building peer community
- Establishing a family-friendly campus environment

Other research findings of note include:

From Inside Higher Ed to The Hechinger Report to the ACE Higher Education Report, national focus on parenting students is intensifying, particularly as the "traditional college-age student" is evolving in non-traditional ways. The cultural shift in today's student demographics requires a commensurate shift in systems of student support.

A survey of more than 15,000 students (Inside Higher Education, 2018) at both two- and four-year campuses of the City University of New York found the following:

- Although roughly two-thirds of student-parents we surveyed did not feel that available child care provided them the time they needed to complete their schoolwork, around

three-quarters of them were on financial aid, which suggests that existing financial aid is insufficient to pay for the necessary child care to provide time for schoolwork.<sup>1</sup>

- A simple question on the FAFSA could identify the number of parenting students and their dependents, which would spur a requirement to incorporate this data into financial aid packaging.
- According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, even with Title IX protections, “while pregnancy is a protected status, parenting is not.” This is despite the fact that parenting has a much longer impact on a student’s academic progress and success. The need for institutional support continues to exist beyond pregnancy.

### **CONCLUSION**

Given the higher rates of food and housing insecurity among UC parenting students, the University will ensure that its basic needs services account for the unique exigencies of this demographic. The ongoing stable funding provided by the State Budget and the UC Office of the President (UCOP) will allow campuses to further explore and expand upon efforts to aid parenting students through a number of objectives:

- The University will divert more efforts to inform incoming and first-year parenting students about supplemental resources and programs to assist them in meeting their basic needs. Both population-specific digital messaging and offline materials for parenting students will include basic needs-specific resources and support information on all 10 UC campuses.
- Campus-level basic needs staff will work together with parenting student partners to ensure that information and resources are directed effectively to parenting students in need.
- Systemwide assessment and campus-directed engagement will be implemented to further investigate how the University can provide responsive strategies to the widely-reported difficulty in advancing student child-care services.

Finally, as an outcome of meetings with the UCLA-based student organization Mothers of Color in Academia (MOCA), UCOP Student Affairs has begun to form a UC Parenting Students Workgroup to identify campus best practices, articulate an institutional research agenda and advise UC leadership on the broad array of issues pertaining uniquely to parenting students. The workgroup will likely conclude its work by fall 2020 with a report and recommendations based on research and findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Wladis, C., Hachey, A.C., & Conway, K. (2018). No time for college? An investigation of time, poverty, and parenthood. *Journal of Higher Education*, 89(6), 807-831.

**Key to Acronyms**

ACE	American Council on Education
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FIPSE	Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
GWS	Graduate Wellbeing Survey
IWPR	Institute for Women's Policy Research
STARS	Services for Transfer and Re-entry Students
UCUES	University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey
URG(s)	underrepresented group(s)