Supporting Students with Children: The Roles of the University and the Library

2020 California Academic & Research Libraries Conference

Undergraduate students with children are an invisible but growing population on college campuses.
As a group they face multiple challenges in navigating their college experience. Many do not feel included because they do not fit into the mold of the traditional college students. They also face numerous obstacles in terms of accessibility and institutional policies. Learn more about their experiences and how universities and academic libraries can help these students succeed.
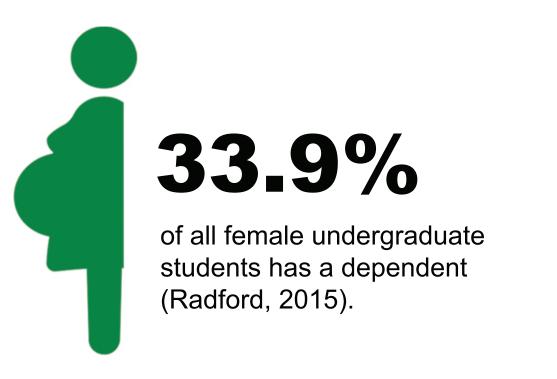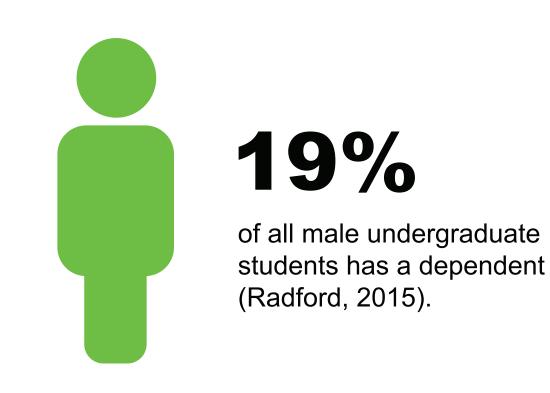
Literature Review

- Student parents are more likely to have higher levels of unmet financial need, to have low levels of college completion, and to receive higher levels of debt upon graduation (Adam, 2014).

- Unless direct efforts are made, universities and colleges may overlook nontraditional students, particularly students with children (students who are also parents) as a demographic who have additional needs. (Godfrey, 2017).

- Creating a space that serves the needs of a previously underserved group- student-parents- benefits the students by providing student-parent balance, education, and emotional health (Graff, Ridge, & Zaugg, 2019).
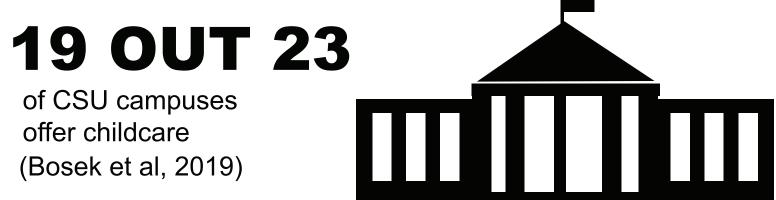
1 out of 4

undergraduate students in the U.S. has a dependent (Radford, 2015).

33.9% of all female undergraduate students has a dependent (Radford, 2015).

19% of all male undergraduate students has a dependent (Radford, 2015).

19 OUT 23 of CSU campuses offer childcare (Bosek et al, 2019)

16 OUT 23 of CSU campuses have lactation rooms (Bosek et al, 2019)

Students with children face multiple challenges in their college experiences:

- Inclusion: feeling excluded in the higher education setting due to differing life experiences, e.g. student organizations catering to traditional college students, campus events inviting parents of students but not spouses or children, etc.

- Student Success: institutional obstacles that obstruct their ability to successfully juggle other demands in their lives, e.g. classroom policies, course scheduling, instructor expectations, etc.

Current Library Projects

- Creating a child-friendly area in the Library that can accommodate children of various ages

- Outfitting some Library restrooms with child-friendly features

- Collaborating with stakeholders across campus for strategic alliances and communication purposes

Next Step

- Assess and continue improving the child-friendly area in the Library

- Update and diversify the children's book collection

- Investigate the feasibility of adding more family-friendly features in the Library

- Continue working with campus stakeholders

References

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