GPSC Child Care Grant for Graduate and Professional Students

Explanation of Proposal and Budget

The Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) is the representative body for graduate and professional students on campus. The organization is comprised of elected student leaders and support staff. The mission of the GPSC is to promote the academic, economic, and social aims of graduate and professional students of the University of Arizona (UA) and advocate on their behalf. Given our mission, we have sought to enhance the support of graduate students with child care needs. Therefore, the GPSC submits this grant application to help fund an existing child care subsidy through the UA’s Life and Work Connections (LWC) (an existing division of Human Resources) in the amount of $52,000 over a two year period (i.e. $26,000/year).

Each year, for the two-year duration of the grant, the GPSC will transfer $25,000 to LWC to offer additional child care subsidies to graduate and professional students. The GPSC will use the remaining $1,000 to advertise the subsidy program, promote the need for an on-campus child care facility, and meet with ABOR and top UA administrators regarding child care needs. We plan to also use this money to host a child care fair on campus and invite local, regulated child care providers, LWC, student groups with a focus on parenting and child care, and others to attend and share information about child care resources with students. The GPSC will likely use some of the $1,000 to purchase supplies, advertising material, food for the fair, etc. If funded, neither the GPSC nor LWC will deduct money from the grant to cover overhead and/or administrative costs (i.e. staff wages, etc.).

This proposal is a first step toward the GPSC’s larger goal of bringing a child care facility to campus. It outlines a general plan to make this goal a reality. First, through the successful acquisition of Student Services Fee (SSF) funds, the GPSC will enrich and be able to better promote the need-based child care program currently offered by LWC. GPSC will partner with LWC to offer subsidies to up to 25 additional graduate and/or professional student families per funding year. The GPSC will take this opportunity to work with other entities on campus to try to enhance child care funding opportunities for other University community members (i.e. undergraduate students, faculty, staff, appointed personnel, etc.). The final step will be to work with the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), University administration and staff, deans and department heads, and other student organizations from across campus to bring a child care facility to campus.

If funded, the GPSC will work closely with the LWC staff to ensure graduate and professional students receive this SSF grant money. LWC has agreed to three conditions if the GPSC receives this grant and passes it to LWC to administer. First, LWC will earmark the additional money ($25,000/year) for graduate and professional students; in other words, others who may qualify for the child care subsidy will not be entitled to the extra funds. Second, the SSF grant money will supplement existing funds available to graduate and professional students—LWC has agreed not to supplant. Finally, at least twice a year, LWC will provide data to the GPSC that can be shared with the SSF Advisory Board (SSFAB) (via semi-annual reports) that outlines the number of graduate and professional students who receive funding and the amount received. Reporting of this type will allow the GPSC to confirm that current funding levels (aka pre-SSFAB grant) to students are not negatively affected and that the SSFAB grant enhances existing levels.

The GPSC had considered establishing its own child care grant program, separate from LWC, but opted not to for a number of reasons. First, by working with LWC, the GPSC does not need to create a staff position to administer a child care grant program (aka no overhead costs). This way, more money will go directly to the students Student Services and the GPSC serve. Second, the GPSC does not need to reinvent wheel—LWC has a solid need-based application and
funding process already established. Finally, UA administration, ABOR, the SSFAB, and others want entities on campus to partner. This grant proposal does this. In this time of economic uncertainty and continual cuts to the UA budget, the GPSC is making a pro-active step to promote and accomplish cooperation and partnership.

**How this Proposal Meets the Student Affairs Mission**

As previously mentioned, this grant proposal helps advance the GPSC mission. It also meets the Student Affairs mission—one not so different from, but a bit broader than, the GPSC’s. As members of the SSFAB know, “Student Affairs supports the UA mission and values by delivering exemplary programs, services, resources and facilities that have a measurable and positive impact on the development and retention of students and contribute to the well being and advancement of our community.” Additionally, Student Affairs lists eight (8) general goals (see Table 1 in the Appendix). Funding this grant proposal clearly meets the Student Affairs mission, and helps to directly and indirectly support and meet goals 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7.

**Reason for Creating/Maintaining this Program**

The need to provide adequate child care for students who double as parents is not a new concern. The UA has begun to address this issue by creating the LWC Child Care Subsidy Program. However, this program needs to be expanded and better funded to serve additional students and more effectively serve students who currently benefit from this subsidy. Numerous data support this notion.

A quick Internet survey/search of the UA’s peer institutions shows that every other peer university offers at least one on-campus child care facility—the UA is the only peer institution that does not. Furthermore, many of these same institutions offer some sort of financial assistance program to their students—many of these programs are better funded and reach more students than the UA’s existing subsidy program. Please see Table 2 in the Appendix for a visual depiction.

Additionally, SSF survey data from the last three years suggests that enriching current child care programs on campus is necessary and desirable—students want their SSF money to support child care programs. Funding this program would be a financial help to graduate/professional students; this would help meet #2 of the SSFAB’s “Top 5 Initiatives.” Please see Table 3 in the Appendix for a summary of SSF survey results regarding child care.

Anecdotal evidence also supports the notion that funding this proposal is worthwhile. A look at past GPSC meeting minutes quickly illustrates that child care has remained a primary concern for graduate and professional students. Groups on campus such as the Parents in the English Graduate Union have attended GPSC meetings in large numbers to show their support for improved child care programs and to express their desire to see an on-campus child care facility. Furthermore, LWC has provided a testimonial from a married graduate and undergraduate student couple who express how important it was for them to receive a child care subsidy. Without the subsidy, the students “were apprehensive about whether the addition to our family (a child) would allow [them] to finish [their] education.” For a full text of the testimonial, please see “Student Testimonial” of the Appendix.

Finally, enhancing the current Child Care Subsidy Program will provide much needed support to students from a financial standpoint. The average cost for child care, for one child, in the U.S. is $11,666 per year, or about $1,000 per month (www.babycenter.com). In Pima County, the figures are a bit lower, but still quite high. Additionally, the population of parents who will benefit from this grant have lower incomes because of their student status (aka school expenses plus less time to work at a paying job). In Pima County, child care costs range from $105 to $150 per week depending on the type of care (center, approved homes, certified group homes, unregulated homes) and the age of the child (<1 – school age) (http://arizonachildcare.org/acccost.html).

Clearly the data encourage support of this grant proposal. Financially, it will better students on campus and it will keep us competitive with our peer institutions. Finally, the students want and deserve an excellent child care subsidy.
Number of Students Affected

University data outlining the number of graduate/professional student parents does not exist. However, data does exist that helps provide some indication of the number of students the grant could help. Over the last three years, on average, 114 students on Campus Health Insurance have insured non-spouse/domestic partner dependents (Campus Health data). Of course, only a minority of students are enrolled in the Campus Health Insurance plan, so the number of students with children is even greater. As mentioned previously, an annual addition of $25,000 to LWC will help off-set child care costs for 13 to 25 different student families per year. Given that $1,000 is available to a student with child care needs per semester, this grant will fund 25 subsidies. The number of student families who apply for the child care subsidy varies by semester and is contingent upon funding. In the Fall 2011 semester, 93 families received a child care subsidy, 61% (57) of the students who received a child care subsidy were graduate and/or professional students—the remaining 39% (36) were undergraduate students. During that semester, LWC was able to successfully fund about 85% of those who applied—15 students families (7 of which include graduate and/or professional students) were placed on a waiting list, and to date, still await funding.

Measuring the Success of the Program

Success of this program will be measured two different ways. First, by partnering with LWC, the GPSC will be able to determine both the number of graduate and professional students who receive a Child Care Subsidy, and the total amount awarded (raw and average). Furthermore, this data can be compared to previous years’ award amounts. The GPSC will consider this program successful if at least 25 additional students receive a subsidy who normally would not given current budget constraints.

Second, the GPSC will measure the success of the outreach program to bring additional funds into the subsidy program and making on-campus child care a reality. The GPSC will work with department heads, UA administrators, ASUA and other student groups, and Human Resources, in order to fundraise for the subsidy program. The GPSC’s goals are to raise an additional $10,000 for student child care subsidies and have tangible and physical progress made in the area of establishing an on-campus child care facility by the end of the 2-year SSF grant.

Ensuring the Longevity of the Program

The GPSC hopes to ensure that funding for child care subsidies for student at the UA remains available and at a level necessary to meet the needs of the student body. The GPSC will take steps to see that this happens. First, the GPSC will begin to outreach to the Graduate College and other UA departments/colleges, administrators, and other members of the UA community to bring awareness to this issue and to seek financial donations. Similarly, the GPSC will outreach to ASUA and other graduate and undergraduate student groups to expand the program to the entire student body. Third, working closely with LWC, the GPSC will look for funding opportunities from the U.S. Department of Education as some of our peer institutions (i.e. University of Illinois-Urbana Campaign) have done. If necessary, the GPSC will find a way to utilize existing staff or hire a student to help oversee this grant program and our outreach efforts.

We hope that the SSFAB will agree to fund this grant proposal over a two-year period for a total amount of $52,000.