

Student Parent Support Center



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



STUDENT PARENT SUPPORT CENTER
STUDENT AFFAIRS | THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

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LETTER FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense gratitude and pride for the progress and achievements we have made together, as a university, in the Student Affairs Department and within the new Student Parent Support Center. It is with great pleasure that we present to you our Annual Report for 2023-2024, showcasing our achievements and the profound impact we have had on the young children and families of the Students, Staff, and Faculty of the University of Utah.

In the spirit of reflection, I want to begin with a story from the Hundred Acre Wood. A magical place filled with adventure, nonjudgmental friendship and timeless understanding. One sunny morning, Winnie the Pooh and his friends gathered around their favorite spot in the forest to share their plans for the day. Pooh, with his usual curiosity, asked his friends what made them the happiest.

Piglet, the smallest and quietest of the group, thought for a moment and said, "It's the times when we all come together, helping each other and learning new things, that makes me the happiest." Eeyore, with this slow and somewhat gloomy manner, added, "It's knowing that no matter how gray the day, I have friends who care about me."

These simple yet profound sentiments remind us of the mission of our work at the Student Parent Support Center; We support student well-being and success by removing barriers, creating inclusive, supportive environments and empowering student-parents and their families.

This year, we have reached several key milestones, among these are:

- Changed our name to align with our and the Student Affairs' purpose and goals
- Expanded our student-parent outreach
- Expanded our student-parent Infant/Toddler child care slots and increased our enrollment
- Rolled out and implemented our CRCL Teacher Development program

Just as Winnie the Pooh and his friends find joy in their everyday adventures, we have also experienced a year filled with growth and new friendships. As we look to the future, we are committed to building on these successes, expand our reach, enhance our programs, and deepen our impact. Thank you for being part of our story. Together we are making a difference, one child, one student, and one student-family at a time.

Warm Regards,
Virginia DeSpain

*"Any day spent with you is my favorite day."
Winnie the Pooh*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

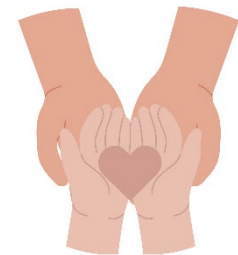
Primary Purpose

The Student Parent Support Center (SPSC) strives to support the goals of Student Affairs at the U of U by helping student-families in the quest for enrolling, persisting, and graduating from the University. SPSC endeavors to align their goals and activities to allow student-families with young children to attend their classes, study, work, belong and achieve health and wellness.



Mission

We support student well-being and success by removing barriers, creating inclusive, supportive environments and empowering student-parents and their families.



Vision

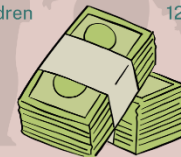
Our vision is for student-parents to discover their passion, people, and purpose by providing inclusive spaces and resources to help them successfully balance the demands of parenting while furthering their education.

Child Care Subsidies for Student-Families

CCAMPIS and Middle-Income subsidies cover the high cost of child care fees for student-parents by paying child care programs fees directly to the programs. These subsidies are essential for promoting educational opportunities for student-parents. By easing the financial burden of child care, they help student-parents balance their academic and parenting responsibilities, increasing their chances of academic success and graduation.

Subsidy Paid for Student Child Care

CCAMPIS	Middle-Income
\$109,607.35 amount	\$13,692.98 amount
48 families 59 children	12 families 12 children



Parent Night Out

Student-parents face the immense challenge of balancing their studies with parenting duties. Offering Parent Night Out child care allows them to take a break, recharge, and enjoy some rest and relaxation. This helps them focus on their well-being, reducing stress, and improving mental health. We provide quality child care with qualified staff, free of charge for students. The program alternates between our two student child care centers, UKids Presidents Circle and UKids East Village, one Saturday per month.

Parent Night Out

	242 Families Participated 357 Children Participated
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Finals Week

Finals Week child care provided by SPSC, in collaboration with ASUU, VPSA, and UKids Presidents Circle, is designed to support student-parents who have the additional responsibility of caring for their children while preparing for and taking their final exams. This service provides them with free child care during the stressful finals week, enabling them to focus on their studies

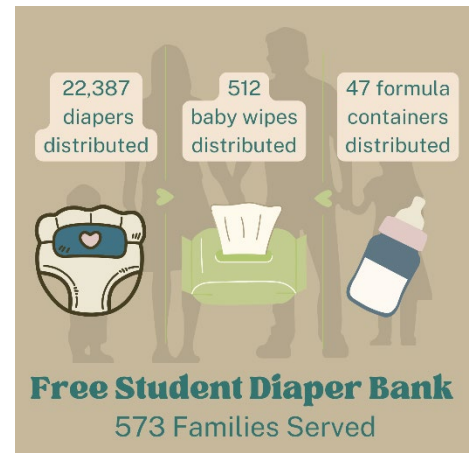
without the added burden of worrying about their children's well-being. Student-parents can dedicate more time and attention to their studies, improving their chances of performing well during final exams.

Diaper Bank

Affordable child care and housing are not the only financial burden that student-parents face while pursuing their educational goals. They also need to provide for their children's basic needs such as diapers and baby wipes, which can become a balancing act. SPSC provides a free diaper bank for student-parents who may struggle to afford an adequate supply for their young children. One time per month, student-parents can pick up a supply of diapers, wipes, and formula for their infants and toddlers. Based on donations, we are also able to give other items to families often, such as clothes and diaper bags.

Early Childhood Education Intern Students

SPSC collaborates with The Department of Family and Consumer Studies to provide Early Childhood Education Internships at three UKids Child Care Programs. The internship is an invaluable opportunity for students to gain practical experience in ECE and apply their classroom learning in a real-world setting. The students have a chance to observe and assist experienced teachers, participate in classroom activities, interact with children and their families, and learn about the various aspects of ECE. In offering our classrooms as student learning environments, we are bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, fostering a new generation of competent and confident early childhood educators.



STATUS OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Child Care Subsidies for Student-Parents

The Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) and Middle-Income subsidies are two forms of assistance designed to support student-parents in paying for child care expenses while they pursue their educational goals at the University of Utah. CCAMPIS is a federal program, offered through the US Department of Ed., which provides funding to SPSC to offer child care services and subsidies to income eligible student-parents. These subsidies can significantly alleviate the financial burden of child care costs, enabling student-parents to focus on their studies without worrying about the well-being and care of their children.

Secondly, Middle-Income subsidy is provided through SPSC to target student-parents who fall outside the specific federal income bracket. These subsidies bridge the gap for families who do not qualify for CCAMPIS, but still face significant financial challenges in paying for child care services. By providing financial support for child care expenses, Middle-Income Subsidies make higher education more accessible for student-parents, allowing them to pursue their academic goals while ensuring their children receive quality, on-site care.

After successfully obtaining a new four-year CCAMPIS grant last fiscal year, the additional funding enabled SPSC to hire 4 full-time teachers. This funding has a significant impact on our student child care programs, UKids Presidents Circle and UKids East Village. While CCAMPIS subsidy alone impacts 59 children, our programs overall are able to improve the quality of care and education provided without raising the cost to student-parents. For the 2023-24 year, tuition rates were not increased.

\$109,607.35 was distributed to child care programs on behalf of 48 student-families to support access to quality child care service. This financial assistance will not only relieve some of the financial burden for the families but also allow the parents to focus on their educational goals while knowing their children are well taken care of. To enhance the CCAMPIS, our Middle-Income subsidy provided \$13,692.98 to 12 student-families who otherwise would not qualify for low-income eligibility, however because of high costs of going to school and raising a family, still find it difficult to pay for the high cost of care.

Overall, the allocation of the CCAMPIS and Middle-Income subsidy funds has been highly effective in enhancing both the child care programs and the educational pursuits of the student- parents.



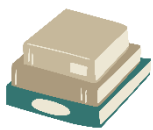
Name of Center	# of CCAMPIS	Amount of CCAMPIS Award
UKids East Village (Student Program)	15	\$32,847.83
UKids Guardsman Way	3	\$9,275.86
UKids Presidents Circle (Student Program)	26	\$56,693.03
BioKids	1	\$3,575.00
Off-Campus	3	\$7,215.63
Total	48	\$109,607.35

Student Child Care

In order to improve our student-parent educational outcomes and persistence to graduation SPSC continues to operate two student child care programs, UKids East Village and UKids Presidents Circle, to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children while their parents or guardians pursue their educational goals. Our primary focus is supporting student-families by offering specialized child care programs tailored to the unique needs of students. We can do this in a number of ways:



Flexible scheduling: We understand that student schedules can vary significantly due to classes, exams, and other academic commitments. To accommodate, we offer flexible child care scheduling options that align with the parents' class schedules.



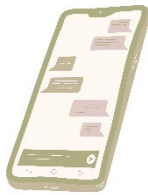
Enriching Curriculum: Our child care programs are designed to provide a stimulating and enriching environment for children. We incorporate age-appropriate educational activities and play to encourage learning and development while the parents focus on their studies.



Supportive Community: We foster a sense of community among student-families within our child care programs and help them find their people. By connecting fellow student-parents, they can share experiences and support each other in their educational journeys.



Qualified Staff: Our staff are trained professionals who have experience in early childhood education. They create supportive and caring atmospheres, ensuring children receive the attention and care they need during their time at our facilities. They are also mentors to those in ECE programs who are learning to work with young children in the field.



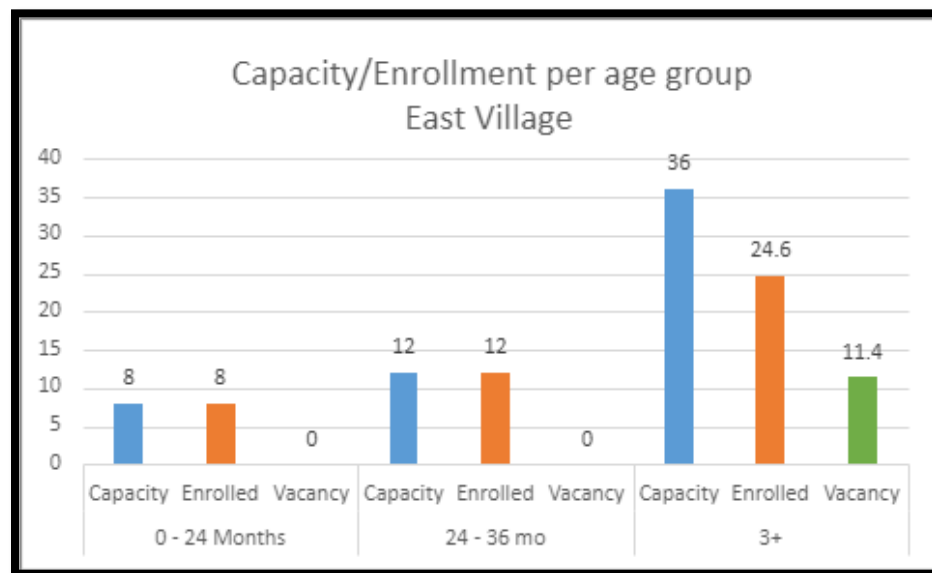
Communication and Involvement: We maintain open lines of communication with parents to ensure that their child's needs are met and address any concerns or questions they may have. We also encourage parent involvement in our programs to strengthen the bond between all those involved in the care of the child.



Access to Resources: As part of our commitment to supporting educational goals, we provide access to resources and information that may be helpful for student-parents. Examples include parenting workshops, educational materials, and referrals to additional support services as needed.

UKids East Village

Located in the East Village Community Center, UKids East Village (EV) provides care based on a full-day model. Student-parents may enroll their children for two, three, four, or five full days per week. EV's hours of operation are 7:00 am - 6:00 pm, M-F. EV is licensed for 60 child slots ages six weeks - five years, however the center is not running at capacity. A full 3+ classroom is open for summer camp and we anticipate it being open, although with lower numbers, in the fall. The following graph represents June 2024.



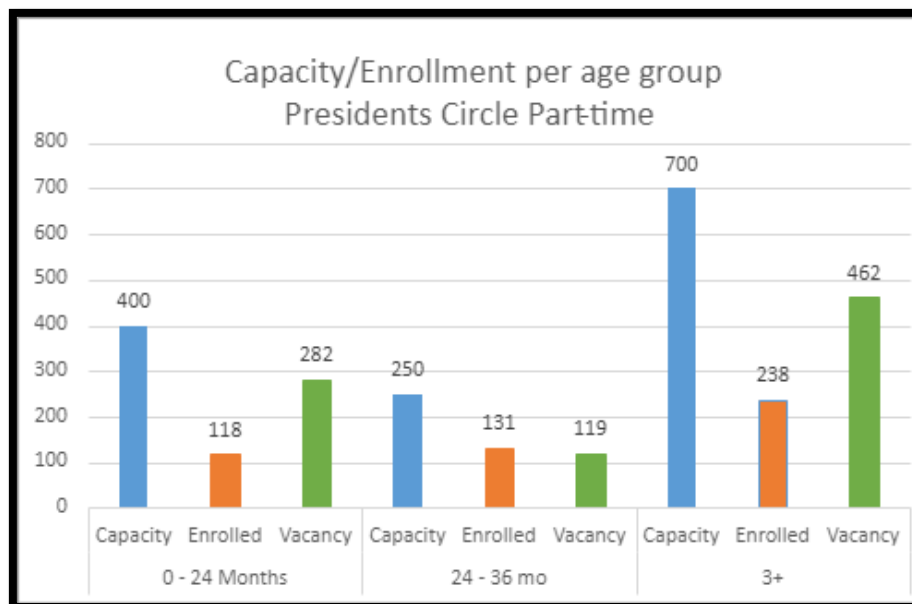
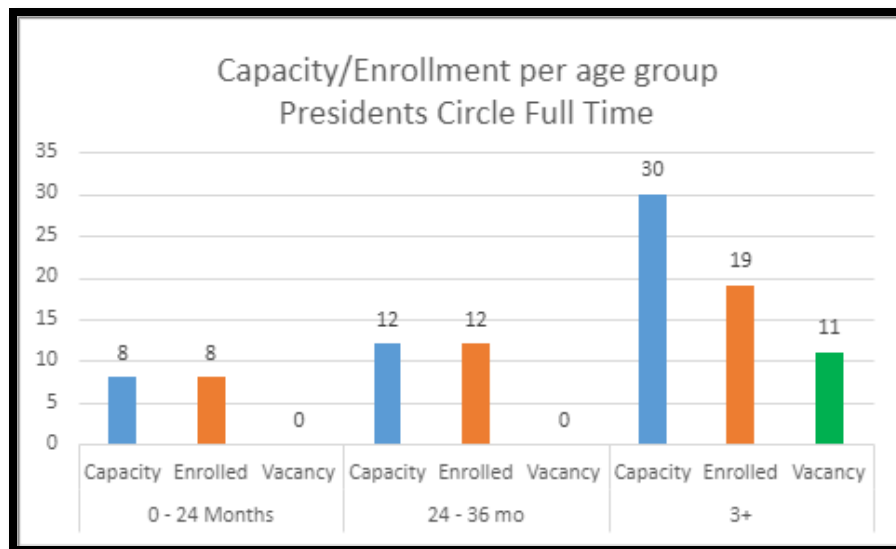
UKids Presidents Circle

Located in the Alfred Emery Building, UKids - Presidents Circle (PC) provides part-time and full-time care with a focus on student-parents. We use a unique block care system that allows student-parents at the University of Utah to enroll their child in exactly what they need according to their semester schedule. PC's hours of operation for Fall



2024 are 7:00 am - 9:00 pm for part-time families and 7:00 am - 6:00 pm for full-time families. We have the capacity for 102 children in our care at any given time.

What makes us unique is our ability to adapt each semester to the specific scheduling needs of the student-parents at the University of Utah. We create our enrollment based on these needs, allowing us to easily adjust our classrooms to serve the necessary demographics. For example, if there is a higher demand for spaces for three-year-olds, we can reconfigure our classrooms to accommodate. The following graphs represent June 2024.

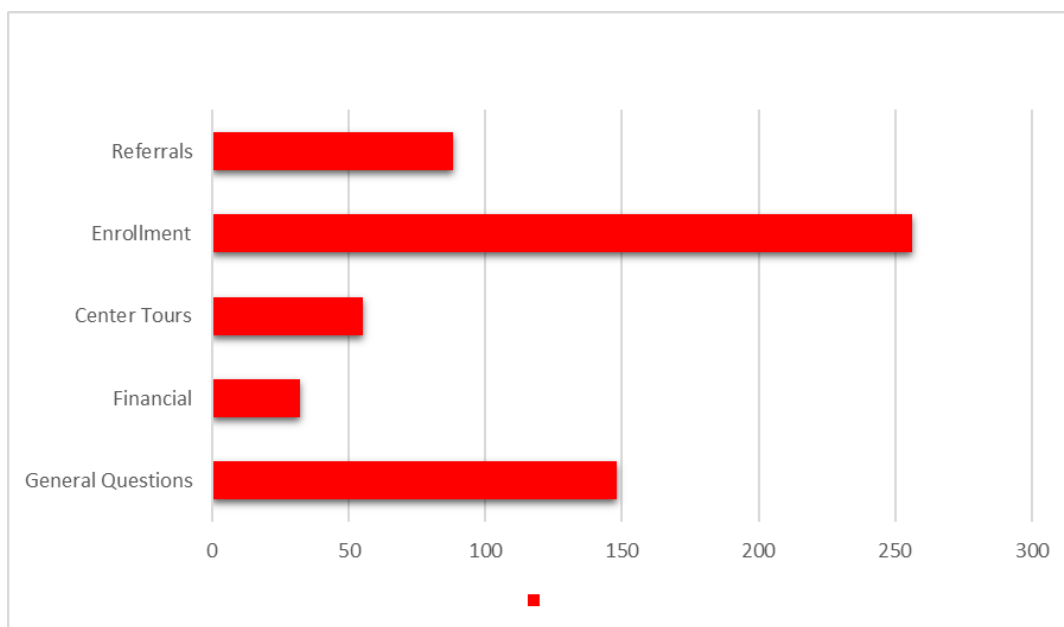
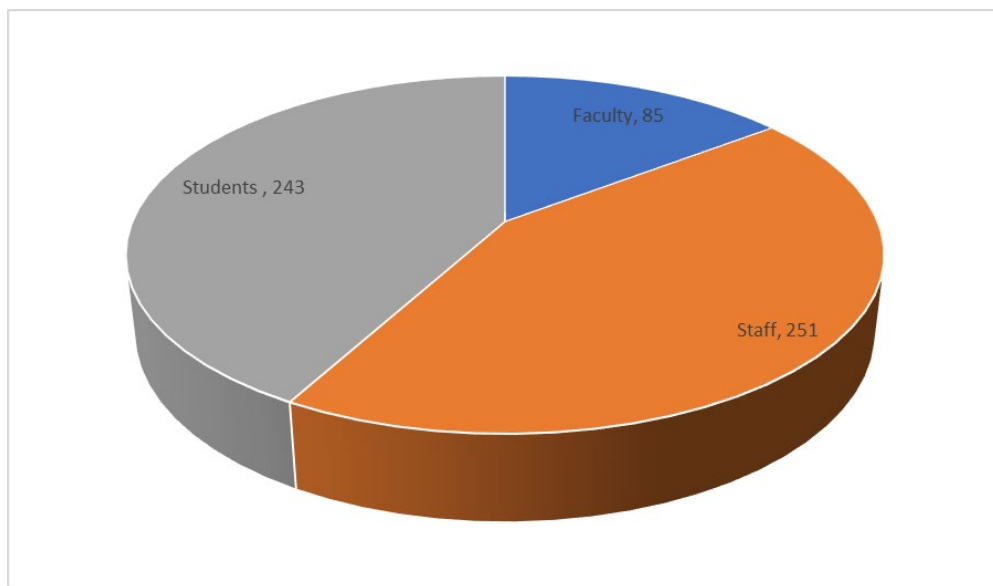


Resource and Referral Services

SPSC plays a crucial role in supporting the university's faculty, staff, and students by offering a comprehensive range of resources for those looking at child care options. While the 2023-24 year marked a scaling back to our previous consult offerings over zoom and in-person, SPSC admin remain

an invaluable resource for the campus community, with our office being a recognized space for reliable and safe child care options. Previous consultations offered a tailored approach to the specific needs and preferences of each person. They were designed to answer concerns, questions, and provide information. Though more informal, the SPSC staff has still been able to connect with many University affiliates to help with these unique requirements. The following graphs represent the consult topics and demographics most common to SPSC:

Child Care Consults 579



Health and Safety Trainer

With the ability to hire a broader range of staff in the University environment comes a need to ensure that staff has the skills and knowledge required for quality care. Having and retaining qualified teachers is essential to operations, and a large part of this has been pre and in-service training for SPSC staff. 2023-24 marks the first full year of training completed with our Health and Safety Trainer, Mallory, at our main SPSC office. Every new hire completed the 6-8 hour in-person training, with Mallory there to support, answer questions, ensure understanding, and clarify information. Any necessary retraining was also completed in the office. This requirement has been instrumental in improving staff behaviors as they enter a classroom for the first day. Whether they have years of experience or have never held an infant, they have been able to spend some time learning one-on-one. In the span of the year, 104 employees have been trained, for a total of 520 hours.

In addition to onboarding, all staff are required to go through six hours of retraining in the month of March. With an assessment completed from the prior retraining, as well as changes to required Child Care Licensing, this process was completely overhauled for staff. Changes focused on the practical application of policies and practices in the classroom, knowledge of children's behavioral expectations and development, health and safety importance, and the collaboration between all individuals involved in the care of the child. The updated information was a large success, with 81% of staff scoring above 90%, and an average score of 92.2%. All canvas retraining changes were then implemented into the initial onboarding process by the end of April.

Month	New Hires	Hours of Training
July 2023	13	90.75
August 2023	8	42.37
September 2023	21	87.97
October 2023	12	64.5
November 2023	2	10.5
December 2023	0	0
January 2024	11	45.7
February 2024	11	38.92
March 2024	5	25.1
April 2024	5	29.3
May 2024	8	43.3
June 2024	8	41.58
Total	104	519.9

Major Accomplishments

Name Change

We are excited to announce that we have changed our name to the Student Parent Support Center (SPSC). This change reflects our commitment to aligning more closely with Student Affairs' mission of serving students and student-parents. By adopting this new name, we aim to better represent our dedication to supporting student-parents in achieving their academic and personal goals. We hope that we will be recognized as a center where student-parents and care-giving students can engage and feel that they belong, find activities and programs that optimize their health and wellness, and can create a personalized pathway forward.

Early Head Start Grant

This year we successfully wrote for and received the Early Head Start Collaboration Grant, to be continued for the next three years. Throughout the academic year SPSC, in conjunction with our two student child care programs, partner with Utah Community Action/Early Head Start as part of a nationwide child care alliance. Early Head Start allocates funds to cover the wages and benefits of full-time teachers in two infant classrooms, accommodating a total of 16 children. Additionally, EHS supplies diapers, food, and social services for the 16 student-families. UKids Child Care Programs provides the physical space, hires the teachers, and ensures compliance with health, safety, and quality standards by providing the quality child care to the children. This collaboration gained national recognition for being among the first of its kind in the country. By having regular access to on-campus child care, and making it affordable for student-parents, we have contributed to the overall well-being of student-parents. In a survey conducted in April 2023, student-parents share that they can attend their classes and participate in study groups, as well as engage in self-care activities, hobbies, and exercise, all of which contribute to their school-life balance. However, a nationwide teacher shortage has continued to affect our child care programs. We have struggled to find qualified staff to fill the vacancies. Currently, we continue to have three classrooms that are completely empty because of unfilled teacher positions. While maintaining a 2023 change for higher BA qualified base-wages, we are still running at a deficit. We continue to recruit and retain qualified staff, with improvements such as our new professional development system, to contribute to an overall higher staff morale and satisfaction.

NAEYC Accreditation

While all three of our child care centers maintained their National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited status this year, it was UKids East Village's year for a re- accreditation site visit and review. We are very pleased to report that UKids East Village passed their accreditation visit with an excellent overall score of 94.88%.

Standard Number and Name	Score	
1. Relationships	100%	Pass
2. Curriculum	96%	Pass
3. Teaching	91%	Pass
4. Assessment of Child Progress	94%	Pass
5. Health	94%	Pass
6. Staff Competencies, Preparation, and Support	93%	Pass
7. Families and 8. Community Relationships	95%	Pass
9. Physical Environment	100%	Pass
10. Leadership and Management	95%	Pass

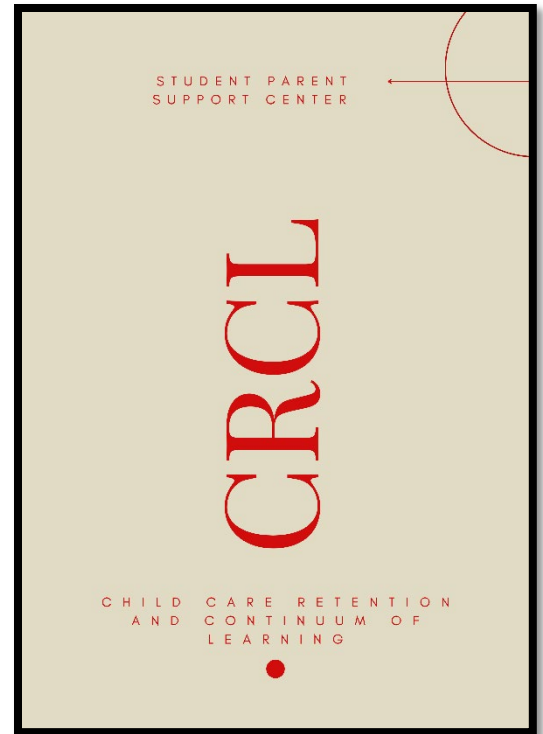
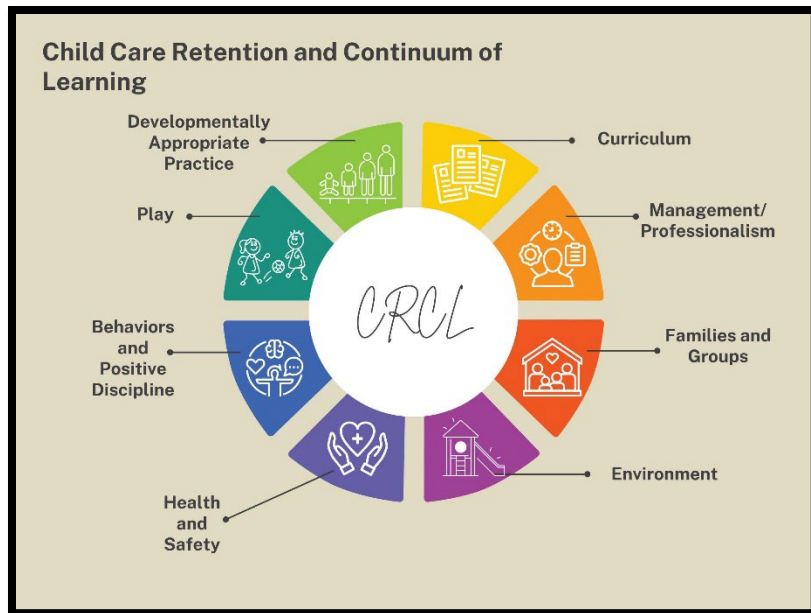
Increased Infant/Toddler Space for Student-Parents

Across the country, child care has struggled with lower enrollment numbers since COVID. However, our waiting list, especially for infant/toddlers, has remained strong. To counterbalance our unusually low enrollment and keep our rates affordable, we opened (and/or are currently in process of opening) new, additional infant rooms in all three of our campus child care centers. This expansion will provide student-parents with much needed infant/toddler child care spaces and enable them to access the CCAMPIS subsidy. This is ideal for both center growth and student-parent enrollment. The centers who have already opened infant classrooms have seen their enrollment/capacity increase significantly, and those infants will grow and fill the preschool rooms in the years to come.

CRCL Professional Development Standard

The Child Care Retention and Continuum of Learning (CRCL) is a professional development incentive program designed to foster employee retention by promoting continuous growth and learning in Early Childhood Education. Recognizing a need to reward staff commitment to professional development, CRCL was built to provide an internal system that staff could participate in continuously. Within eight distinct areas of learning, training resources are available in various formats and platforms for staff to access. Completion of ten hours, with at least an hour in each of the eight areas, awards a \$100 bonus. Subsequent bonuses of \$200 and \$300 are given after completion of additional ECE training hours, for a maximum of \$600 within the year.

CRCL was announced to staff August 2023, and officially began October 1, 2023. In that time, 21 staff have participated in CRCL, with the maximum being reached 18 times. 705 hours of training in early childhood education have been submitted. A total of \$11,300 has been earned by staff participating in the program.

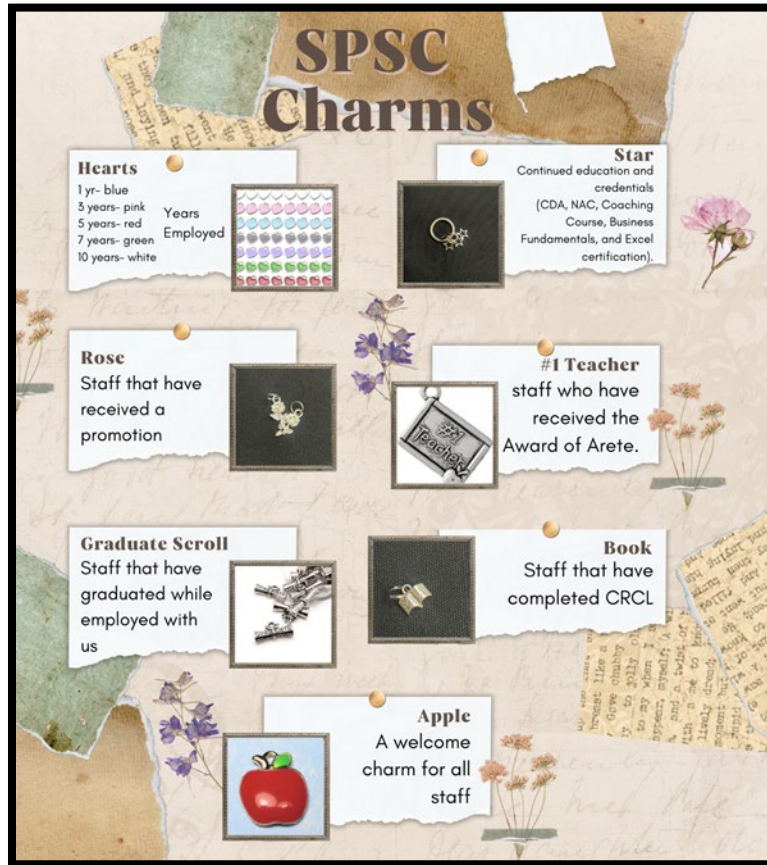


Staff Recognition Badge Charms

Yearly, our department hosts the Awards of Arete event for SPSC admin staff and all UKids teachers. The annual tradition of this event is to collect information from families, nominating an educator who has demonstrated excellence. One award is given per center, four total, at the formal event in January. This has been a wonderful tradition that will continue, but in reflecting on all the accomplishments of the year, the department recognized a broader need to recognize the success of staff. We wanted to develop a system that made these accomplishments more visible to co-workers, as well as the families within our programs. The idea of Badge Charms was developed to attain that system.

At the Awards of Arete event in January 2024 we introduced Badge Charms, with ten charms to represent the most notable achievements. Heart charms of a different color are given to represent the one, three, five, seven, and ten-year marks working. A rose is given to those who have received a promotion within SPSC and UKids. For staff who graduated while employed with our department, a grad scroll is given. Completion of our internal CRCL professional development program earns a book charm, while a star is given for various outside professional development certificates. Staff that won Arete, as nominated by their peers and families, also receive a charm to display the accomplishment.

With a bit of backdating to catch up on years working with SPSC, and recognizing achievements of 2023, a total of 108 charms were awarded at this year's Arete ceremony. The remainder of backdating for accomplishments was completed by mid-April. At the beginning of May, an 11th charm was introduced. An apple is given as a welcome to new staff and an introduction to the system. All staff have now received this charm.



Early Childhood Education Conferences

This year SPSC was very excited to welcome once again the Utah Association for the Education of Young Children (UAEYC) Early Childhood Conference, as well as represent the University of Utah at the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (N4C) Annual Conference and Professional Institute, hosted in Salt Lake City for the first time in many years. The ability to bring early childhood educators together from across the state and the country provides great opportunities for growth and engagement with like-minded individuals, all for the benefit of our families and staff.

UAEYC was the first of our conferences, taking place March 8th and 9th. We were proud to welcome them back to the University of Utah for the second year. Over the two days, events took place in both the Union and Gardner Commons. All of our admin team had the opportunity to volunteer, with roles in collaboration with UAEYC and others to table in support of our Student-Parent Diaper Bank. UKids teachers also had the chance to attend the professional development sessions Saturday. This year we had 37 total attendees from SPSC.



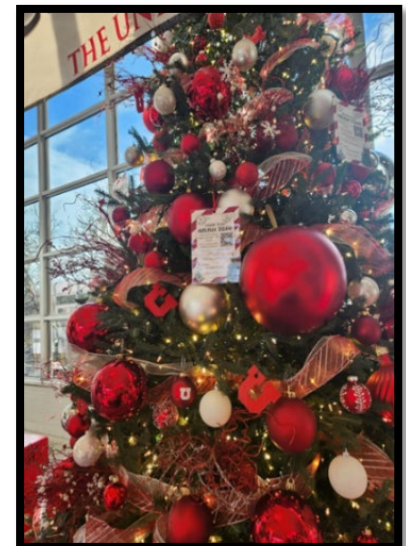
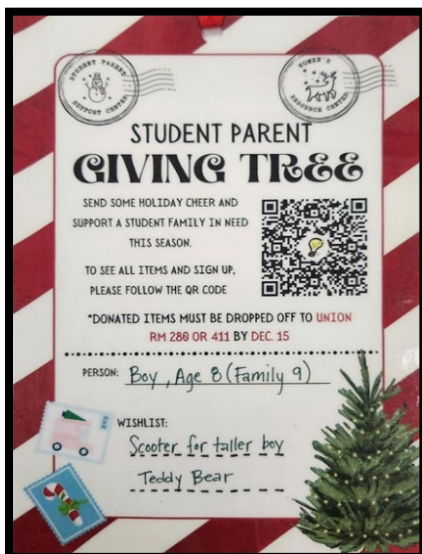
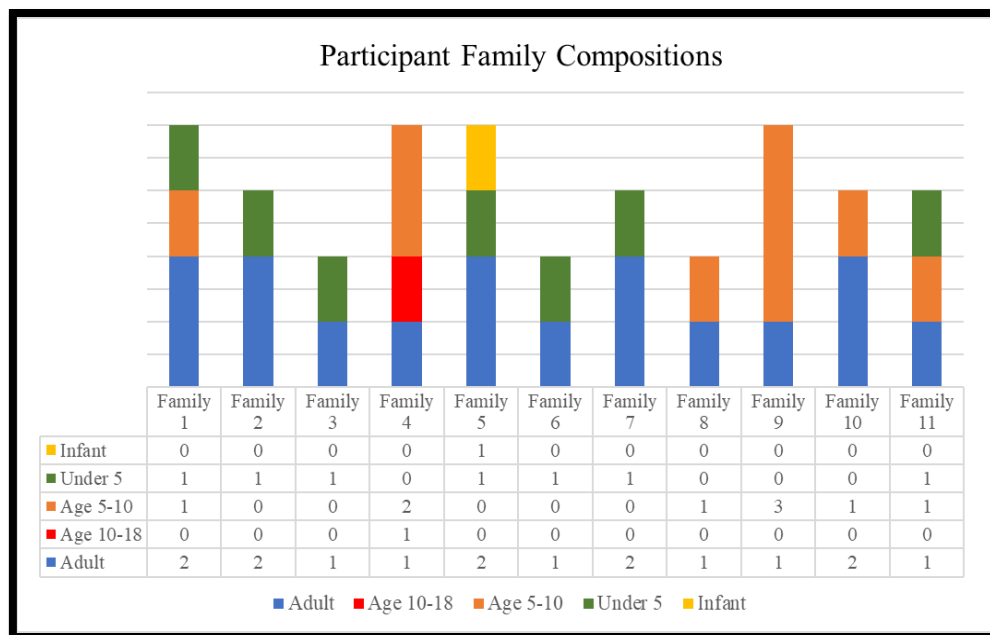
At the end of March, early childhood educators from higher education campuses across the nation gathered in Salt Lake City for the N4C Conference and Professional Institute. From March 20th to 23rd we had the opportunity to engage, attend workshops and roundtables, and connect with regional colleagues. Among the presenters was our own Director, Shauna Lower, speaking on unique funding options and the drop-in care model. With the event hosted right in the city, we had the unique opportunity on the last day of the conference to invite groups on a tour of UKids Presidents Circle and UKids Sugar House. Over 100 educators participated in the tour, with wonderful reviews to share of the spaces.



Student-Parent Giving Tree

In 2023, SPSC proposed the introduction of a Student-Parent Giving Tree, aimed to help with gifts and household items during the holiday season. Student-parents with the pressure of accomplishing higher education, have the additional stressors of being responsible for young children. This is a strain that is felt even more during the holiday season for many.

Student-parents were referred or signed up to participate after word was spread through Student Affairs departments. Both digital and physical flyers were also posted around the University of Utah. There were 11 families who participated consisting of 34 individuals of various ages and family make-ups. Each family provided a wish list consisting of needs and desires of their family members.



Donation sign-ups were published at the beginning of December, accessible in a physical and digital format. There was a total of 79 slots for sign-up, comprised of 68 wish list items and a grocery store gift card for each family. 52 slots were filled through 24 University of Utah affiliate donations. SPSC purchased each individual gloves, socks, a hat, and a shared holiday treat for the family.

SPSC, in collaboration with the Women's Resource Center, spent a day wrapping an estimated 180 items. In total, SPSC spent \$2122.32, funded through our Middle-Income subsidy. At pick up there were a few student-parents in tears, so grateful. It meant a lot to these student-parents. SPSC and WRC also received emails thanking our departments for arranging this project.

Parent Night Out

Student-parents find it difficult to balance not only the financial needs of attending school and raising a family, but also the social and mental strains it places on them. Balancing studies with parenting duties can be overwhelming and very isolating at times. Parent Night Out, and some months Parent Day Out, can provide student-parents the gift of time, relaxation, and release from stress. Having uninterrupted time away from child caregiving duties can provide a student-parent time to engage in hobbies, exercise or pursue other leisurely activities.

SPSC, in collaboration with ASUU, VPSA, and UKids Student Child Care Programs, offers a Parent Night Out (PNO) for student-parents one Saturday every month. The service is provided free of charge for student-parents. Children are cared for at one of the student child care programs, UKids East Village or UKids Presidents Circle, by their qualified staff. In December and June, a Parent Day Out is scheduled. This gives parents the opportunity to participate in activities they may not regularly be able to during the 5:30-9:30 evening hours. During the 2023-2024 academic year, 242 families participated in PNO. Staff cared for 357 children ages six weeks to ten years old. Student-parents have reported that having regular access to free child care during PNO contributes to their overall well-being.

Crimson Kids

Crimson Kids is a drop-in child care service offered during tailgating and game time for the University of Utah home football games. The service is provided in the UKids Guardsman Way child care center, located in the tailgating parking lot. Child care is open to anyone, but is offered free for student-parents. Student-parents are also given free football tickets as available to attend the home football games. This is an excellent way for student-parents to relax, have fun, and network with other student-parents.

This program acknowledges the importance of student-parents' well-being and mental health by providing opportunities for them to enjoy themselves without worrying about who is safely caring for their child. This support benefits not only the student-parents but also their entire families. With another opportunity to interact in the campus environment, student-parents renew their focus towards people, passion, and purpose.



189 families
participated



329 children
6 weeks-10 yrs.



93% Extremely
Satisfied

Finals Week

SPSC, with ASUU, VPSA, and UKids Presidents Circle, has been providing free child care during finals week for 18 years. This initiative showcases a commitment of the SPSC office to the well-being and success of student-parents, by recognizing the unique needs of parenting students and promoting a supportive and comprehensive campus environment. By offering support and care for their children during a crucial time like finals week, we can ease the burden specific to student-parents by actively contributing to their academic success. Being able to focus on their exams and coursework without worrying about child care can make a huge difference in their ability to perform well in their studies.

All student-parents, regardless of enrollment in an on-campus child care program, can participate in Finals Week care. Pre-registration is required in order to plan for staffing, but remains completely free for student-parents. During the 2023-24 academic year, 94 families participated in the service, 122 children between the ages of six weeks and six years received care



94 families
participated



122 children
6 weeks-6 yrs.



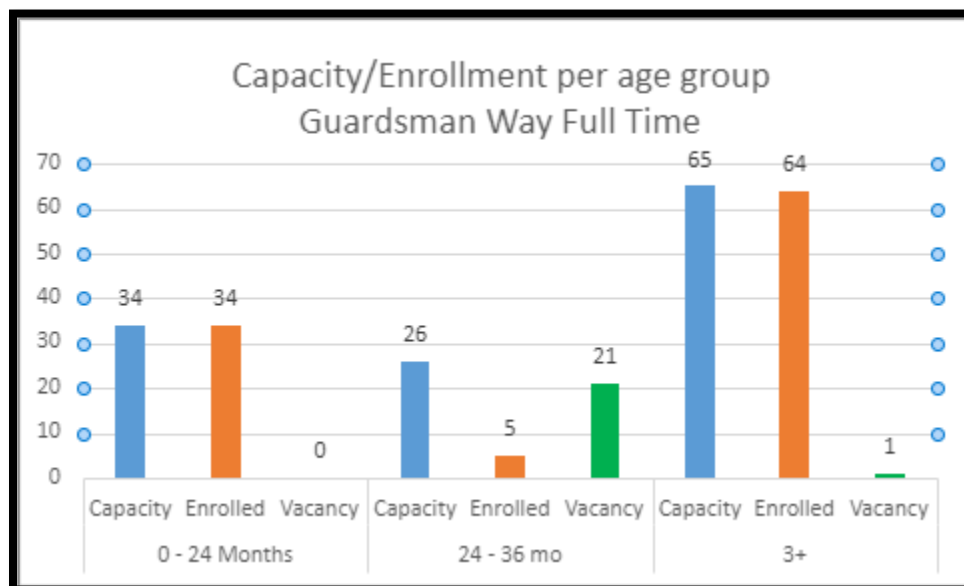
97% Extremely
Satisfied

UKids Guardsman Way

Located at 545 Guardsman Way, UKids Guardsman Way (GW) is the largest child care program on campus. It can serve up to 125 children of university families. GW accepts children six weeks- six years old throughout ten separate classrooms. Those classrooms include five infant rooms, two 2-year old rooms, and three preschool rooms.



In the past, GW has primarily focused on providing child care services to children of faculty and staff. However, a student scale fee has been implemented and 16 slots are reserved specifically for student-parents. This initiative reflects a commitment to supporting student-parents and recognizes the importance that child care has on their academic pursuits, while also meeting their family responsibilities. By offering child care services specifically aimed at student-parents, SPSC and GW acknowledge the unique challenges that student-parents face and seek to create an environment that fosters academic success while catering to the needs of the whole family. Student-parents can form social groups connected with their children in specific age groups, meet while attending parent/child activities, and bond over shared experiences. The child care programs are uniquely poised on campus to help student-parents find their people, passion, and purpose.



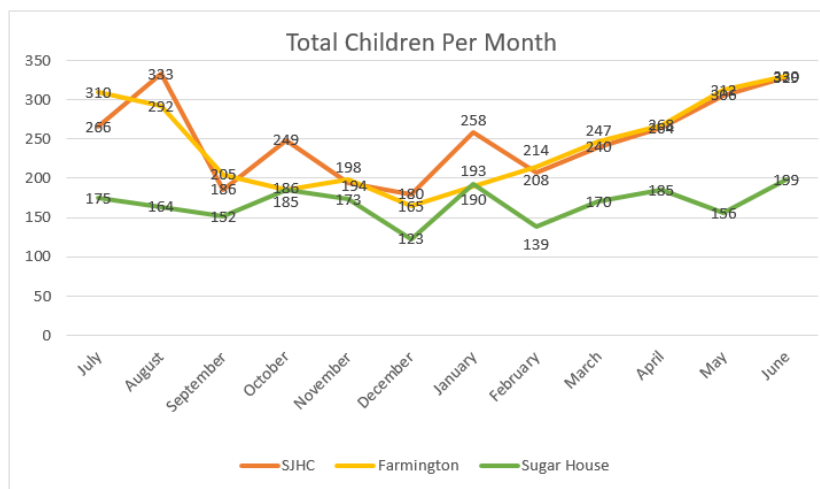
UKids Health Centers

The UKids Health Centers have experienced a remarkable year of growth, successfully supporting an increasing number of children and families. Across the UKids locations in South Jordan, Farmington, and Sugar House, a total of 7,944 children received care, representing a 21% overall increase from the previous fiscal year.

- UKids South Jordan: 29% increase
- UKids Farmington: 19% increase.
- UKids Sugar House: 12% increase.

As we advance into our fourth fiscal year post-pandemic, we remain committed to growth and strategic marketing efforts. UKids Health Centers continues to lead the way in innovative drop-in child care within a health system context. We are proud to collaborate with other health systems nationwide to provide quality care to children and families in vulnerable health situations.

In addition, UKids Health Centers remains dedicated to supporting the Student Parent Support Center at the University of Utah. By assisting student-parents with on-campus child care, we help ensure that Middle-Income student-parents have access to affordable care, supported by our administrative budget. This year's achievements highlight our ongoing commitment to excellence and our mission to support the well-being of children and families within our community.



Child Care State Collaboration

Over the past few months, SPSC has worked closely with seven major universities and colleges in the state to establish a coalition for on-campus child care. Participating in the N4C conference and fostering collaboration nationwide highlighted the need for this collaboration within Utah's higher education system and the area of child care. This initiative aims to ensure that student-parents, faculty, and staff receive the highest quality care available on campuses statewide. Additionally, this coalition will collaborate with other professionals to proactively influence state legislation. This initiative underscores

our commitment to enhancing the quality of child care and early education, ensuring that our community benefits from the best possible support and resources.

SPSC played a pivotal role in creating the Utah Higher Education Early Childhood Coalition (UHECC). The coalition's vision is to elevate early care and education through innovation, collaboration, and advocacy across higher education institutions, communities, and government. The coalition's governance will consist of an executive committee, with one delegate representing each institution in the state. Kara Hinson has been chosen as the delegate for the University of Utah.

The Big Clean

The Big Clean is an extensive initiative aimed at enhancing the organization and unity of our childcare centers, drawing from research in Early Childhood Education emphasizing the significance of a decluttered and intentional environment. This project involved removing clutter, organizing materials, and replacing outdated furniture and flooring. Classrooms were redesigned with new layouts based on best practices, ensuring that materials matched the developmental needs of the children. Offices, storage areas, and shared spaces were also systematically cleared and organized.

Spanning across three on-campus centers, this effort encompassed 23 classrooms, four offices, three teacher planning rooms, and numerous storage spaces. The classrooms were outfitted with new, high-quality Community Play Things furniture and durable, child-friendly flooring. Emphasizing the "less is more" philosophy, the project drew from a University of Toledo study showing that fewer materials lead to less distraction, longer playtime, more sophisticated play, and higher quality learning.

Our team engaged in extensive research and virtual tours of various centers following these best practices to inform our vision. The beautifully revamped rooms have garnered national recognition, receiving praise during N4C conference classroom tours. This initiative has ensured our centers are aligned with the latest Early Childhood Education best practices, creating an optimal learning environment for our children.



MAJOR CHALLENGES

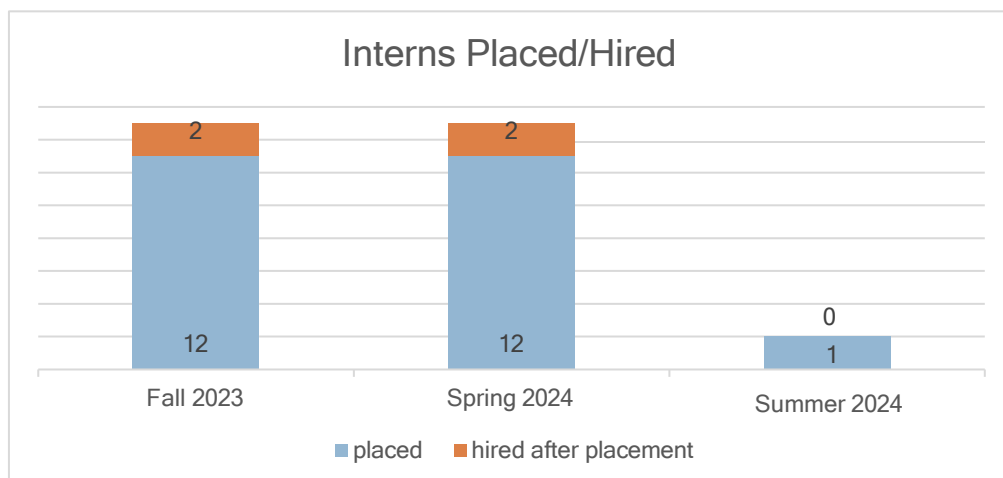
Staffing

Hiring and retaining our child care staff continues to be a major challenge and concern for our department. The ability to attract and retain qualified, benefitted staff is essential for maintaining our high-quality of care standard and meeting the demand of child care services on campus. This challenge is not unique to the child care programs at the University, but is a crisis facing the nation as a whole. This issue has several overarching reasons that are industry wide. We are trying to address several of them as outlined below. However, we are not likely to overcome most of these challenges in the near future with the current resources available to our department.

Shortage of Qualified Staff

One of the primary issues facing the child care industry is a shortage of qualified staff. Child care centers often struggle to find and hire individuals with the necessary qualifications, such as Early Childhood Education degrees or relevant certifications. This shortage can lead to increased workloads for existing staff, compromised quality of care, and difficulties in meeting accreditation requirements.

To address this issue, SPSC is participating in an Early Childhood Education Internship Program in collaboration with the Department of Family and Consumer Studies. Qualified interns in the child development program are placed in our UKids Child Care Programs and under the direction of an experienced educator and given lead responsibilities in early childhood classrooms. Student interns participate in classroom activities, interact with children and their families, and learn the various aspects of the early care and education field. These experiences help the student intern develop skills such as effective communication, classroom management techniques, and understanding child development. Often times, the child care programs hire the student interns as qualified full-time teachers.



Low Compensation

Child care workers and early educators are typically paid low wages compared to other professions with similar educational requirements. The low compensation levels make it challenging to attract and retain talented individuals in the field.

Of course, increasing funding to the child care programs would seem the best solution to increased wages. During the pandemic and subsequent years, federal and state governments have offered sustainability grants to child care programs, including all three UKids Child Care Programs on campus. This allowed for two bonus payments and the increase in wages for all teaching and caregivers. However, grant funds were greatly reduced in October of 2023 and will be completely stopped in August 2024. Without the sustainability grant funds, parent tuition rates will need to be increased substantially to sustain the increased wages that were implemented during the previous year.

High Staff Turnover

Due to the combination of low pay and demanding work conditions, the child care sector experiences high staff turnover rates. Frequent turnover disrupts the continuity of care and hampers the establishment of strong relationships between staff, children, and families. It also places an additional burden on remaining staff members who must constantly adapt to new team members and pick up added duties as staff members leave.

While some of our child care staff have remained at UKids, well over two thirds of UKids child care staff have worked one year or less. We continue to work diligently on training, professional development, and staff morale to retain qualified, professional staff.

Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development is crucial for maintaining high-quality child care practices. However, limited access to ongoing training and development opportunities is a significant concern in the industry. Insufficient funding and resources, as well as time away from caregiving duties for professional development programs, hinder the ability of child care staff to enhance their skills, stay updated with best practice, and advance their careers.

Over the past year, our department has made significant progress in implementing a comprehensive professional development plan. Our Health and Safety Trainer and on-boarding process, along with the implementation of in-service training, a mentor/coaching training program, and the initiation of a career ladder system, have set a solid foundation for the growth of our PD plan. However, addressing time away from caregiving duties and refining delivery methods will remain the primary challenges for our developing system.

Rising Costs

As the cost of living continues to rise and inflation affects the overall economy, our child care programs are feeling the effects of those increases. Utility, food, and regulatory fees are just a few of the expenses that are rapidly growing. In addition, the rising cost of wage and benefits in an industry that operates on very small margins, has made the operation of the UKids Child Care Programs very difficult. With the federal and state sustainability funds from the COVID-19 pandemic decreasing and ending in August 2024, the increasing operational costs of a quality early care and educational program will need to be passed on to parents through increased child care fees. Current tuition rates for student-parents are already at record high levels and with the high demand for the available child care spaces, student-parents are facing significant financial and accessibility challenges. This makes it critical to find subsidy funds to help student-parents pay for the ever-increasing child care tuition that helps support quality child care. SPSC will continue to advocate for student-parent friendly initiatives and funding that make it possible for parenting students to enroll, persist, and graduate from the University of Utah. Our goal is to ensure that child care and raising a family are not barriers to earning a degree.

New/Continuing Strategic Initiatives

1. Create Proactive & Personalized Pathways: Automate our Check-in Process

- We are working with the Assessment office to simplify/streamline the check-in process for students and student-parents who visit our office and events. They will be able to tap their card to register in office. This will not only help us to log who visited our office but also allow us to follow up with them and include them in future programs and/or activities. We hope to also use this information to survey and learn from the students about what their specific needs are and how we can best meet them.

2. Revitalize Engagement and Belonging: Early Childhood Educator Interns

- Continue to collaborate with Family and Consumer Studies to offer real world early childhood education internships. This collaboration is going well with seamless transitions into the classrooms. The students are reporting a general sense of belonging and gratitude for the teachers that they are working with and for the rich teaching experience they are gaining.
- Certify three of our master teachers in nation-wide coaching program through Weber State training program to be better equipped to mentor interns. This is a three-semester long program (one and a half years). Our first cohort of five has graduated and our second cohort is one third of the way through their program. As more lead teachers enter the program, more lead teachers express interest in joining.

3. Optimize Health and Wellness Access: Student-Parent Support Services

- Continued interdepartmental collaboration and student referral. We work closely with the offices on campus that help other under-served groups of students and actively refer students to them for support and services as needed.
- Increase family centered activities throughout the semester, collaborating with other departments and building networking opportunities. Possibilities include:
 - Family movie night
 - Trunk Or Treat
 - Spring family picnic
 - Family play date

- QR Code scavenger hunt for student-parent campus resources
- Continue to provide and expand the Health and Wellness Activities and Mental Health Breaks for student-parents that are vital for student-parent and their family's success. Incorporating mental health breaks into routines can have profound positive effects on both personal and professional aspects of life. Our services include:
 - Parent Night Out
 - Finals Care
 - Crimson Kids and Free Football Tickets
 - CCAMPIS subsidy
 - Middle-Income subsidy
 - Diaper Bank Services
 - Student-Parent Giving Tree Christmas Support
 - Networking Activities for Student-Parents (at meeting, at activities, at planned social groups)

In the past year, the Student Parent Support Center has focused its priorities and made significant strides in enhancing support for student-parents. We've expanded our services, ensuring accessibility and affordability for a larger number of caregiving student-parents. Our comprehensive programs included consults, child care, a financial subsidy, mental health and wellness resources, family activities, and a student-parent advocacy group, and a free diaper bank. All of which foster a holistic approach to student-parent success. We also wrote for and received grant opportunities, providing vital financial support to those in need. Collaborations with local organizations and the Department of Student Affairs enabled us to continue to offer a broad range of services and resources. Through these efforts, we believe students will see a marked improvement in their academic performance and well-being, reaffirming our commitment to their success and the mission of the University and the Department of Student Affairs.