

University at Buffalo Support for Students with Care Responsibilities

2016-2017 UB Graduate Student Association Resolution

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WHEREAS the University at Buffalo (UB) Graduate Student Association (GSA) Senate may enact resolutions concerning issues of importance to the graduate student body as regards issues of academic policy, student rights, and student welfare;

WHEREAS UB currently has a total enrollment of 29,806 students, 7,291 of which are graduate students;

WHEREAS parenting graduate students and those with care responsibilities have voiced numerous problems with lack of support and equal access to academic opportunities because of familial status;

WHEREAS UB's Discrimination and Harassment Policy specifically "prohibits discrimination and harassment and requires that accommodations be provided to individuals when such accommodations are reasonable and necessary as a result of an individual's disability, religion, pregnancy, maternity, or breastfeeding status";¹

WHEREAS child care expenses on campus (Child Care Center and Early Childhood Research Center) are prohibitively expensive, do not have a sliding scale, and are not subsidized for graduate students;²

WHEREAS access to on-campus childcare is further prohibited by long waiting lists and spots occupied by community members not affiliated with UB;

WHEREAS access to on-campus childcare is further prohibited by hours that do not align with required evening classes/labs and teaching assistant/research assistant (TA/RA) schedules;

1

<http://www.buffalo.edu/administrative-services/policy1/ub-policy-lib/discrimination-harassment.html>

2

<http://www.buffalo.edu/ubccc/enrollment/tuitionfees.html>;
<http://ecrc.buffalo.edu/parents/schedule.php>

WHEREAS no child care opportunities are provided for children older than 13 years, but some parenting graduate students report a lack of adequate access to after-school programs that would cover child care during classes and TA/RA assignments;

WHEREAS graduate student TAs regularly take leaves of absence that result in loss of health insurance and income;

WHEREAS UB does not consider TAs employees, teaching assistants therefore cannot qualify for TANF/WIC/disability leave for child birth or adoption;³

WHEREAS there are only four lactation rooms on North Campus, one on South Campus, and none on the Downtown Campus, and graduate students have reported inappropriate spatial accommodations;⁴

WHEREAS there are no maps for locating changing tables for any campus, nor changing tables in any men's restroom;

WHEREAS some UB schools have implemented flexibility measures to assist pregnant and parenting graduate students retain their positions and funding while taking on caring responsibilities, but there is as of yet no university-wide policy that would encourage all schools to do so;

WHEREAS this administrative lack of concern for familial-status based discrimination has led highly-qualified graduate students to leave UB and puts enormous and unfair pressure on those who stay;

WHEREAS the lack of support leads to increased health risks and costs for all students with care responsibilities;

WHEREAS international students are especially negatively impacted by visa restrictions on work flexibility;

3

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; WIC: Women, Infants, and Children (Food and Nutrition Service)

4

<https://www.buffalo.edu/equity/obtaining-assistance/obtaining-accommodations/pregnancy-and-breastfeeding-accommodations/LactationRooms.html>

WHEREAS some SUNY campuses, such as Buffalo State and Purchase have actively increased their support for students with care responsibilities or already provide much better accommodations;

WHEREAS other public research universities—such as Pennsylvania State University, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of California, Davis, and the University of California, Los Angeles—have actively increased their support for students with care responsibilities;

AND WHEREAS UB does not collect any information on familial status/care responsibilities and its effects on graduate students.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The graduate student body of UB calls for the administration to commission a report on students with care responsibilities;
2. GSA urges UB to implement a task force that will address the lack of services and support for students with care responsibilities, especially parenting graduate students;
3. GSA encourages UB, given its strategic goal to “[i]mprove academic support infrastructures to provide state-of-the-art educational and research environments that advance faculty and students in their ongoing pursuit of excellence” and in accordance with its mission statement, to provide access for students with care responsibilities to UB’s “diverse, inclusive scholarly community” and its “transformative educational experiences”⁵;
4. GSA supports a university-wide care leave policy, financial childcare assistance, increased space accommodations, funding increases to TA/RA lines (including summer funding possibilities), and free or reduced family attendance at UB events