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# Structural Obstacles for Women in Academia: Availability and Costs of Campus Child Care

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*Women face tremendous obstacles to success in academic institutions. While we have witnessed incredible progress in some areas of representation of students, staff, or faculty who are women, outcomes by gender continue to be impacted by structural challenges in higher education. One structural barrier is the availability of child care. The article examines the availability and characteristics of child care centers at institutions with a public service commitment to social equity, as evidenced by offering degree programs accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Public Affairs, and Public Administration (NASPAA). Findings indicate that, of the 173 schools with NASPAA-accredited programs, 127 schools (73%) provide some type of child care for students, faculty, or staff members. However, the average full-time cost per child exceeds affordability guidelines which indicates a significant structural factor in child-care accessibility. While findings are descriptive, this study provides evidence of institutional barriers for women in academia.*

**I**n 1972, with the signing of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it became illegal to discriminate against individuals in higher education programs on the basis of sex. Under those amendments, for the first time, women were legally protected in their pursuit and representation in higher education. In the last four decades, the representation of women as students and alumni in higher education has skyrocketed. The American Council of Education (2016) reports, for the last three decades, students who are women earned half or more of all baccalaureate degrees and, for the last decade, students who are women have earned half of all doctoral degrees. Nonetheless, the postsecondary outcomes achieved by women are not translating into representation in tenured faculty and campus leadership, nor equitable income levels for women employees or alumnae.

The state of representation is concerning, but when applying a social equity lens, it is undeniably problematic. In public administration programs seeking accreditation from the

Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), institutions must “demonstrably emphasize public service values” within their programs, defined as “goals to build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels” (NASPAA, 2019a, p. 9). The public service values that undergird a Master of Public Administration program, for example, must be holistic and grounded in institutional commitment to public service values. The disciplinary commitments and actions of public administration programs to values of diversity has previously been explored by Rivera and Ward (2008) from a racial equity perspective, but we expand this discussion to include gender equity. Providing an empirical discussion, we also build on the work of Edwards, Holmes, and Sowa (2019) who theoretically explore the structural barriers that impede women from being hired, promoted, and in leadership of academic ranks in public administration programs and departments.

This research contributes to the discussion of representing women in academia by reviewing the presence and operational characteristics of campus child care centers in a college or university setting. The research question guiding this work is: How do NASPAA schools vary in their support of women in academia through available and affordable campus child care centers?

This focus on institutions offering degrees in public policy, administration, and affairs is purposeful, as these institutions have an institutional commitment to public service, a value which may influence the likelihood of offering child care on campus for faculty, staff, students, and the community. Providing campus child care services is one way to remove a structural barrier to improve inclusivity for faculty, staff, and students. Increasing diversity among faculty, staff, and students is imperative for all institutions, but especially for minority-serving institutions which diversity can improve student success on campus (Gooden & Martin, 2014). This research purposefully examines institutions with NASPAA-accredited programs as the public service values at work in supporting those programs may also lead to a potentially stronger focus on supporting faculty, staff, and students.

Our article begins with a discussion of the structural challenges facing women in academia with a focus on underrepresentation, impacts of work-life policies, and the benefits that supportive childcare can provide to women in academia. Next, we discuss our methods for collecting data from various administrative datasets and university websites to build a dataset for analysis. We present findings from our data and a discussion of the major observations. These findings pre-date COVID-19 and serve to highlight challenges prior to the pandemic. Concluding comments and opportunities for future research follow.

Important to note, this article refers to women throughout. We intend for the term “women” to include all individuals who identify and/or present as women. Therefore, when we reference women, we include all individuals who consider themselves to be a woman. Likewise, this article refers to parents with the intention to be inclusive of all family and caregiving arrangements. By using the term parent(s), we mean any individual who identifies as a caregiver to child(ren).

## **Overview of Structural Challenges Facing Women in Academia**

Women face a myriad of challenges that prohibit access, representation, and success in higher education. When classifying the ways that oppression manifest toward women, the challenges can be classified as structural, cultural, or personal (Gulati-Partee, 2019). While there is an important need for research to explore cultural and personal forms of oppression, the focus of this work is on structural forms of oppression. Examples of structural challenges facing women in academia include, but are not limited to, policies, discourse, physical space, budgets, and workloads. In other words, these are challenges that manifest in observable

domains of organizational culture (Dolamore, 2019; Gooden, 2014; Testa & Sipe, 2013). We focus on these challenges because, as Feeney, Carson, and Dickinson (2019) state about representation of editors who are women in academic journals, when obstacles are structural they are also changeable. We explore four of these structural challenges in higher education: underrepresentation, policies promoting work/life balance, access and availability of childcare, as well as emerging challenges from COVID-19.

### *Underrepresentation*

The representation of women in academic public administration is an ongoing area of concern. In all disciplines, women are underrepresented as faculty on the tenure track but overwhelmingly hold positions as full-time lecturers, part-time adjuncts, or as graduate students (Shulman et al., 2016). Within public administration, only a handful of studies purposefully focus on faculty who are women (see, Scutelnicu, Knepper & Tekula, 2019; Sabherwal, 2013; Slack, Myers, Nelson, & Sirk, 1996). Sabherwal (2013) finds that women are less likely than their peers to be full professors and make the same salary. Although Sabherwal (2013) found that women who are faculty were less likely to be a department chair, Edwards, Holmes, and Sowa (2019) note this may be changing as they found in 2018 that 56% of chairs or deans were women in the top 25 public affairs departments by U.S. News and World Report rankings. Still, research finds that women are underrepresented in public administration journal publications as well as in leadership roles for academic journals (see Feeney, Carson, & Dickinson, 2019 and Scutelnicu & Knepper, 2019). Scutelnicu, Knepper, and Tekula (2019) examine faculty research productivity in NASPAA-accredited schools with specific attention to gender and rank, with findings that women are less productive than men even when accounting for time, rank, tenure status. The decreased research productivity also creates an impact on citations and representation in the literature overall. For example, underrepresentation of women is pervasive throughout the public administration curriculum. In MPA introduction courses, less than 20% of assigned readings are by authors who are women and a very small percentage of programs (5%) have courses on gender diversity (Hatch, 2018).

For students enrolled in NASPAA-accredited programs, the majority of these students are women. From 2013 to 2017, the NASPAA Data Center (2019b) reports that 60% of enrolled students in accredited programs are women among 112 institutional respondents. While NASPAA collects data on student enrollments, programs do not report on graduation rates or employment rates broken down by demographic groups such as gender or race. Programs may have diverse students enrolled, but without data on student persistence and outcomes, it is nearly impossible to unpack if the representation in enrollment translates into student success. Perhaps this is why Edwards, Holmes, and Sowa (2019) note it is not enough to promote front-end solutions, such as recruitment or affirmative action efforts, but substantive solutions that explore the many structural challenges faced by women are needed.

The reasons for underrepresentation are many but efforts can and should be made to address both symbolic and descriptive representation of women as faculty and students in public administration programs. The following section will explore how institutions can support specific policies that benefit women in caregiving roles.

### *Institutional Policies to Support Work/Life Balance*

Work-life balance can be challenging for parents and organizations adapting to the needs of communities. Work-life balance in higher education faces its own challenges and consequences. Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) discuss work-life balance in a manner that seeks

to assess relative differences in the benefits and burdens of work, defining it as "... experiencing greater interrole facilitation and enhancement than interrole conflict and depletion" (p. 496). They further outline how "balance" may imply that someone can achieve a state of perfect equilibrium, however, "... academicians that have children may be prone to suffer frustration from having to limit their attention to either the professional or parental domain" (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006, p. 498).

Caring for children and elderly dependents are primary causes of work and family role strain among college faculty (Elliott, 2003; Wyatt-Nichol, Cardona, & Drake, 2012), and child care has long been identified as a primary concern for dual-couples in higher education (Smart & Smart, 1990). Valcour and Batt (2003), in their study of highly educated, professional or managerial employees with a relatively high level of control over their work found that, despite these advantages, a considerable amount of work-family conflict still persisted. As with others in teaching and instructional positions, faculty members in institutions of higher education can be viewed as key front-line workers, with significant discretion over their activities and tangible impact on students (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Museno, 2003). Job-related stresses can shape those interactions, and also manifest as absenteeism, turnover, and reduced productivity in academic faculty (Lease, 1999). University employees were more negative towards their workplace's work-family climate when compared to that of a sample of corporate employees (Anderson, Morgan, & Wilson, 2002).

A number of positive and supportive structural factors exist that help organizations promote a culture of work-life balance. Comprehensive work-family policies, supportive department chairs, and mentorship can all positively influence work-family balance in both public service (Feeney & Stritch, 2019) and academia (O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Wyatt-Nichol, Cardona, & Drake, 2012). Feeney and Stritch (2019) find that employer provided child care has positive and statistically significant effect on work-life balance, though there are gender differences in these perceptions of employer-provided child care. Raabe (1997) finds that specific types of policies helpful in this regard such as job assistance for spouses, paid family leave at childbirth or adoption, financial assistance for child care, elder-care programs, and on-campus child care (Raabe, 1997). Higher education institutions with flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies can be more attractive to faculty, such as the case in many community college campuses (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Twombly, 2007). Connelly, Degraff, and Willis (2004) found that employer-sponsored child care is perceived as helping organizations to maintain a competitive position in the industry. Not surprising, advocacy for work-family policies, is strong among those with dependent children in higher education (Anderson, Morgan, & Wilson, 2002), and campus child care centers positively reflect such policies (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). The impact of these several components of policy and culture as they relate to family friendly policies can be significant, including impacts on processes like tenure and promotion of women faculty (Wyatt-Nichol, Cardona, & Drake, 2012).

#### *Available and Accessible Child Care*

The challenges of child care for parents in academia has long been recognized by scholars and advocacy groups. Existing research indicates that the presence of a child care center on campus is beneficial for parents, whether they are faculty, staff, or students, and for institutions (Boswell, 2003). These types of facilities offer parents who work or study on campus conveniently located care for their children, reduce related logistical stresses, and potentially reduce financial burdens. As Boswell (2003) notes, these centers can "...

contribute to an institution's success in recruiting and retaining faculty and students with childcare responsibilities” (p. 2).

A historical backdrop for the cultural environment that women have faced in academia is an important part of this discussion, as it can influence the decisions made in the more contemporary work-life balance by women and administration. The campus child care center becomes a more prominent work-life resource when framed into the historical context of women in academia. Clark and Corcoran (1986) outlined cultural barriers, “particularistic experiences” of sexism and discrimination, as well as the structural-institutional impediments for women entering academic careers. Women continue to be underrepresented in academia, especially among the tenured and highest-ranking faculty (Perna, 2005). Armenti (2004) notes that women encountered childbearing/childrearing problems and research dilemmas in academia as well as denial of tenure and promotion, calling for a restructuring of academic careers in order to effectively accommodate women with children in the profession. Armenti (2004) further suggests that a number of changes would add support for women, including “... university daycare facilities that cater to the working hours of faculty members and early sabbaticals for infant care would constitute progress toward the inclusion of women as full members in the academic profession” (p. 21).

The challenges of navigating child care and academia are not limited to faculty members; students attending or employed by higher education institutions also need support to balance work and family life demands. Sandler and Hall (1986) underscored the challenges and hostile campus climate for women in higher education, whether they were faculty, students, or administration. Evidence suggests that the student population needing this support is on the rise, outgrowing other groups of students across all regions and all institution types (Noll, Reichlin, & Gault, 2014). At the same time, research also shows that the availability of on-campus child care is declining and raising concerns about how institutions will support students with families (Noll, Reichlin, & Gault, 2014). Supporting students is critical not just for their own success, but also for creating change in the academy. Scholars note the impact of limited family-friendly policies, for students in particular, such as subsidized child care on campus, contributes to the “leaky pipeline” of women exiting the academy as students or new faculty (Bodkin & Fleming, 2019).

Likewise, non-instructional employees at institutions of higher education who also care for children need access to child care. Nationally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the U.S. Department of Labor has found that employer-funded child care is offered to 27% of employees at junior colleges, 4-year colleges and universities (Stoltzfus, 2015), a rate that is higher than for other service-providing industries. However, trends indicate that half as many part-time employees do not have access to this benefit (Stoltzfus, 2015). This is a problematic observation considering many individuals working part-time who may need child care already face a proportional disadvantage in income-earning impacting the affordability of care, but also because research shows that these positions are more likely to be filled by black or Hispanic women due to historical and institutional barriers to success (Fisher, 2015).

Given the challenges faced by women in academia, it is little surprise that research finds they are more likely than men to strongly support the need to promote work-family policies (Anderson, Morgan, & Wilson, 2002). Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) suggest that having an affordable, high-quality child care facility on campus can help women faculty overcome reluctance to rely on nonparental care and in turn attend to academic roles with added attention. Supporting women faculty, specifically with on-site child care programs, is particularly critical in subject areas where women are underrepresented, and Bauman, Howell, and Villablanca (2014) view on-site child care as a critical next step in addressing

these disparities. Likewise, Carr, Gunn, Kaplan, Raj, and Freund (2015) call for a systematic review by medical schools to achieve gender equality in academic medicine where a disproportionate burden of family responsibilities and work-life balance on women's career progression. Ultimately, the potential impact of child care centers on campus can have a beneficial impact on women in academia.

### *Emerging Challenges of COVID-19*

Amid the impact of COVID-19, the conceptual understanding of work-life balance is being re-framed. As institutions pursue hybrid or distance learning models, so are local school boards and child care centers for young children. The implications for these decisions are profound as closed schools and child care centers means working caregivers assume the roles traditionally filled by child care professionals and teachers. Already, there are reports of the detrimental economic impact of COVID-19 for women compared to men globally (Madgavkar, White, Krishnan, Mahajan, & Azcue, 2020) and for women who can work from home, there is an increase in both caregiving and employment-related work (Ibarra, Gillard, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020). Findings from the summer of 2020 show that women overall are leaving the workforce at 1.3x the rate of men (Coury, Huang, Prince, Krivkovich, & Yee, 2020). In academia, research productivity by women appears to be declining (Malisch et al., 2020; Gabster, van Daalen, Dhatt & Barry, 2020) as evidenced by reports from journal editors show that in the spring of 2020, journal submissions were rising overall but almost entirely by male scholars (Flaherty, 2020). At the time of writing this manuscript, in the last months of 2020, we acknowledge that the unique challenges of working as a women during a pandemic has not yet been fully felt and, therefore, fully explored by research. This will be an area to monitor and explore in public administration scholarship in 2021 and beyond.

### **Data and Methods**

At the heart of this research is an effort to understand the types of child care centers that serve higher education institutions with public affairs programs. Colleges and universities with public affairs programs inherently have an institutional commitment to public service, a value which may influence the likelihood of offering child care on campus for faculty, staff, students, and the community. This is reflected in the research question guiding this study, asking: *How do NASPAA schools vary in their support of women in academia through available and affordable campus child care centers?* This research uses original descriptive data collected directly from institutions housing NASPAA-accredited programs via public-facing websites and related child care and human resources documentation, and matched data on institutional characteristics for each NASPAA institution pulled from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The processes for obtaining and analyzing these data are detailed below.

### *Defining Childcare and Childcare Centers in Academia*

Child care centers vary significantly in the scope of services provided, characteristics and populations served, and cost. The child care programs at the center of this research focus on a number of characteristics identified by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Child Care, a unit of the United States (US) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These characteristics include location in commercial settings; providing for increased capacity for children (as opposed to home-based centers); groupings of children in similar age ranges; professionalized staff with a clear organizational structure, oversight, and formal credentialing; and ownership by public, for-profit, or non-profit organizations with

differing missions (ACF, 2019)

This article uses the term “child care” to encompass the various centers and programs that offer parents care for their children as they attend to their school and work responsibilities at their respective universities. We focus on programs providing care for children from ages birth to five years old, as this age group represents those requiring significant care and attention but are unable to attend kindergarten; the age of five years old is a common threshold used by public schools throughout the US for entry into kindergarten. In order to capture the various types of care of children options for parents at academic institutions, this research team defines child care as *a licensed program or center where a child receives structured and developmentally-appropriate care from adults with other children between ages birth to five years old*. For reasons of inclusiveness, we include programs that limit care to only certain ages within the range, and centers that may only offer care on a part-time basis.

#### *Data on College- or University-Based Child Care*

The selection of accredited programs was based on the 2018-2019 roster provided through the NASPAA website accessed on July 1, 2019. The total number of institutions identified for analysis was 173. After identifying the institutions relevant for this study, a comprehensive list of variables was generated, which was then used for data collection that assessed characteristics of child care centers. The data was collected via each institution’s website and child care facility website. Only publicly accessible information was used. Responses were collectively reviewed by the authors, and questions of coding of center characteristics were reviewed on an iterative basis to ensure consistency of coding.

#### *IPEDS Data*

Matched data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) were pulled for each institution housing a NASPAA-accredited program with a child care center. Data available in IPEDS are institutional-level data that are publicly available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a center within the Institute for Education Sciences under the US Department of Education. Institutions of higher education submit data to NCES in the form of 12 surveys spread across three periods in the calendar year. These surveys are required by all institutions that receive federal funding, such as financial aid for students or grants to conduct research. Institutional responses are subject to quality control measures within the institution, by state administrative bodies, and by federal employers at IPEDS. Data are reviewed during a preliminary release and again during a second provisional release, as a robust data checking effort to ensure high quality data available for public use. Data are available from approximately 2,000 IPEDS variables across 7,000 institutions and standardized to allow for comparison.

While there is an abundance of data available for analysis in IPEDS, not all of the institutional variables were relevant for analysis. Given the variation in cost of care by location, the authors selected information related to college or university locale to extract from IPEDS, and descriptive statistics are used to assess the several characteristics identified as important here. Our findings are presented in the next section and, viewed broadly, these findings are consistent with previous research. Boswell (2003) found that 88% of campus child care centers are located on campus, 35% are managed by an academic unit, 92% provide care for students, 83% care for staff and faculty, 68% care for the community.



**Findings**

An improved understanding of the availability and characteristics of child care centers in NASPAA accredited schools is important in how we think about the support needed for faculty, staff, and students managing the pressures of academic and personal lives at schools with a commitment to public service and social equity. Here, we present descriptive data about these centers focusing on their availability to and prioritization for key constituencies, location of care and full versus part-time status, accreditation, the cost of care.

Table 1 presents a count of the total schools accredited by NASPAA, those providing child care, and the number of centers per school. Of the 173 schools with NASPAA-accredited programs, 127 schools (73%) provide some type of child care for students, faculty, or staff members. A vast majority of those – 115 out of 127 – have a single center per school, while 12 programs have two or more centers serving the campus and/or community populations. A total of 72 centers provided information on the year established, which varied from a minimum of 0 years (established in 2019) to 91 years of service, with a median of 45 years. Of those, just over 18% (13 centers) have been in service for less than 25 years, nearly 60% (43 centers) have been in service from 25–50 years and slightly less than a quarter (16 centers) have been in service for more than 50 years.

**Table 1 Count of NASPAA Accredited Schools and Child Care Centers**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Count</b>
Total NASPAA Accredited Schools	173
Total Schools with Child Care Centers	127
Total Child Care Centers	150
<b>Centers Per School with Child Care</b>	<b>Count</b>
1 Center	115
2 Centers	4
3 or more Centers	8

Note: Counts here represent publicly available data listed on official college or university websites. Instances in which data were not available or addressed are omitted.

Not all child care centers provide services for those affiliated with the university and the surrounding community. Table 2 presents information on both whether the college or university website explicitly provides care for these groups and the extent to which any (or several of those) are prioritized over others. Centers that specifically indicate the groups that they serve are included. Most indicated that they specifically serve faculty, staff members, and students (a total of 134, 133, and 132, respectively). Fewer centers, a total of 103, provide services for community members. Interestingly, more centers specifically prioritized students (44 total), while a smaller number of centers prioritized faculty or staff members (27 total each).

**Table 2 Total Child Care Centers for Faculty, Students, and Staff**

Description	Count	%
Child Care for Faculty Members	134	68%
<i>Faculty Prioritized</i>	27	14%
Child Care for Staff Members	133	68%
<i>Staff Prioritized</i>	27	14%
Child Care for Students	132	67%
<i>Students Prioritized</i>	44	22%
Child Care for Community Members	103	53%
<i>Community Prioritized</i>	0	0%

*Note: Counts here represent publicly available data listed on official college or university websites. Instances in which data were not available or addressed are omitted. Proportions represent the total possible child care centers, including those institutions with more than one center.*

Tables 3–6 present these data in a more granular fashion, examining the number of centers for faculty, staff, students, and the community base on geographical and institutional characteristics. Table 3 presents child care centers by city, suburban, or town locations as defined by IPEDS. The proportions of centers providing care for faculty, staff, and students are similar across each of these three geographies, from urban to more rural, with each ranging from approximately 66% to 69% across all categories. The one area of notable difference is that of the provision of care to the community; both city and more remote locations are less likely to provide child care for community members (at 50% and 56%, respectively).

**Table 3 Child Care Center for Faculty, Students, and Staff by Geographical Location**

Description	Cities		Suburbs		Towns	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Child Care for <b>Faculty</b>	99	69%	23	66%	12	67%
Child Care for <b>Staff</b>	98	69%	23	66%	12	67%
Child Care for <b>Students</b>	97	68%	23	66%	12	67%
Child Care for the <b>Community</b>	71	50%	22	63%	10	56%

*Note: Counts here represent publicly available data listed on official college or university websites. Instances in which data were not available or addressed are omitted. City, state, and town designations use IPEDS categorizations. Proportions represent the total possible child care centers, including those institutions with more than one center.*

Table 4 presents center availability by total institutional employment. Smaller institutions, with a total employment less than 2,500 employees, are less likely to provide child care centers, with just over half providing care for faculty, staff, and students, and just under half for the community. Proportions for the middle categories (institutions between, 2,500 and 4,999, and 5,000 and 9,999) showed more consistency, with between 69% and 77% providing child care across the faculty, staff, and student categories. As with smaller institutions, proportions for community care were lower for these institutions.

Finally, for larger employers, those with more than 10,000 employees, the proportions making care available were higher, between 83% to 87% for faculty, staff, and students. As with the other categories, proportions for community care were significantly lower.

Table 5 presents data on the availability of child care centers based on type of institutional control as defined by IPEDS; all institutions in our data set were either public or private, non-profit organizations. The proportions of public organizations offering child care centers for faculty, staff, and students were in line with the general proportions presented previously; 71–72% of organizations made child care available, while that proportion was lower for communities at 55%. The proportions of private, non-profit agencies providing child care were noticeably lower than public institutions, with 39–46% making care available for faculty, staff, and students, and 36% for the general community.

**Table 4 Child Care Centers for Faculty, Students, and Staff by Total Institutional Employment**

Description	1 to 2,499		2,500 to 4,999		5,000 to 9,999		10,000+	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Child Care for Faculty	38	54%	37	71%	33	77%	26	87%
Child Care for Staff	38	54%	37	71%	32	74%	26	87%
Child Care for Students	39	55%	36	69%	32	74%	25	83%
Child Care for the Community	32	45%	27	52%	26	60%	18	60%

Note: Counts here represent publicly available data listed on official college or university websites. Instances in which data were not available or addressed are omitted.

**Table 5 Child Care Centers for Faculty, Students, and Staff by Institutional Control**

Description	Public		Private, Non-Profit	
	Count	%	Count	%
Child Care for Faculty	121	72%	13	46%
Child Care for Staff	120	71%	13	46%
Child Care for Students	121	72%	11	39%
Child Care for the Community	93	55%	10	36%

Note: Counts here represent publicly available data listed on official college or university websites. Instances in which data were not available or addressed are omitted.

Table 6 presents the availability of care by total student enrollment. Relatively smaller institutions (enrollment of 19,999 or less) displayed a smaller proportion making care available, with 58% making care available for students, faculty, and staff. Those proportions

increased for mid-sized (20,000 to 39,999 total enrollment) to approximately 75% for faculty, staff, and students. Nearly all of the larger institutions, those with enrollment of 40,000 or more, made child care available, with between 90–95% providing centers for students, faculty and staff.

**Table 6 Child Care Centers for Faculty, Students, and Staff by Total Enrollment**

Description	Less than 20,000	than 20,000	to 40,000	to 40,000	and higher
	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Child Care for <b>Faculty</b>	51	58%	63	75%	20
Child Care for <b>Staff</b>	51	58%	62	74%	20
Child Care for <b>Students</b>	51	58%	62	74%	19
Child Care for the <b>Community</b>	41	47%	48	57%	14

*Note: Counts here represent publicly available data listed on official college or university websites. Instances in which data were not available or addressed are omitted.*

A total of 91 of these child care centers (just over 61%) indicated that they have a specific institutional or teaching focus in which university or college students enrolled in degree or certification programs were used to staff these centers; these teaching-focused centers spanned all categories of potential parents, including faculty, staff, students, and the community.

Program standards and quality of care are vitally important for caregivers, and Table 7 provides information on both state licensure and program accreditation by either the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the largest accrediting body for early child care centers in the US, or other smaller accrediting agencies. Of the 150 child care centers, nearly 60% are accredited by an external agency, with the vast majority of those being accredited by NAEYC. A nearly identical number – 88 in total – are licensed in the state in which they operate.

**Table 7 Child Care Center Accreditation and Licensure**

Description	Count
Accredited Child Care Centers	89
NAEYC	86
Other	3
State-Licensed Child Care Centers	88

*Note: Counts here represent publicly available data listed on official college or university websites. Instances in which data were not available or addressed are omitted.*

Often accompanying these statements of accreditation of licensure were more specific or targeted discussions of program policies. Of the centers identified here, 44% (66 centers) included specific and robust program descriptions and policies, usually aggregated in a “parent handbook” or other policy documents.

The cost of child care is often cited as a compounding challenge for the work-life

balance and overall accessibility to care. Across all child care centers, the maximum cost of care was \$28,776, the minimum cost was \$0 (fully subsidized by the university for teaching

**Table 8 Annualized Cost of Child Care in US Dollars**

Description	Obs.	Mean	Median	Min	Max
All Centers	98	12,178	11,826	-	28,776
<b>By Region*</b>					
New England	2	13,739	13,739	13,689	13,788
Mid-East	7	17,544	15,756	11,172	28,456
Great Lakes	12	12,245	13,130	3,000	16,380
Plains	8	12,934	12,540	10,020	16,800
Southeast	30	9,216	9,434	-	19,330
Southwest	12	9,571	10,080	1,716	14,556
Rocky Mountains	6	10,734	11,340	1,500	22,880
Far West	21	16,051	15,840	-	28,776
<b>By Urban / Suburban / Rural**</b>					
City, large	33	14,336	13,800	1,716	28,776
City, midsize	27	11,791	11,880	4,500	22,880
City, small	12	9,445	10,660	-	15,300
Suburb, large	11	14,268	13,788	8,400	20,124
Suburb, midsize	1	11,172	11,172	11,172	11,172
Suburb, small	3	13,121	14,222	9,540	15,600
Town, fringe	2	5,980	5,980	-	11,960
Town, distant	7	8,823	9,000	3,000	12,672
Town, remote	2	3,750	3,750	1,500	6,000

Note: \* = Regions are defined by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. New England = CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, and VT; Mid East = DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, and PA; Great Lakes = IL, IN, MI, OH, and WI; Plains = IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, and SD; Southeast = AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, and WV; Southwest = AZ, NM, OK, and TX; Rocky Mountains = CO, ID, MT, UT, and WY; Far West = AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, and WA; \*\* Urban, suburban, and town definitions are derived from IPEDS data

purposes), and the median was \$11,826. Regional differences in costs are readily apparent; coastal areas including the Mid-East and Far West regions had the highest maximum costs and median costs, while New England and the Southwest had the lowest relative maximum costs for annual care. Child care costs in urban, suburban, and rural areas varied significantly; large cities demonstrated the highest maximum cost for care (\$28,776), while remote towns had the lowest (\$6,000). Median costs were relatively consistent in both cities and suburbs (between \$10,660 and \$14,222), though costs dropped off in more rural areas.

## Implications and Discussion

The findings of this research highlight the prevalence and characteristics of child care centers located in or affiliated with institutions offering NASPAA-accredited degrees. Of the 173 organizations offering these degrees, 73% provide some form of campus-child care, and a majority have done so for longer than 25 years. Previous research has highlighted the difficulty of finding quality and affordable child care, a necessary component in supporting the work-life balance for those in academia with young children. Our findings here indicate that campus child care centers were available to faculty, staff, and students with equal regularity, and that priority in enrollment was also given to many of those affiliated with the institution. However, there were often limits in availability to the outside community. Though geographic region did not play a role in availability, there were other key institutional factors in which differences were notable. Organizations with larger total employment and larger total enrollment, and those in the public sector displayed higher proportions of available child care for faculty, staff, and students.

Importantly, the availability of care does not equate accessibility or utilization of care, which can be compounded by waitlists, costs, hours of operation, or other operational obstacles. Although 73% of institutions studied provide some form of campus-child care, accessibility can still be a real challenge. The variation in the size of schools does not necessarily equate to the number of spots available for child care. A school with over 10,000 faculty and staff may only have one child care center on campus. This is a key aspect that can be overlooked when understanding work-life balance in academia and whom it can negatively impact. Further research should be continued in this area to best understand accessibility to child care and the number of available spots are centers are available in proportion to institutional size.

In addition, there are additional aspects that can be factored in when considering both availability of a child care center - as well as its overall accessibility. Some day care centers were opened during work day hours while some also provided child care during the evening for those teaching or taking evening courses. Some day care centers allowed for part-time care, while others only provided full-time care. Having a part-time option may work best for some, teaching and work schedule permitting. On the other hand, full-time care may be the only option for some faculty and staff, but with it comes the costs of full-time care which from the data findings can be a critical barrier in child care accessibility.

Though availability was broad, cost is still an important factor in considering the ability to actually enroll in those centers. Our findings here show that the cost of child care across all centers included in this research is, on average, \$1,000 a month per child. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services considers child care to be “affordable” for families when it costs 7% or less of household income (Malik, 2019; Child Care and Development Fund Program, 2016). The IPEDS data provide average salaries at each academic rank for the institutions in our sample, which help to better understand affordability: the average salary of an instructor in 2016–2017 was \$56,805; for an assistant professor, \$74,358; for an associate professor, \$84,634; and for a full professor, \$112,969. At \$1,000 a month for one child in care, these costs far exceed the threshold for affordability for most working faculty and staff members on college campuses and is especially daunting for students or those working part-time jobs. Although some institutions provided discounts for affiliated faculty, staff, or students, many of these on-campus centers did not represent a significant cost-saving option as compared to child care in other non-higher education settings. Though location can be a benefit to any parent, the overall expenses of child care can outweigh the benefit of a convenient location.

While offering a child care center is an institutional effort, NASPAA programs can

actively participate in these efforts to support the diversity of faculty and students. The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) states that NASPAA programs "... must systematically, deliberately, and intentionally emphasize diversity and inclusion to ensure goals are met and sustained" (NASPAA, 2019a, para 2). Indeed, these statements directly relate to Standard 3.2 on faculty diversity and Standard 4.4 on student diversity. One mechanism for promoting diversity, particularly for women, is to support faculty and students with children through an affordable, accessible child care program on campus. The benefits of a diverse academic program extend beyond the targeted individual, in this case, individuals with children, to all students, faculty, and staff. Program with diverse students and faculty bodies are critical to the development of cultural competencies and prosocial skills, like empathy, social curiosity, and critical thinking.

Of course, child care is only one facet of work-life balance in higher education, and the full range of challenges for households with young children is broader. Still, providing accessible child care that is high quality and affordable supports 'a rising tide to raise all ships'; that is, campus-based child care has the potential to benefit all employees, not just women. In their review of the impact of family friendly policies in higher education, Feeney, Bernal, and Bowman (2014) found that on-site child care increases productivity for women and men, though women see an increase in teaching productivity and men see an increase in journal publications. The authors conclude that providing on-campus child care, without other efforts to change organizational culture within the higher education institution, may exacerbate existing structural issues (Feeney, Bernal, & Bowman, 2014).

Therefore, child care centers are only part of the larger picture of the factors needed to retain and promote individuals with children, particularly women, in academia. Other considerations include unpaid labor and management duties within the household, perceptions of individuals using family friendly policies (i.e., family-leave or 'stopping the clock' for faculty or students), and the impact of conscious and unconscious bias in the cultural work environment. For these reasons, it is important that higher education institutions "move beyond policy development to a culture that has established norms of work-life balance" (Lester, 2013, p. 464). Work-life balance must be embodied in the organizational culture of institutions, not just policies or support programs, like campus-based child care.

### *Limitations*

The results noted here should be considered in light of a number of limitations. First, the data were collected from publicly-available websites and other documentation, and there is a chance that some institutions may provide child care services but may not make those services known in public forums. This is unlikely, though, given the often-public nature of the description of human resources and fringe benefits offered to employees and families, and the use of these as a means of demonstrating the value of employment. This is especially true for child care services. Second, this study does not account for the actual use of these services among faculty, staff, or students, a critical next step in advancing this line of research. Likewise, this study does not gather information on the relative effects of the use of services on core aspects of the work experience, critical in thinking about women in academia.

### **Conclusion and Future Research**

Diversity and representation in higher education have and continue to be critically studied - specifically in areas such as the representation of women among student and faculty, program content, and curriculum (Ewoh, 2014). The support and work-life balance of employees and students in higher education, specifically women and other diverse populations, is an area that requires further research. Our study has aimed to highlight one such area. Caring for

children can have a significant impact on faculty members, staff members, and students. These challenges are both highly personal and enduring, and touch on our individual desires to both have a family while also contributing to the future of public service. Child care centers located on campus can, in part, alleviate some of these associated challenges. Centers can provide convenient and potentially affordable care for members of academic communities that enable those individuals to more successfully manage both personal and work obligations. This study contributes to our understanding of the ways in which colleges and universities may address some of these challenges through the availability of campus-based child care. Future research should examine the factors that predict the availability and cost of these child care centers, institutional resources, and care availability, changes in child care availability over time. In addition, the relationships between each of these factors can be explored to underscore levels of impact and opportunities for creating paths towards available and accessible child care. Importantly, COVID-19 will dramatically impact the role and availability of campus child care. Future studies should reflect on how distance learning impacted the sustainability and availability of campus child care centers.

In addition, future data collection efforts should focus on collecting the direct perspectives of faculty and other campus community members about their child care choices, issues related to waiting lists and convenience for faculty or staff working non-traditional schedules, and students seeking low cost, temporary drop-in care. In addition, future research can assess the impact of gender make-up of institutions on work-life institutional policies, and on case studies of institutions providing exemplary programs or policies to support work-life balance among faculty, staff, and students. The importance of exploring the relationships of gender and institution is critical in addressing the challenges that women in academia continue to face. This research highlights how on-campus child care is but a small piece of a larger institutional framework. This study does not allow for any conclusions about causality in the relationship between campus-based child care and the number of women faculty members. Future studies should more directly explore the impact of on-campus child care on the recruitment and retention of women faculty.

Providing policies and programs that address the needs of members of college or university communities is essential in creating an environment that is genuinely supportive. This article contributes to these efforts through an improved understanding of the availability and characteristics of child care in institutions offering public affairs degrees, and future work in this area is undoubtedly necessary. Supporting those who endeavor to shape the provision of public service and encourage future public servants has important implications far beyond a single campus community.

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