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# Campus Child Care in Ohio: An Assessment of Characteristics, Quality, and Challenges

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Campus Child Care in Ohio: An Assessment of Characteristics, Quality, and Challenges

Cassandra L. Milham

The University of Akron

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## Introduction

When selecting an institution of higher education, students must look at the diverse array of schools to best fit their needs. There are myriad factors to consider when selecting a college or university. Characteristics such as size, location, housing, academics, student support, and academic programs are all important considerations. As the economy changes, non-traditional students are returning to school in higher numbers. Some of the needs of non-traditional students are different than those of the traditional student population. Non-traditional students are more likely to have caregiving responsibilities in addition to their academic duties (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005; Eckerson, et al., 2016). In day-to-day responsibilities, many parents rely on the availability of child care. Unfortunately for student parents, there has been a decline across the country in campus child care (Eckerson et al., 2016). In fact, in spite of the growing need for child care on college campuses, “less than 50% of public college and university campuses in the United States provide child care for either their students or faculty on their campus” (Eckerson et al., 2016, p. 2). It seems counterintuitive that there would be a decline in this particular student service at a time when there is a growing demand for it, but the trend has only accelerated as university’s budgets are becoming more constrained due to declines in state support of public higher education (Hinrichs, 2017).

Access to quality child care is no small issue for student parents or universities. In fact, it can be a critical factor in student retention and graduation. According to the one study, the “primary reason for nontraditional female students dropping out of college is due to children and their responsibilities as a parent” (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005, p. 917). Although this is often cast as a women’s issue, parenthood can cause men to drop out of college as well as women. The researchers further found that “parents of infant, toddler and preschool children showed 50%

decrease in completing their degree” (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005). The authors suggested that one solution was to provide available and affordable child care on the campus.

Not only do campus-based child care centers help meet the child care needs of student parents, but campus child care can also be essential to the academic mission. When set up as a lab school, this form of campus child care promotes the development of the child development profession. Lab schools provide opportunities for research, training in early education, and is a model for the early childhood profession (McBride, 1996, p. 17). Nonetheless, non-lab child care centers still provide services that continue to assist in the academic mission of serving students with educational opportunities.

In spite of the importance of campus child care to student success and academic mission, and in spite of the demand and demonstrated need for it, we actually know very little about the campus-based university nationwide or in Ohio specifically. We know centers have closed over the years (Eckerson et al., 2016), but the Ohio Higher Education webpage is the only list of centers. As I found, it does not appear to be up to date.

The purpose for the current study is to learn about the characteristics and quality of campus child care with colleges and universities in the state of Ohio, with a focus on how these centers may serve the university and surrounding communities. This study asked directors of campus-based child care centers about the benefits, challenges, and services provided to the students and university, support received by the university, how the center supports the academic mission, and indicators of the quality of care provided (e.g. accreditation).

## **Literature Review**

### **Quality Early Childhood Programming**

The quality of child care centers can vary dramatically. Quality is essential; high-quality child care and preschool have been shown to have benefits for infants, toddlers and young children, particularly those most at risk (Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2012). Conversely, low-quality child care can have a deleterious impact on development (Votruba-Drzal, Coley, Maldonado-Carreño, Li-Grinig, & Chase-Lansdale, 2010). There are several developmental benefits of high-quality early education, many of which are long-term. Some benefits include better academic performance, fewer behavioral issues, and better social skills compared to peers who did not have the benefit of quality child care (Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017).

Quality is assessed using a plethora of factors; these include curriculum, family engagement, staff qualifications and training, teacher-child ratios, the physical environment, consistency of care, cleanliness, staff turn-over, and more (Mathers, Eisenstadt, Sylva, Soukakou, & Ereky-Stevens, 2014). All these factors play into healthy development in the various domains for children. Unfortunately, children living in low-income families, who tend to benefit the most from high-quality care, have the least access to high-quality care (Black et al., 2017).

### **Accreditation**

One objective indicator of quality is accreditation. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the national association that offers accreditation that is most widely known and accepted. This organization's vision statement states that, "All young children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential"

(NAEYC, n.d., par. 1). NAEYC is an important voice in early child development. NAEYC conducts current research in early education and child development, promote Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) for early education, and advocates for inclusivity. NAEYC understands that to provide the best possible foundation for children is to understand that it takes a multifaceted perspective, “family, culture, community, and society” (NAEYC, n.d.).

Accreditation shows that a center meets the high-quality standards NAEYC has set in place. Earning NAEYC accreditation involves a Four-Step Process. These standards are in the following areas: “(1) relationships, (2) curriculum, (3) teaching, (4) assessment of child programs, (5) health, (6) staff competencies, preparation, and support, (7) families, (8) community relationships, (9) physical environment, and (10) leadership and management” (NAEYC, n.d., par. 7). Programs must send in reports annually to demonstrate that they are keeping up with the accreditation standards (NAEYC, n.d.).

### **Statewide Rating Systems**

In Ohio, another type of assessment of a center’s quality is Ohio’s system of Step Up to Quality (SUTQ). This is a five-star rating scale, with five-stars being the highest rating a center may receive, and zero stars being the lowest rating. This rating system not only evaluates the quality of child care centers, but it also incentives quality programming. Centers that receive funding must keep a rating of three stars (Ohio Department of Education, 2018). Not all centers participate in SUTQ (O’Donnell, 2015). Ohio has roughly 2,000 center-based programs participating in SUTQ, and SUTQ participation will be required for all centers in Ohio by 2020 (Child Care Aware of America, n.d.). Star rating is determined through a variety of areas, or domains. Some domains that are evaluated include curriculum, staff education, staff

management, transitions, communication and engagement, and more (Early Childhood Ohio, n.d.).

### **Indicators of Quality**

The early childhood environment is a key indicator of quality. It allows growth and development in the various domains (e.g. physical, intellectual, etc.) (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Centers assess the quality of the environment as they evaluate the overall quality of the program (Wechsler, Melnick, Maler, & Bishop, 2016). The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) and The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) are commonly used instruments that assess the quality of a center's environment. ITERS focuses on infant/toddler, and ECERS focuses on the overall environment. Aspects such as curriculum, interactions, staffing, and more are considered and evaluated. Changes may be suggested and implemented after assessing a center with these rating scales (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, n.d.)

### **Teacher Qualifications**

Professionally educated teachers in early education is another indicator of quality. Having highly qualified teachers means understanding developmentally appropriate practice. Another indicator of quality is through low teacher-student ratios (Wechsler et al., 2016). Fewer children particularly is associated with better outcomes for children. With implementing low ratios and small class sizes, this allows higher quality interactions with the children, as well as a greater focus on the needs of the children. Child Care Aware of America (n.d.) lists the following NAEYC recommendations for staff-child ratios when seeking accreditation:

- “Birth to 15 months – 1:3 to 1:4



- 12 to 24 months - 1:3 to 1:4
- 21 to 36 months – 1:4 to 1:6
- 2 to 3 years – 1:6 to 1:9
- 4 years – 1:8 to 1:10
- 5 years – 1:8 or 1:10”

### **Parent Engagement**

A quality program must promote and encourage positive interactions with the teachers and parents. Not only does this help set the child up for success, but it allows the family to be a part of their child’s educational experience (Early Education and Care, 2018). This factor ties in with quality programs valuing multiculturalism in their practice. This helps to understand the diverse backgrounds of the families we encounter in the early childhood setting. Educators should be “bias-free and respectful of the various backgrounds” (U.S. Department of State, n.d., par. 9).

### **Curriculum**

With quality education, there are a variety of curricula centers may adopt. These curriculums include but are not limited to Creative Curriculum, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, High/Scope, and Head Start (Brown, n.d.). It is important to note that the state of Ohio provides Creative Curriculum free of charge for centers that request it. Because of this, the Creative Curriculum is the most widely used curriculum in the state of Ohio. Many centers will utilize this opportunity (Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, 2016).

Curricula vary in terms of focus and are rooted in philosophies or theories of education. Briefly, the most common curricula used nationwide can be described as follows:

- The Creative Curriculum “focuses on adopting a child-centered approach” (Brown, n.d.). This includes providing play opportunities for children to learn through their actions and physically doing the activities and lessons (Barblett, 2010).
- Montessori curriculum is another child-centered curriculum that values “play being child’s work” (Brown, n.d.). There are multi-age classrooms, as children are allowed and encouraged to “learn at their own pace” (Brown, n.d.). The materials utilized are more hands-on, including a variety of manipulative activities (American Montessori Society, 2018).
- Reggio Emilia curriculum “is a project-based approach curriculum” (Brown, n.d.). The idea of emergent curriculum is an implemented characteristic of this curriculum. This is a way for teachers to “engage children through questions and guiding them through their responses” to situations and encounters (The Compass School, 2017).
- Waldorf “is a play-based approach curriculum” (Brown, n.d.). Again, this curriculum values the interactions children have with “the environment around them” (Waldorf Education, 2015). Creativity in curriculum and learning is utilized (Brown, n.d.).
- High/Scope “focuses on active participatory learning” (High Scope, n.d.). Again, this curriculum is more hands-on and allows children to make decisions in their learning. It utilizes the Vygotskian concept of scaffolding. Essentially, parents and teachers “assist children in a way to maximize their learning potential” (High Scope, n.d.).
- Head Start is “an early education program for low-income families” (Office of Head Start, 2017). This programming brings in a variety of services to meet the needs and resources of the whole child. Some of the services include “early learning, health, and family well-being” (Office of Head Start, 2017).

## **Challenges in Early Childhood Programming**

Challenges that occur in early education may affect the quality of programs available to families. One challenge faced by professionals who wish to advocate the early childhood profession and quality child care is the low status of the job, which leads to low pay and high turn-over among early childhood teaching staff (O'Connor, McGunnigle, Davie, Waggoner, & Treasure, 2016). Educators see the importance of early education, but this is a view not held by everyone. A survey of teachers in Australia and The United States showed high agreement for the statement: "Early Childhood Teachers make the overall greatest contribution to a children's education." While this was the feeling towards their profession, "they were aware that this was not the view held by those outside their profession. Those outside saw less value on early education when comparing to education within higher grades levels" (O'Connor et al., 2015, p. 7).

There are challenges when it comes to prestige in early education. Although early childhood professionals are helping to shape the minds of future generations, they are among the lowest in terms of pay and occupational prestige (Hofferth, 1996). This is the case in spite of growing regulations and requirements of child care professionals and preschool teachers. Even as the field requires more education and training, wages have remained stagnant. This has led to high staff turnover and burnout among early childhood professionals (Hofferth, 1996). For example, Lindsay & Lindsay (1987) noticed that teachers in early education get paid less than general education in grade schools. The study also finds that early education professionals felt as

if their occupation was not valued or taken seriously as other professions. These could lead to people not going into the field who show passion for early education, as well as potentially lowering the quality of instruction in the classroom.

The researchers saw that among professionals and their friends, the profession of early education “was important to the future of society.” However, the majority of friends of each professional breakdown (excluding directors), said that their job “is much like babysitting” (Lindsay & Lindsay, 1987, p. 101). This finding raises the question of how seriously those outside early childhood education view the profession and the importance society places on early education.

Many of their participants held degrees in elementary education as opposed to early childhood education. Even among the directors of the centers who were interviewed, there was not consistency in formal education. Once again, quality is brought into question when the professionals in the field have not been trained in aspects of early education specifically (Lindsay & Lindsay, 1987).

### **College Students’ Caregiving Responsibilities**

One of the primary reasons for child care on college campuses is the increase of student parents (Eckerson et al. 2016). Student parents have responsibilities that may vary from the typical, traditional student. They go to school for a variety of reasons, whether it is to continue a previous education, to encourage and be a role model to their children, to find a better job, or to give their family a better life. Although, parents who have younger children that require extra assistance show a need for campus child care to best meet their needs as a student (Baus, Dysart-Gale, & Haven, 2005; Lovell, 2014). Through the availability of campus child care, parents

know their children are being taken care of at a high-quality facility that is nearby—which helps them to focus on their studies. This leads to higher retention of these students (Drago et al., 2006).

Student retention is important. When family obligations are a priority, attainment of a degree can prove to be difficult. Taniguchi & Kaufman (2005) saw parents struggle due to the distractions of caregiving. There were also additional costs of school on top of providing for their children that can present challenges to retention and degree completion. In fact, “the presence of young children significantly suppresses both men and women’s college attainment... One additional infant or toddler reduces the chance of degree completion by about 50 percent for both genders” (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005, pp. 924). The researchers saw long-term incentives of parents completing college through being able to motivate their children down the road and being more financially stable with a degree. While motivation credited to student persistence, a support system and resources are equally important to student success. Suggested was a critical resource that campuses should provide child care (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005).

Not only do student parents need child care, but they also have their own health and mental health needs. There is a great deal of mental strain when parents do not take the time to recognize and take care of their stress. Lovell (2014) noticed the lack of services geared towards student parents. They recommended counseling services, campus child care, and child development classes for student parents who show the need for this type of assistance.

Student parents have the responsibilities of their children and family on top of potentially working while going back to school to earn an education. Professors believe students should not work more than 10-15hr/week (Perna, 2010). Unfortunately, this is not possible for most student parents. Student parents must balance work, family, and academic obligation. Access to child

care and the affordability of this service is thus a concern of parents going to school (Simons, 1991).

One study saw that women put their children before their own goals (Baus, Dysart-Gale, & Haven, 2005). This limits the energy and time they can put towards their personal goals and academics, and it creates an added stress that can be difficult to manage without support or services beneficial for their situations (Baus, Dysart-Gale, & Haven, 2005). Again, services such as support groups and parent education would prove to be beneficial for this population. It is something that both parents and professionals see as a necessity, but unfortunately is not always happening on campuses (Simons, 1991).

It is also important to look at how the university sees this issue. In the view of faculty members, the “traditional” student is the default; it is typically the population with whom they have the most experience. Most professors could describe and walk through their class for a traditional student (Zerquera, Ziskin, & Torres, 2016). A study of university professors by Zerquera, Ziskin, & Torres (2016) found that some professors were accommodating to understanding of how this population differs from the traditional college student, but there were some that had more stereotypical views. For example, one professor complained that “non-traditional students were not putting the effort in to understand the material, because they could not readjust their schedule due to parental and family responsibilities” (Zerquera, Ziskin, & Torres, 2016, p. 10).

It is not only students who need child care, but at times, faculty and staff of colleges and universities show the need for this service. They also show the desire to have quality child care that is close to their place of employment. Employers may see child care and parental

responsibilities as unfavorable or incompatible with their place of work. These family responsibilities may take away from the employee's focus on their work (Simons, 1991).

### **School Spending & Affordability**

Over the years, there has been a noticeable increase in tuition costs among colleges and universities. The U.S. Department of Education (n.d., par. 7) states, "Over the past three decades, tuition at public four-year colleges has more than doubled, even after adjusting for inflation." Because of the rising cost of college, many students may not have the means to afford a college education. Unaffordability leads to students having to drop-out for financial reasons (Mendoza, Malcolm, & Parish, 2015). There is a similar finding in Hinrichs (2017) short analysis. Using data from the Delta Cost Project, this commentary showed how "tuition has been increasing over the years for students, but revenues are decreasing for the state and local governments." In recent years, this trend was accelerated in part because of the recession. More people were attending college, but state funding was limited and cut across the board. In Ohio specifically, "tuition rose 4.8% between 2008-2017" (Mitchell, 2017).

In January 2016, the Delta Cost Project published *Trends in College Spending 2003-2013*. They broke down spending into various categories and found the most increase of expenditures in student services. In fact, student services had the most growth within these categories. These services enhance the student's success during their time at the school. Services such as career centers, academic advisors, and availability of mental health services are merely a few of what schools were putting more funding towards (Desrochers & Hurlburt, 2016). All of these are important and needed for the success of students, as we invest in all of these services,

we are seeing disinvestments in campus child care centers. This decline is unfortunate, since, as noted previously, child care is a valuable service for student retention and graduation.

Universities and colleges are trying to make their institution appealing and marketable to students. One thing that may be added to the budget to create this appeal is athletics and sports. College sports are a tradition, especially football, and the conventional wisdom is that a well-funded program makes the school more attractive to prospective and current students. Schools typically have their student body pay fees every year for sports, even if they are not an athlete. It is a way to fund the college's program. In fact, "one statistic shows over \$10.3 billion to athletics through mandatory student fees and other subsidies within the past five-years" (Wolverton, Hallman, Shifflett, & Kambhampati, 2015, para. 6). The priority of athletics funding over investment in campus child care is something that we should be re-evaluating as we move towards models of student success that incorporate the needs of non-traditional students.

### **Cutting Funding for Child Care**

With the numbers of campus child care centers diminishing, we need to consider why this is happening. Child Care Aware of America (2017) informs us that Ohio has an 89% availability in overall child care centers, while Eckerson et al. (2016, p. 2) found the national availability for campus child care to be "53% among 2-year and 4-year public institutions." While some campus child care centers receive financial help from colleges and universities, not all are fortunate enough to have this happen. Budgets and financial constraints tend to be a stressor for center directors (Myers, 2009). Centers have received financial support through "student fees, paying for maintenance and utilities, covering salaries of employees, providing educational experiences for enrolled children, grants, endowments, donations, and more" (Boressoff, 2013, p. 15-19).



Schools cannot always provide the financial assistance that would be beneficial for the operation of a child care center. Budget restrictions may lead to declines in financial support from the university. An example would be a school assisting in utilities but not in paying teachers and staff (Townley & Zeece, 1991). If campus child care centers are meant to better the academic atmosphere in both serving the students and the academic mission, these centers need the support of the campus community and administration. These centers cannot create high tuition costs if they expect to be appealing to the students who require these services. Students who need child care need lower tuition rates if possible to improve accessibility. Colleges and universities need to support this service, but support is rapidly declining, if not absent, over the past years (Eckerson et al., 2016).

## **Methods**

### **Participant Selection**

Participants in the current study included universities and colleges in Ohio. Schools were selected based on information from their institution's websites showing that there were child care options associated with their institution. The list of child care options on the Ohio Department of Higher Education website (<https://www.ohiohighered.org/students/prepare-for-college/non-traditional-student/child-care>) was utilized to initiate the list. Following that list, another list of 126 institutions in Ohio from The National Data Base of Scholarships was used to discover more locations that may not have been on the first list. Each institution's website had been searched for child care options. A list of these centers contact information was created to further the process of initial phone contacts prior to sending the questionnaire link.

When developing this list, some universities and colleges had child care listed, but it was no longer available. One college had been listed on the Ohio Higher Education list as having possible child care, but when looking for the contact information, the college website said child care had not existed on campus since 2013. In one of the phone calls, another person said their college had not had a child care center for about three-years now. If an institution that had information listed no longer had a center, a mark was made that there were no longer child care services affiliated. This process provided a concrete list of campus child care, so it was known who to include in the study.

One participant had been removed from the data analysis due to answering “most of the questions did not pertain to us, due to our lack of affiliation with the local college branch.” This incident is another case where the university does not run or outsource child care. They only recommend this location due to its proximity to campus.

The sampling frame began with a list of 46 centers. After conducting phone calls and emails, this list was reduced to 38 centers. Due to the difficulty of finding information on all of the centers, the list was reduced again to 33 centers. These centers received the questionnaire for this study.

### **Demographics of Participants**

The sample size consisted of 33 centers across Ohio. Twenty-two centers responded to the questionnaire. Among the centers that responded, a majority of 44.45% were affiliated with four-year public universities, while 27.27% identified with community/technical colleges, and 27.27% with four-year private universities (see Table 1). The atmosphere of these campuses had been broken down as well (mainly commuter versus mainly residential). Table 2 describes how

many centers were located on branch campuses as opposed to main campuses. Eighteen centers reported that they were located on main or only campuses (81.81%) and four reported that they were located on a branch campus (18.18%).

Table 1

*Type of Campuses Served*

Campus Type	Count	Percentage
Community/Technical College	6	27.27
Four-Year Public University	10	45.45
Four-Year Private University	6	27.27

Table 2

*Campus Setting*

Campus Setting	Count	Percentage
Main Campus	18	81.81
Branch Campus	4	18.18

In Table 3, there is a similar pattern as is seen with the types of campuses taking part in this research. From the options of mainly commuter, mainly residential, and equally commuter and residential, about 41% identified as mainly commuter campuses. There were 31.82% identifying as mainly residential, and 27.27% said they were equally commuter and residential.

Table 3

*Campus Atmosphere*

Atmosphere	Count	Percentage
Mainly Commuter	9	40.91
Mainly Residential	7	31.82
Equally Commuter and Residential	6	27.27

The questionnaire asked the location of the child care center being either on-campus or off-campus (see Table 4). Seventy-seven percent reported that they were located on campus, as opposed to off campus (22.72%). The directors were asked how long their centers have been a part of the campus environment (see Table 5). The average number of years was 30.40-years with a range of 47-years (highest: 52-years; lowest: 5-years).

Table 4

*Campus Location*

Location	Count	Percentage
On Campus	17	77.27
Off Campus	5	22.72

Table 5

*Years Serving Campus*

	Range	M	SD
Years	47	30.40	13.53

Participants were asked to identify where they are organized/affiliated with their institution (Table 6). Responses recorded under “other” were redistributed to “outsource” and “department.” It is seen that 40.90% are organized within an academic department. Among these departments, there are student services, student affairs, education, early childhood, health services, and business and administrative services. There were 5 participants (22.72) identified as being with a college. These colleges included Humanities and Sciences, Education and Human Ecology, Education, Health, and Human Services, Education and Human Development, and Medicine. There were 4 participants (18.18%) identified as being with Human Relations, and 1 center (4.54%) identified with the Provost’s Office. Three centers identified as outsourced. These are mainly outsourced to places such as the YMCA.

Table 6

*Academic Affiliation*

Location	Count	Percentage
Human Relations	4	18.18
Provost's Office	1	4.54
College	5	22.72
Academic Department	9	40.90
Outsourced Center	3	13.63
Other	0	0.00

**Questionnaire Development**

The questionnaire was inspired and developed from a doctoral student at Western Michigan University (Meyers, 2009). From assessing the survey in this dissertation, a modified format was arranged with questions to best meet the needs of this study.

**Research Questions**

The development of these research questions focuses on the quality of child care in the higher education setting. These questions were developed to investigate challenges that may be specific to centers encountering a college and university population and to overall assess the benefits of early education and child care to a campus population. The following questions were created for this project:

1. What challenges do college and university child care centers face? How are they supported?
2. How do university and college child care centers help support the campus and broader community, especially student parents?
3. How do university and college child care centers support the university's academic mission (teaching, research, experiential learning)?
4. What kind of quality is found at university and college child care centers in Ohio?

## **Procedures**

Distribution of an online questionnaire (Appendix A) to 33 centers occurred after conducting 9-days of phone interviews. The purpose of creating an online questionnaire was to make it convenient for the child care center directors and administrators to complete. These professionals typically are on schedules that can vary every day. By collecting data online, this allowed these individuals to complete the questionnaire when their scheduled permitted time.

This questionnaire was anonymous to allow those completing it to protect the integrity of their institution and child care center. Included in the invitation email, invitation reminders, and the welcome page of the questionnaire was the same information provided in the phone calls and emails regarding the purpose and use of the data. This questionnaire contained 29 questions with the following breakdown: 5 extended responses, 2 matrix tables, 17 multiple choice, 4 box selections, and 1 percentage count.

Data collection occurred over the course of 7-weeks (49 days). Three email reminders were sent out during the last 24-days of the collection. Follow-up phone calls were conducted to maximize the potential questionnaire completion.

Once the selection finished, phone calls were conducted with 46 schools. These interviews were done with the administration of the centers, including directors, assistant directors, and site administrators. It took place over 9-days. There were six days with phone calls completed between 1:45PM-5:00 PM and three days with phone calls completed between 9:00AM-12:15 PM. The duration of these phone calls lasted anywhere between 5-minutes to 8-minutes. This duration depended on how long I was put on hold and the information given by the person on the other end of the call. During each interview, the following questions had been asked:

1. What ages is the center licensed to serve?
2. How many children is the center licensed to serve?
3. What are the center's hours of operation?
4. Approximately how many staff members does the center have?
5. Of all the children enrolled, what percentage are of student parents?
6. What is the name and contact information for the best person to complete the questionnaire?

Not all the centers were able to take the time to talk on the phone. In these instances, it was recommended to contact them through email. Five centers were contacted by email to fit their schedules and needs best. The same questions listed above were conveyed in the emails. All centers (both phone contact and email contact) were made aware that the information and data collected would be used for an honors research project with the Williams Honors College at The University of Akron. These administrators were informed the research is to better understand the characteristics, challenges, and benefits of child care in the setting of higher education. They were each informed of the questionnaire that would be sent out and asked if they would be able to complete it once arriving in their inbox. The administrators were aware that the questionnaire



was a component of this research. Contact information for both myself and my academic advisor were given in the phone interviews, as well as emails with the questionnaire link, the start date of the questionnaire, and the end date of the questionnaire. The participants were assured that their responses to the online questionnaire would be anonymous.

The questionnaire was distributed to 33 campus child care centers. There were 23 responses received by the end of data collection. This outcome gave a 69.69% response rate to the questionnaire.

## **Results**

The following contains the results from the questionnaire. Analysis of the findings have been separated into the listed categories: quality, academic mission, support for student parents, and challenges.

### **Quality**

Under quality, questions were asked on the following: NAEYC accreditation, SUTQ star rating, minimum education for lead teachers, implemented curriculum, and assessment and evaluation of their early education program. Table 7 shows that nearly half of the centers reported that they had earned NAEYC accreditation. Ten centers reported that they were accredited, and 12 reported that they were not.

Table 7

*NAEYC Accreditation*

Accredited	Count	Percentage
Yes	10	45.45
No	12	54.54

In Table 8, directors were asked to identify whether their center was SUTQ rated and, if so, and how many stars they had earned. As can be seen in Table 8, the majority (54.54%) of the centers identified their rating as 5-stars. It was noticed that there were no centers with a 1-star rating and only one center with a 2-star rating. There were seven centers (31.81%) identifying as not being star-rated.

Table 8

*Step Up to Quality Rating*

Star Rating	Count	Percentage
1	0	0.0
2	1	4.54
3	2	9.09
4	0	0.00
5	12	54.54
Not Rated	7	31.81

With the minimum education level for lead teachers (Table 9), none of the centers have a minimum requirement below a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential. Half of the centers (50%) required of a Bachelor's Degree, which was the most frequent response. The next most common answer was an Associate's degree (27.27%). A CDA is required by three centers, and a master's degree is required by two centers.

Table 9

*Lead Teacher Minimum Education*

Education Level	Count	Percentage
Less than High School Degree	0	0.00
High School Degree / GED	0	0.00
Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential	3	13.63
Some College (No Degree)	0	0.00
Associate Degree	6	27.27
Bachelor's Degree	11	50.00
Master's Degree	2	9.09
Other	0	0.00

When asked if a curriculum was implemented, the majority of the centers reported the use of a curriculum at their center (Table 10). The most commonly used curriculum was the Creative Curriculum at 54.54% (12 centers). The next highest was identified as "other" at 27.27% (6 centers), but none of the participants responded with what their curriculum was for

this answer. There were two centers (9.09%) implementing a Reggio Emilia curriculum, and one center identified as a Montessori center (4.54%). There was one participant that reported that their center does not implement a curriculum.

Table 10

*Curriculum Type*

Curriculum	Count	Percentage
Creative Curriculum	12	54.54
Head Start	0	0.00
Montessori	1	4.54
Reggio Emilia	2	9.09
Waldorf	0	0.00
High/Scope	0	0.00
No Curriculum	1	4.54
Other	6	27.27

There were a variety of answers given on how the center assesses and evaluates their program. A full list of all the answers is found in Appendix B. Some of the more frequent responses include the following: Program Administration Scale (PAS), the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), evaluations through NAEYC (assessments for classroom, program, and family), and evaluations and surveys done through the parents and staff. Other answers included “accreditation through

American Montessori School (AMS) and the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE),” “Creative Curriculum Implementation Checklist,” and assessments through Step Up to Quality.

### **Academic Mission**

When evaluating the academic mission, the following topics were addressed: primary mission of the center, accomplishments on campus, student experiences, and the center importance in relation to institution’s overall mission.

There was little difference between the missions of “serving as a lab school for university students/providing a model for the best practices in early childhood practice” (40.90%) and “meeting the child care needs of the university/college community” (45.45%). Those were the two highest responses to this question. There were three centers (13.63%) that identified their primary mission as “meeting the childcare needs of the outside community.” Zero centers saw “meeting the childcare needs of at-risk/ low-income families in the community” as their primary mission. Table 11 displays these results.

Table 11

*Center Mission*

Mission	Count	Percentage
To serve as a lab school for university students / provide a model for best practices in early childhood practice	9	40.90
To meet the childcare needs of the university/college community (faculty, staff, and/or student)	10	45.45
To meet the childcare needs of the outside community (paying community members)	3	13.63
To meet the childcare needs of at risk / low income families in the community (e.g. Title XX families)	0	0.0

Centers were asked about their academic impact in a variety of areas (see Table 12). Participants rated items from “not at all” to “to a great extent.” Items included the following: (1) providing opportunities for research and observation, (2) modeling of appropriate pedagogy and early childhood practice, (3) providing work experience opportunities for students, (4) supporting better class attendance for students with children, (5) helping traditionally aged students with children stay in school, (6) attracting graduate students, (7) enhancing the institution’s image, (8) showing a commitment to women and minorities, and (9) attracting faculty and staff to the university. Among these, it is seen that “modeling of appropriate pedagogy and early childhood practice” is rated “to a great extent” by 81.81% of the participants

(18 centers). The second highest rated “to a great extent” was “providing work experience opportunities for students” with 77.27% of the participants (17 centers).

Participants were asked about student employment. As can be seen in Table 13, an overwhelming majority of the centers (86.36%) reported that they employ undergraduate students. This selection was by far the most frequent answer among the participants for this question. Eight centers (36.36%) reported that they employ graduate students. Only two centers (9.09%) do not employ students at all.

Table 12

*Contribution to Academics*

Accomplishments	Not at All		To a Limited Extent		To a Moderate Extent		To a Great Extent		Not Sure	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Providing opportunities for research and observation	0	0.00	1	4.54	8	36.36	13	59.09	0	0.00
Modeling of appropriate pedagogy and early childhood practice	0	0.00	1	4.54	3	13.63	18	81.81	0	0.00
Providing work experience opportunities for students	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	18.18	17	77.27	1	4.54
Supporting better class attendance for students with children	3	13.63	1	4.54	10	45.45	5	22.72	3	13.63
Helping traditionally aged students with children stay in school	3	13.63	4	18.18	5	22.72	8	36.36	2	9.09



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Attracting graduate students	5	22.72	5	22.72	7	31.81	3	13.63	2	9.09
Enhancing the institution's image	0	0.00	2	9.09	6	27.27	11	50.00	2	9.09
Showing a commitment to women and minorities	0	0.00	3	13.63	9	40.90	10	45.45	0	0.00
Attracting faculty and staff to the university	1	4.54	6	27.27	4	18.18	3	36.36	3	13.63

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Table 13

*Student Employment*

Student Type	Count	Percentage
Undergraduate	19	86.36
Graduate	8	36.36
Does not employ students	2	9.09

Addressed next is the availability of student experiences the center offers for students. Participants were able to select multiple options as applicable to their center. As can be seen in Table 14, the top two selections were observations and field experiences (95%). The next highest option, 63% of centers provided work study and research opportunities. Other experiences included internships (45.45%), graduate assistantships (22.72%), and other (13.63%). The “Other” option asked for an explanation. The participants who answered with this category included co-ops and service learning, volunteering for class needs, and practicum hours.

Table 14

*Student Experiences*

Experience Type	Count	Percentage
Work Study	14	63.63
Internships	10	45.45
Graduate Assistantships	5	22.72
Field Experience	21	95.45
Observations	21	95.45
Research	14	63.63
Other	3	13.63
None of these programs are offered	0	0.00

The last question about the academic mission asked participants how vital their center was to their campus. A complete set of the responses are found in Appendix C. There were both positive and negative responses. The negative side of the answers showed that there is a need for child care on campus, but they can only assist to limited extent due to challenges and barriers they face, such as wait lists and center location. Some participants said they could not be of as much assistance due to being further from campus, while others said their proximity is what helps student parents and students needing early childhood educational experience for their children. For the positive themes, the participants felt their programs were important for students in programs such as child development and early childhood education. They help to provide educational opportunities for future early childhood professionals. Students could take advantage

of the center for educational purposes. One director noted, “Other departments use our center as a lab for observations and assessments. Any major that needs to understand child development can utilize the center.”

### **Support for Student Parents**

The next section for the participants covered how they support student parents. Topics for this research question included: percentage of enrolled children who are the children of students and other members of the campus community, center programs for parent, discounts for student/faculty/staff parents, Title XX acceptance, resources for parents, and their importance in meeting the child care needs of student parents.

In Table 15, we see the populations served. There is a considerable difference in the top population served and student parents. Among the participants, the highest percentage of enrolled students were children of “community members not affiliated with the university.” This response had an average of 43.04%, while student parents were the next highest average (19.95%) in the centers. Faculty parents were the lowest served population, averaging at 13.50%.

Table 15

*Population Served*

Group	Minimum (%)	Maximum (%)	M	SD
Student Parents	0.00	80.00	19.95	22.52
Faculty Parents	0.00	42.00	13.50	12.30
Staff/Other University Community Members	0.00	60.00	17.27	18.02
Community Members (not affiliated with the university)	0.00	90.00	43.04	31.86

The participants were asked to select what kind of child care programs they offer. This selection allowed the participants to select all applicable answers. Table 16 summarizes the responses. All 22 centers (100%) have preschool programs (3-years to 5-years). Formal Preschool Sessions was another option found at three centers (9.09%). Other programs included infant care (50%), toddler care (68.18%), and school-age programming (27.72%). From these options, preschool and toddler programs are the most common, while formal preschool and school-age programming are offered least.

Of the offered programs, other options included the nature of the times and programs. For full-time child care, 18 centers (81.81%) offered this option for their families. Part-time child care was provided at 14 of the centers (63.63%). Two centers (9.09%) offered evening child care, and only one center (4.54%) provides drop-in child care.

Table 16

*Programs Offered*

Program	Count	Percentage
Infant Care	11	50.00
Toddler Care	15	68.18
Preschool (3yr-5yr)	22	100.00
Formal Preschool Session(s)	2	9.09
Full-Time Child Care	18	81.81
Part-Time Child Care	14	63.63
Drop-in Child Care	1	4.54
Evening Child Care	2	9.09
Weekend Child Care	0	0.0
Sick Child Care	0	0.0
School-Age Programming	5	22.72

Table 17 and Table 18 address discounts for student parents and faculty/staff parents. Over half of the centers (68.18%) do not offer a discount for student parents, while only seven centers (31.81%) provide this kind of discount. Similarly, a majority (63.63%) of centers reported that they do not offer faculty parents a discount, while eight centers (36.36%) provide a discount option.

Participants were asked if their centers accept Title XX (Ohio Child Care Assistance), Table 19 summarizes the responses. Most of the centers (68.18%) accept Title XX, while seven centers (31.81%) do not.

Table 17

*Discounts for Student Parents*

Student Discount	Count	Percentage
Yes	7	31.81
No	15	68.18

Table 18

*Discounts for Faculty Parents*

Faculty Discount	Count	Percentage
Yes	8	36.36
No	14	63.63

Table 19

*Title XX Acceptance*

Acceptance	Count	Percentage
Yes	15	68.18
No	7	31.81

Participants were asked if they provided resources or support for parents (Table 20). All but one center reported that they do offer these kinds of materials. The 21 centers (95.45%) who do offer these kinds of materials, were asked to identify what they provide. A full list of the responses is found in Appendix D. Of the answers, there were some themes and overlapping responses. Many of the centers offer parent education. Some of the centers provide this in the form of evening events, materials, and parenting classes. Other support included scholarships, agency partnerships, support groups, and parent committees.

Table 20

*Are Programs/Resources Offered for Parents?*

Parent Resources Offered	Count	Percentage
Yes	21	95.45
No	1	4.54



The last part of this question asked participants to either agree or disagree with the following statement: “We play an important role in the meeting the child care needs of student parents on our campus” (see Table 21). While one center disagreed with the statement, there were 14 participants (70.00%) who agreed. Five centers (15.00%) reported that they “somewhat agreed,” and 10.00% said they “somewhat disagreed.”

Table 21

*Campus Importance*

We play an important role in meeting the child care needs of student parents on our campus.	Count	Percentage
Disagree	1	5.00
Somewhat Disagree	2	10.00
Don't Know/Unsure	0	0.00
Somewhat Agree	3	15.00
Agree	14	70.00

**Challenges**

Challenges facing campus child care was the last question addressed. Questions asked of the participants discussed funding, perceptions from the university, and overall difficulties they feel are issues for their center.

Participants were asked, “From what sources do you receive funding?” participants were able to select all applicable options. Answers given under the “Other” category were found to fit

within the other categories of the question. All answers within the “Other” category were able to be redistributed to the appropriate category. In Table 22, we see that majority of the centers (47.36%), receive external funding and funding from their institution. Only two participants (5.26%) reported receiving funding from the department they are organized. Fourteen answers from the “Other” category that were redistributed included funding from Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and tuition payments from the university and families.

Table 22

*Sources of Funding*

Source	Count	Percentage
External Funding (e.g. grants, gifts, or donations)	18	47.36
The university/college	18	47.36
The academic unit in which they are organized	2	5.26
Other	0	0

Participants were asked if they felt supported by the college/university. An option to provide comments was offered (see Table 23). Nine centers (43.85%) reported that they were “well supported by the college/university.” One participant said “The university keeps in constant contact to see what we might need and how they can help. Our contact checks in regularly with us.” A second participant said, “The program has such a long and rich history of

providing services for the University staff. Many staff have utilized services here at one time or another and have become a great supporter across the University.”

Table 23

*Support with Institution*

Do you feel supported by the college/university?	Count	Percentage
Yes, we are well supported by the college/university.	9	42.85
We are somewhat supported by the college/university.	8	38.09
We are not supported much or at all by the college/university.	4	19.04

Eight centers (38.09%) reported that they are “somewhat supported by the college/university.” A participant commented, “Top administrators are aware of us but often don’t understand the importance of high-quality early care and education.” It was also seen by another participant who said, “There is a lack of understanding of the early childhood education field in general. We often have staffing issues and are expected to be self-sufficient with tuition paying for operational needs.”

The last response was selected by 4 participants (19.04%) who said they are “not supported much or at all by the college or university.” Two comments provided said were “We are not recognized or supported financially as we should be,” and “The college supports us in theory. The YMCA is our main support.”

Participants were asked whether they are subsidized by the university (Table 24). The most common response was “the university pays for a few things (e.g. electricity and building maintenance), but that’s all.” This choice had been selected by almost half of the participants (45.45%), in contrast to the 13.63% that responded with “the university covers most or all of the operating budget.” On the other end of the spectrum, 9.09% of the participants argued that, “the university provides no support; the center is 100% self-supporting.” There were a couple of centers (9.09%) that reported “the university provides at least half of the operating budget,” and almost a quarter of the centers (22.72) reported, “the university provides some of the operating budget.”

Table 24

*Operations Subsidized by University*

Extent	Count	Percentage
The university covers most or all of the operating budget.	3	13.63
The university provides at least half of the operating budget.	2	9.09
The university provides some of the operating budget.	5	22.72
The university pays for a few things (e.g. electricity and building maintenance), but that’s all.	10	45.45
The university provides no support; the center is 100% self-supporting.	2	9.09

A challenge with campus child care is having a shared understanding of the center importance among administrators. Participants had been asked how they felt the (1) president, (2) provost, (3) dean, (4) department chair, (5) faculty, and (6) student affairs/non-academic unit of administrators understood the importance of their center. As summarized in Table 25, most centers reported feeling at least somewhat supported by college/university administrators. Though the results were fairly consistent across specific types of administrators (president, provost, etc.), participants reported that they received more support from deans than other university administrators.

Table 25

## Administrator Understanding of Center Importance

Administrators	Not at All		To a Limited Extent		To a Moderate Extent		To a Great Extent	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
President	1	5.00	6	30.00	7	35.00	6	30.00
Provost	1	5.26	7	36.84	4	21.05	7	36.84
Dean	1	4.76	5	23.80	2	9.52	13	61.90
Department Chair	0	0.00	5	23.80	6	28.57	10	47.61
Faculty	0	0.00	4	19.04	10	47.62	7	33.33
Student affairs/non- academic unit of administrators	1	4.76	7	33.33	5	23.80	8	38.09

Among challenges, support from the college/university may affect a center's role in meeting the child care needs of the students. A cross tabulation revealed that the 20 participants who answered these questions, eight centers reported they are fully supported by their institution and agree that they play an essential role in the child care needs of their campus. In contrast, only three centers reported that they are not supported by their institution but still feel they play an essential role in the child care needs of their campus.

The last part of this research question allowed the participants to explain the challenges they face individually as a campus child care center. A complete list of all the responses is in Appendix E. There was a wide range of answers given to this question. Themes with this response included budget constraints, lack of space, need for additional staff, and higher-up administration of the university not understanding the needs of the center. Multiple participants noted there are extensive wait lists. Some participants mentioned that they could not pay their teachers the pay they deserve, which discourages finding high-quality teachers for their center. When writing about university/college administrators, one participant observed the following challenge to their center, "... individuals (president/provost) making decisions about a program that they haven't stepped foot in." When one participant presented the need of expansion and improvements to the center, it was found to be a "struggle to convince the university to support this endeavor."

## **Discussion**

Before beginning this research, little was known about university-based child care in Ohio. The Ohio Higher Education website (<https://www.ohiohighered.org/students/prepare-for-college/non-traditional-student/child-care>) had a list that turned out to have several errors. As a

result of this research, we now have a comprehensive list of campus child care centers in Ohio. Also, nothing was known about the characteristics of these centers, how they fit into the university's mission, what populations they serve, or what challenges they face. The current study attempted to fill in the rather large gaps in our knowledge about these centers. In this discussion, we will discuss the major findings, practical implications, and future directions for research.

## **Characteristics of Campus-based Child Care in Ohio**

### **Quality of Care**

As discussed in the review of the literature, the quality of child care is essential (Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2012). The questionnaire asked about some of the primary indicators of quality, such as teacher qualifications. The vast majority of the participants (over 86%) required some form of college degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's Degree). This shows that campus-based centers are specifically looking for qualified teachers with a proper background in early childhood education. Nationally as of 2016, the average entry education for a preschool teacher is an Associate's Degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). If we look at the national statistics for child care workers, their average entry education is a high school diploma (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). This shows Ohio campus child care is setting their entry requirements above the national average.

Teacher qualifications do affect the quality of care in the center. For example, this can be seen through increased teacher-child interactions (Lin & Magnuson, 2018). When teachers have formal training specific to early education, they have been trained on the milestones of child development and how to help children develop necessary skills. They know how to tweak the



activities to meet individual needs and how to best set up the classroom for the needs of the children. These are a few of the differences between courses containing early education and a formal degree in early education (Lin & Magnuson, 2018).

Participation in a rating system is another indicator of quality (Wechsler et al. 2016). Looking at SUTQ Star Rating, 68.17% of the participants participate in this rating system, and among the participants, slightly over half (54.54%) hold a 5-star rating. In Ohio, only 35.9% of all child care centers participate in SUTQ, and 17.4% of Ohio's child care centers hold a 5-star rating (Child Care Aware of America, n.d.). This shows that campus child care in Ohio is taking the steps to be a demonstration of quality in early education.

Some centers have decided to seek NAEYC Accreditation. Almost half of the centers (45.45%) in this study are accredited. This shows that campus child care centers are willing to undergo a rigorous evaluation process to prove they provide quality programming. In Ohio, only 2% of all the child care centers are nationally accredited (Child Care Aware of America, n.d.). Accreditation and Step-Up ratings help to show programs where they excel and where they can still improve. Through participation in these systems, these centers are promoting quality in a variety of ways. Some of these include developing proper education of their lead teachers, implementing and setting a stimulating environment for adequate growth and development in children, and being inclusive of the families that attend the center (Early Education and Care, 2018).

All the centers except one reported that they implement a curriculum in their center. A little over half the centers participating were using the Creative Curriculum, which as stated in the review of the literature, is provided free of charge by the state of Ohio (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2016). Thus, it was not surprising that most centers would opt to use

that curriculum. Six centers identified as using a curriculum not listed in the question. Unfortunately, those six centers did not provide information on what curriculum they use. An examination of the responses of the director reported that the center did not use a specific curriculum revealed that the center is not star rated or NAEYC accredited. While they reside on the main campus, they serve predominately community members (making up 90% of their enrollment), and they do not offer parent resources. With all of these factors considered, this center's primary mission is to serve as a lab school for the school.

### **Parent Support**

Providing parent support is another indicator of child care quality (Wechsler et al. 2016). All but one respondent reported that they offer parent materials. Centers provide support in a variety of ways. Some of the primary offerings included: parent education (events and discussions), community partnerships, conferences, parent surveys and input on the center, and opportunities to be involved in the classroom. Through providing these forms of support to parents, it continues to show the focus on the family as a part of early education. Parents are not always trained in early education, but they all serve as "the first teacher in a child's life" (Wechsler et al. 2016). The majority of these centers understand this concept and are providing the tools these parents need to continue to be successful in their child's development. Many of these centers reported collaborations with their communities. One participant mentioned their center provides a referral to speech-language pathology services, and another participant indicated that they have social work interns to help connect families with these services. Parents are not always aware of what programs are available, so having the centers guide the families with these services is support some may not have been able to experience. By connecting and

collaborating with the community, centers can create a multi-faceted program with opportunities for families outside of the center.

It is noteworthy that less than half of the centers offered a discount for student parents. It is difficult to pay for child care while in college. Without a discount, some parents may have to look for child care elsewhere. However, over half the centers did accept Title XX for those who qualify for this state assistance program. While this does not help everyone afford campus child care, it does at least help those student parents who have the highest financial need.

Centers understand the importance of helping parents, and they want to be as accessible as possible. The centers attempt to give parents the tools they need to continue proper growth at home. Some participants mentioned they have family engagement events or parent education workshops. Participants mentioned that they have speakers come in to talk about issues in child development and that they collaborate with other agencies, so parents can find the support needed. One participant described how their parent program is set up into stations. They said this about their program: “During these parent programs, the parents come in and go to different stations and learn how important this topic is in their child’s development of learning. We show that literacy can be found in all interest areas (manipulatives, art, dramatic play, sensory, science, etc.). At the end of the program, the children have a take-home bag with some materials that go with the theme of our topic and a book.”

### **Other Characteristics**

There were centers affiliated with an institution though being outsourced. While not being located within an academic unit (e.g. education), Human Relations, or another location on campus, they still felt as if they were essential to the university mission and the success for

student parents. One participant representing an outsourced center said the following on the importance of them to their institution: “The fact that we are located on campus allows the parents the freedom and comfort to continue their education knowing that their child is well cared for.” This center was also one of the few that offered discounts for both university students, faculty, and staff.

Another participant stated that, although their center is outsourced, their primary mission was to serve the child care needs of the campus. When asked about their importance to the university, they said “many students couldn’t go to school here if we were not on campus. Parents can rest easy and be confident in their choice of center.” We saw that they served university students, faculty, and staff through offering a discount at the center as well.

Both participants described academic opportunities for students. They offer observational and research opportunities to students, and one of the centers offered work studies and internships in addition to the first two. Offering these programs is a way to advance the institution’s academic mission through creating educational experiences.

## **Challenges**

Challenges were a focus for this study, since support for campus child care centers have been declining. In a telephone pre-interview, one participant stated, “We are so different than your typical child care center.” In spite of the importance of campus-based child care to providing access to quality child care to student parents, and in spite of the important role many play in supporting the education and training of students in various fields such as Child Development, Early Childhood Education, and Social Work, many participants supported a lack of support from their institution. One participant explained that “people think we are 100% fully

supported and funded, but the reality is the constant struggle for funding and understanding of the center.”

Multiple participants believed that the lack of support of their center stemmed from a general lack of understanding of the importance of early childhood education and care. They felt that administrators at their colleges or universities lacked such an understanding. One participant wrote, “As the director, I am constantly advocating for the work that we do on a daily basis with senior administration.” Another said, “It is hard getting people, higher-ups at the university, to understand what all Early Childhood programs and being a licensed child care center entails.”

Some thought that this lack of understanding reflects a lack of interest on the part of university administrators. One participant wrote, “Individuals (president/provost) make decisions about a program that they haven’t stepped foot in.”

Early childhood and childcare professionals have long suffered from lack of occupational prestige. Numerous studies have found that early education professionals are not viewed as professionals by those outside of their profession (Follmer, 2008; Goeman & Guo, 1998; Glick, Wilk, & Perreault, 1995; Lindsay & Lindsay, 1987). These opinions affect the quality of campus child care centers. If the upper administration does not understand the center and its importance to the university community, it will be harder for centers to receive the needed support to benefit not only the student and faculty parents who utilize the center but also programs that depend on the center to further the academic mission of the university/college.

Lack of adequate resources causes a myriad of problems. Some participants described higher demand than they can accommodate, which forces student parents and others onto wait lists. Some of the participants said they need to expand to serve the campus and community better. However, this is not a simple task when they need to convince those without an early

education background. One participant said, “We would like to expand to infant-school age care and also update our current facility, but we struggle to convince the university to support this endeavor to expand and renovate. There are a million hoops to jump through to change, add, or expand our program.”

A center must follow state licensing rules, and most campus-based centers had even lower teacher to child ratios due to accreditation or SUTQ requirements. This means that a center can only accept so many children given the size of the center and their current staffing. There are no “cutting-corners,” especially if providing a quality program.

Another challenge observed was the funding and support of these centers. The center directors who reported that they were well supported by their institutions were more likely to say they can meet the child care needs of student parents on their campus. Due to lack of support and budget cuts, one participant said, “Three master degree level teachers have quit and moved on... It has been difficult to hire due to the low pay.”

Paying teachers was another challenge. Having teachers with formal education (Associates, Bachelors, Masters Degrees) is an indicator of quality (Wechsler et al. 2016). If centers cannot pay their staff well, it will be more challenging to find quality educators. As one participant stated, “Attracting high-quality lead teachers is very difficult when they can go to the public school and make twice what they would here.”

### **Budget Cuts**

Budget cuts are an issue with many college campuses. Nationwide, the trend has been declining in state support for higher education (Hinrichs, 2017). However, sometimes this may be a matter of institutional priorities and redistribution of resources. While many types of student

services have been receiving more funding, unfortunately, campus child care has seen disinvestment (Desrochers & Hurlburt, 2016). During the process of attempting to contact the campus-based child care centers on the Ohio Higher Education list (<https://www.ohiohighered.org/students/prepare-for-college/non-traditional-student/child-care>), I found that some centers had closed. It was not always clear why, but the trend of decreased funding for campus child care, seems a likely factor in centers closing. Directors of outsourced centers explained that the university dropped them altogether. The centers were not closed, but instead were simply no longer affiliated with the institution. The overall answer given to this was the university either ran out of funding to continue outsourcing them or would not assist much in funding.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the small pool of participants. This study was limited to child care centers affiliated with colleges and universities in the state of Ohio. Regarding the sample size, this made statistical testing impossible. Though generalization of the results outside of Ohio is not possible, it is important to note that Ohio is relatively typical when considering in terms of child care and overall demographics (National Center for Education Statistics n.d.). Ohio is average among categories such as “median household income, persons in poverty, populations by age, and education level” (United States Census Bureau n.d.)

### **Suggestions for Future Directions**

It is essential that this study be replicated in other states so that we have a more accurate picture of the availability and challenges of campus-based child care nationwide. Each state has

its own unique characteristics and needs. By studying individual states, we could learn about variations in the quality and services offered with campus child care. The more research into campus child care, the more we can continue to advocate for this crucial student service.

On a policy level, it is vital that we continue to advocate for resources to go to universities and colleges, and that we better convey to university and college administrators the crucial roles that campus child care can play in the university's mission. Not only is it a critical service that enables student parents to persist and succeed academically, but these centers also often serve as lab schools that provide research, teaching, and experiential learning opportunities for various units across campus.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to assess the characteristics and challenges of campus child care centers in Ohio. While we found that child care in this setting is declining, we see that it continues to serve not only student parents in need of child care assistance, but it also serves the academic missions of higher education institutions. This was seen through the educational opportunities found at many of the centers in this study. It is important to understand that this research is only a start to analyzing campus child care on the state level. Through research, we can continue to assess challenges, benefits, and quality of campus child care. We cannot let this essential student service die out. Together, we will shed light on its importance in our society as we move forward in higher education and the early childhood profession.



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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire



#### University Child Care Survey

Hello! My name is Cassandra Milham, and I am a child and family development student at The University of Akron. I am an honor's student in the Williams Honors College at UA. This questionnaire is a component of my senior honors research.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to analyze the current state of child care centers on college and university campuses in the state of Ohio. This questionnaire was designed to be completed by directors or their designees who are familiar with the center's operations. This survey will provide information about the variety of child care options available to college campuses in Ohio, how the centers are run, and what populations they serve. This information will be helpful in determining the challenges and opportunities for campus child care in Ohio.

By clicking the arrow below, you are giving your consent to participate in this questionnaire. Your answers are completely anonymous, and you may leave the questionnaire at any time if you would like. The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes of your time.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [cfh.honors@gmail.com](mailto:cfh.honors@gmail.com) or my honor's advisor, Dr. Pamela Schulze, at [schulze@uakron.edu](mailto:schulze@uakron.edu).

**Background and Demographics**

Please provide some demographic information so that we know a little about you and your center.

---

What type of campus do you serve?

---

How would you describe the campus atmosphere?

---

Are you serving a main campus or a branch campus?

---

Where is your center located?

- On Campus  
 Off Campus

How many years has your center been a part of the campus environment?

---

Is your center accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)?

- Yes  
 No

---

If star rated through Step Up to Quality, please indicate your rating.



## Organization

Please tell us a little about how your center is organized in relation to your college or university.

Under what department, college, or division are you located at your institution?

Human Relations

Provost's Office

College

Department

Outsourced Center

Other

## Mission/ Center Characteristics

Please identify the percentage of children enrolled for each of the following groups of coenrolees serviced by your center (combination of both part and full-time children). **The percentages must total 100.**

Student Parents

Faculty Parents

Staff/Other University Community Members

Community Members (not affiliated with the university)

Total

What is the primary mission of your center? (Please select only one.)

To serve as a lab school for university students / provide a model for best practices in early childhood practice

To meet the childcare needs of the university/college community (faculty, staff, and/or students)

To meet the childcare needs of the outside community (paying community members)

To meet the childcare needs of at risk/ low income families in the community (e.g. title XX families)

To what extent has your center been successful in accomplishing the following:

	Not at all	To a limited extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	Not sure
Providing opportunities for research and observation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Modeling of appropriate pedagogy and early childhood practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing work experience opportunities for students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting better class attendance for students with children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping traditionally aged students with children stay in school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attracting graduate students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enhancing the institution's image	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing a commitment to women and minorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attracting faculty and staff to the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What types of programs does your center offer?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infant Care                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Drop-in Child Care      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toddler Care                | <input type="checkbox"/> Evening Child Care      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool (3-5)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekend Child Care      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formal Preschool Session(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sick Child Care         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-Time Child Care        | <input type="checkbox"/> School -age Programming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part-Time Child Care        |  |

What kind of curriculum do you implement?

What is the minimum education level for your lead teachers?

---

If you employ students, please indicate what types of students you employ. Please select all that apply.

- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- We do not employ students.

---

Do you offer any of the following experiences for students? Please mark all that apply.

- Work Study
- Internships
- Graduate Assistantships
- Field Experience
- Observations
- Research
- Other (please explain)

- None of these programs are offered

---

How do you assess and/or evaluate your program?

**Fee Structure and Funding**

---

Does your center offer a discount for student parents?

- Yes  
 No
- 

Does your center offer a discount for faculty parents?

- Yes  
 No
- 

Do you accept Title XX?

- Yes  
 No
- 

From what sources do you receive funding? Please select all that apply.

- External funding (e.g. grants, gifts, or donations)  
 The university/college  
 The academic unit in which you are organized  
 Other (please specify)

To what extent are your operations subsidized by the University?

- The university covers most or all of the operating budget.  
 The university provides at least half of the operating budget.  
 The university provides some of the operating budget.  
 The university pays for a few things (e.g. electricity and building maintenance), but that's all.  
 The university provides no support; the center is 100% self-supporting.
- 

Do you offer any resources or support for parents (e.g., parent education, parenting support groups, educational materials, etc.)?

- Yes  
 No

## Challenges

---

Would you agree or disagree with the following statement?

We play an important role in meeting the child care needs of student parents on our campus.

Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

To what extent do you feel that administrators at your college/university understand the mission of your center and its importance?

	Not at all	To a limited extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	Not applicable
President	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provost	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Department Chairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student affairs/non-academic unit administrators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Do you feel supported by the college/university? (Please explain.)

Yes, we are well supported by the college/university.

We are somewhat supported by the college/university.

We are not supported much or at all by the college/university.

As a university/college affiliated child care center, what challenges do you encounter?

### Final Thoughts

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In your opinion, currently how important is your center to your campus (e.g., the overall mission of the institution) and why?

Please feel free to share any other comments you may have.

Thank you for completing this survey! Please email [cfh.honors@gmail.com](mailto:cfh.honors@gmail.com) if you would like to get a summary of the results of this study when they are available.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about this survey, please contact Dr. Pamela Schulze, [schulze@uakron.edu](mailto:schulze@uakron.edu).

## Appendix B

### Responses: How do you assess and/or evaluate your program?

Omissions are represented with [X] to keep anonymity among the participants.

1. NAEYC classroom, program and family assessment, Step Up To Quality family, program, classroom assessment.
2. Community assessment, self-assessment, employee/staff survey, parent/family survey
3. We have annual parent surveys we send out. We believe in on-going communication with parents as well for their feedback. I do an annual assessment called the Program Administration Scale. (PAS)
4. Use the PAS and the CLASS
5. We use the PAS for the program and the ITERS/ECERS/ELLCO for classrooms.
6. Parent Evaluations along with the NAEYC self study
7. Metrics towards goals aligned to our strategic plan.
8. Staff and Parent Surveys
9. Yearly parent survey Continual reflection of practice through regularly scheduled faculty meetings, leadership team meetings, advisory board meeting. All lead and associate teachers are observed and evaluated annually. All teaching assistants (student employees) are observed and evaluated each semester. All faculty participates in survey of the administrative team annually.
10. PAS, NAEYC Family Survey, NAEYC Teacher Survey
11. A rating scale call the PAS and ECER-R. Also through Step Up and State Licensing Benchmarks and Rules
12. We have accreditation by AMS and MACTE, observation, staff evaluations

13. We are accredited through NAEYC. We submit annual paperwork and go through the full process every 5 years. Parents also evaluate our program annually.
14. We use the ITERS and ECERS classroom assessment tool. We have staff and parent surveys annually.
15. Through staff surveys, family surveys.
16. The program completes an annual self assessment and also conducts an annual parent survey. This information is utilized to assist with strategic planning.
17. We use the ITERS, ECERS, and PAS
18. We formally and informally evaluate throughout the year
19. Program Administration Scale (PAS) ITERS-R (Toddler classroom) Creative Curriculum Implementation Checklist (Preschool)



### Appendix C

**Responses: In your opinion, currently how important is your center to your campus (e.g., the overall mission of the institution) and why?**

Omissions are represented with [X] to keep anonymity among the participants.

1. I think it's very important and it's my job to make sure we stay involved in the campus community as well as the broader community. The campus supports the mission and vision of our program!
2. It is extremely important. Many students choose to come to [X] because we offer childcare. They stay enrolled because we offer childcare. We recruit and retain. Faculty and staff stay for the same reasons. We can employ students to cover part-time hours, students can fulfill their volunteer hours here, and do service projects. Other departments use our Center as a lab for observations and assessments. Any major that needs to understand child development can utilize the Center. Having children on campus brings a lot of joy too. We trick-or-treat on campus, we have lemonade and apple cider stands in the quad. We get very positive feedback from everyone on campus just by being present and interacting. It gives our parents great peace of mind knowing their little ones are close, and being well cared for and loved. Students have so much on their plate, this provides a little relief.
3. We are not located on Campus.
4. We have an extremely long waiting list, so the need is there. Often times, university higher ups do not understand that we can't just create spaces. We will be asked to provide space when someone is hired, but we don't have the space to give.....

5. Our program fits the new emphasis on theory to practice. We work with many departments across campus. We bring prospective education students through our lab school and use it as a recruiting tool, as many small liberal arts schools do not have a education lab school.
6. Our program reflects the university's commitment to social justice and inclusion by providing a foundational high quality education to children and families who may otherwise be unable to access it.
7. I don't think you can underestimate the power of high quality early childhood programs. We provide programs for the children of faculty, staff, and students so they can work/go to school worry free and know their children are close by. We also play an integral role in the training of future teachers via our Early Childhood program.
8. Our center is a critical part of offering high quality care for the [X] employees. We are also a demonstration school the university's school of education students. Sophomore level students are required to complete 45 hours a semester of time in our infant, toddler and preschool classrooms. We offer a unique opportunity to students learning in the college classroom and then being able to work in a classroom and see the philosophies, curriculum and the development of young children. We also offer quality care for children who are of low socioeconomic status as we accept title XX. We are also a [X] provider. This allows families who may not be able to afford care at our center to enroll and receive tuition assistance dollars.
9. I think our school is very important to the mission of our university. It is also has had the powerhouse of changing education in this country.

10. All sophomores in the early childhood program must do fieldwork in our center. We graduate more education majors than any other college in the state. For those reasons, I believe we have a very important mission on campus! Unfortunately, lab schools are becoming a thing of the past. I hope we can continue to be a benefit to the university, as well as provide a top notch preschool program for families.
11. We serve a vast amount of families here in the [X] area, providing high quality child care and early education that allows families to participate in and fulfill their responsibilities to the university. We also provide support for academic units and the early childhood community, by offering opportunities for study and research by students, faculty and colleagues.
12. I think the longevity alone speaks to the overall importance of our program to the campus. We currently are able to provide services for 430 infants/toddlers/preschoolers/kindergarten, and still maintain a waiting list between 600-800 children. The average enrollment wait can be up to 18 months wait time. The university has an early childhood education program so we are also used for teaching and field experiences as well.
13. The fact that we are so located on campus it allows the parents the freedom and comfort to continue their education knowing that their child is well cared for.
14. All sophomore ECE majors spend a semester field experience in our Preschool. They gain a lot of valuable knowledge through observation and a hands-on experience in our classroom. They read the DAP handbook and write journal entries as part of their course work. They also see best practices modeled. The students comment about how much they learn during their placements with us.

15. The President feels that the center is a community outreach and she is a big believer in the University being a major part of the community. With that being said it is not always evident at the college level as we are located downtown.
16. I think we're important - we provide a service that helps the students with children. Many students couldn't go to school here if we were not on campus - transportation is a HUGE issue with many of my parents. Our accreditation and 5 star SUTQ rating also makes us a selling point for student families - we provide top notch, high quality care right here on campus - parents can rest easy and be confident in their choice of center.

## Appendix D

### Responses: What kind of [parent] resources or support is offered?

Omissions are represented with [X] to keep anonymity among the participants.

1. community resources, early childhood mental health consultants, home visits, parent/family/teacher conferences, family engagement events, policy council (parent driven council)
2. Parent support groups, use of our wellness center, parenting materials given out, a list of community resources is available, and we help them find community resources based on their needs.
3. We have many different resources from community organizations, etc.
4. Parent education programs, scholarships, resources, parent committee, volunteer opportunities.
5. Parent education evenings
6. parent article, advisory committees
7. Speech Language Pathology services for qualifying students, Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic on site, fully-functioning library and librarian on site, social work interns supervised by the school assist families in job procurement, housing and utility needs. Parent discussion group meets monthly on topics of interest generated by parent survey.
8. We offer parent programs once every semester. Our past parent programs have been block play, art, literacy, community helpers, etc... During these parent programs the parents come in and go to different stations and learn how important this topic is in their child's development of learning. We show that literacy can be found in all interest areas - manipulatives, art, dramatic play, sensory, science, etc... At the end of the program the

children have a take home bag with some materials that go with the theme of our topic and a book.

9. Many educational resources available for families. We also have a Family Services Coordinator who supports the families and their many needs.
10.  Parent Organization provide information for parents when presentations are held on topics of interest
11. Resources that provide parents with opportunities or other resources to help them emotionally, physically, and financially. (any extra support they may need, we will guide them to where they can get assistance.
12. Scholarship parent education parent involvement coffee talks-issues parent want discusses observation room
13. We have had speakers in to discuss parent selected issues. We have open houses and special interest nights (math, literacy, make-it/take-it) We've had a parent committee that acts as a liaison between families, teachers and ad staff.
14. We offer parenting classes. We offer support to families with children who have disabilities that are enrolled in our center. We have therapy staff and we offer Early Intervention coaching to families and our teaching staff.
15. partnerships with the following agencies- center, ,  Family Center, Help Me Grow. As well as educational programming for parents; example- child guidance and discipline workshops for parents, etc...
16. The staff are the primary resource for parents who have educational/developmental questions and/or concerns. We also offer opportunities for parent participation both in

classrooms or the center. We also try and plan parent education opportunities based on parental input.

17. Help me grow, parent workshops, information from the health department, and Job and Family Services
18. Parent Sessions, Open House, Parent Teacher Conferences, Information sent home with students, Informational literature rack for parents/community members, etc...
19. Parent Cafe's, Parent Advisory Board, Strengthening Families (4C), Personal one-on-one contact with staff

## Appendix E

### **Responses: As a university/college affiliated child care center, what challenges do you encounter?**

Omissions are represented with [X] to keep anonymity among the participants.

1. Always a balanced budget. Attracting qualified staff and maintaining their employment.
2. Dealing with ever-changing schedules, and being able to provide enough staff to adapt to those changes. Financial challenges of running a program while offering childcare at a very reduced rate. Students bringing in sick children because they have no childcare back-up.
3. Our situation is complicated as we are a "partner" of the university, but not employees of the university. Sometimes it is challenging to get outside grants and funding, because people think we are 100% supported by the university.
4. The teaching staff having enough time to address needs of children/university students/parents. State licensing often has difficulty with how to accommodate our university students who work at the center. We are so different than your typical child care center.
5. Operating hours and students expecting drop in care. Only 1 classroom--with an extensive waiting list.
6. Our program serves a very diverse child and family population by design, to better reflect the teaching experiences our future teachers in the college may encounter in the work force. In addition, we support many research projects on best practices in early education, conducted by faculty, graduate and undergraduate students. Funding for at-risk children



and families to support this mixed-income model in early education is always a challenge. Families do not need to be affiliated with the university to attend.

7. Financial, of course, we are essentially self supporting. Our biggest worry is teacher salaries as they should be much higher than they are. Attracting high quality lead teachers is very difficult when they can go to the public school and make twice what they would here.
8. I have tried to receive approval to hire an Assistant Director with no luck. There will be a time we will need to restructure our administrative team. It has been challenging to staff all the classrooms maintaining a ratio that allows us to demonstrate best practice. As the director, I feel challenged with maintaining the waiting list, annual reports, step up to quality, two teacher observations each year (22 teachers), developing professional development plans with teachers, supervising 25 staff members, weekly staff meetings, parent communications, handbook updates, paperwork updates, facility issues, managing interns and researchers, tours from prospective parents, tours for schools with students in ECE (high school), involvement in initiatives, preschool promise, food program, Title XX. Also PAS, surveys, and taking the information gathered from surveys and creating a continuous improvement plan. It is challenging to maintain but also to create an environment where we can set goals to improve, research latest information in the field and then set up an environment that invites teachers to learn, support and mentor students. Another challenge has been hiring highly qualified teachers with our pay being so low.
9. We would like to expand to infant-schoolage care and also update our current facility, but struggle to convince the university to support this endeavor to expand and renovate.

10. There are a million hoops to jump through to change, add, or expand our program. All professors see us as an important part of the University.
11. We don't receive recognition for the benefit we provide pre-service teachers. Our center isn't utilized by other schools/departments as a research facility. Students with children do not receive a discounted rate in tuition. Teacher/administrators have a lot to do and aren't recognized for the time/effort that's put in.
12. out growing our space, long waiting list for families, individuals (president/provost) making decision about a program that they haven't step foot in,
13. Even though there is a tremendous amount of support for the child care program, we are always challenged with finding the goodness of fit within the higher education setting. Our mission is to provide quality early educational services for the children of faculty/students/staff so that they can perform their duties for the university and attend coursework. As the director I am constantly advocating for the work that we do on a daily basis with senior administration.
14. The biggest challenge we face is that because we are on campus most people think all we serve is college students and faculty.
15. It is hard getting people, higher ups at the university, to understand what all Early Childhood programs and being a licensed child care center entails.
16. Being open when the university is closed - they must keep staff on campus in case we need something (ex: snow day) Cleaning the center - their idea of clean is not our idea of clean