

Ford Childhood Enrichment Center Recommendation to the Board of Education
April 10, 2019

The Ford Childhood Enrichment Center serves the campus and community by providing accessible, affordable, high quality child care for UCC students; high quality child care for employees and community members; and a practicum site for UCC students studying early childhood education.

The benefits of high quality child care are apparent. Parents are more likely be successful in their academic studies, employees experience greater satisfaction and fewer absences, community members are provided choices that meet their needs, and children's development is enhanced.

UCC's child care center has a reputation for providing excellent child care. At the same time, the center's cost of operations has accelerated at a pace that far exceeds its revenues. As a result, the College has invested ever increasing amounts from its general fund in order to balance the center's budget. The operations are unsustainable.

At the Board's request, the College administration worked with The Ford Family Foundation to secure an analysis of the center's operations by an experienced early childhood consultant. The report yielded information that confirmed the findings of the College's investigation. Below is a summary of the consultant's suggestions; parenthetically are the College's comments:

- The current method for parents to reserve slots for their children favors the ever-changing schedules of students but results in time slots that are difficult for the center to fill. A more sustainable model may be to require full-time monthly rates. *(This model may price some students out of child care if they are required to pay for more hours than they need.)*
- The operating hours are centered on the most common student schedules, with the center closing at 4:30 daily as well as being closed during term breaks and the summer. A more sustainable model may be to remain open until 5:30 and provide services year-round that better serve the community. *(The extended hours have not worked for the center in the past, but longer hours and year-round operations may indeed serve community members and some UCC employees.)*
- The center can currently enroll 38 full-time children. Economy of scale may be achieved by dividing one classroom into two and converting the resource room into a classroom. *(We currently cannot fill all the slots we have. Converting the resource room would require an additional investment of resources.)*
- Current rates are relatively modest relative to other centers. Increased fees may increase revenue. *(Increased fees may price some students out of child care, even with subsidies and C-CAMPIS support.)*
- Integrating the expertise and management of the Center Director with the CCR&R and the ECE academic program may result in more stable leadership. *(This approach was tried last year, and we found the work load was so demanding that it disallowed adequate attention to both the academic program and the child care center.)*
- Part-time staff reduces capacity. Increasing the number of full-time staff may provide more stability, especially at the salaries paid by UCC. *(Increased numbers of full-time staff dramatically increases the cost because of the negotiated pay scale and benefits of full-time UCC employees. The better pay and benefits afforded UCC employees has not yielded greater recruitment and retention of employees, especially in the director's position.)*

A fiscal snapshot provided by the consultant suggests that operating at 90% capacity year-round with full-time monthly slots for children, increased rates, predominantly full-time staff with part-time staff to cover the scheduling gaps, and a director with half-time teaching duties would result in the following financial outcomes:

1. Operating with UCC staff with salaries and benefits as determined by CBAs and policy:
 - a. 18 infants/toddlers and 38 preschoolers: **-\$149,000**
 - b. 9 infants/toddlers and 68 preschoolers: **-\$59,000**
 - c. No infants/toddlers and 78 preschoolers: **+\$2,000**
2. Operating with an external provider with salaries and benefits typical of child care:
 - a. 18 infants/toddlers and 38 preschoolers: **-\$23,000**
 - b. 9 infants/toddlers and 68 preschoolers: **+\$85,000**
 - c. No infants/toddlers and 78 preschoolers: **+\$127,000**

The UCC leadership firmly believes that UCC students and employees, as well as the greater community, benefits from high quality child care. UCC desires to continue campus-based child care. The analysis clearly shows that sustainability of child care operated by the College is not feasible. However, discussions with local providers leads the College administration to believe that there are community entities that have the desire to partner with the College and the capacity to provide high quality, affordable child care in a manner that can be sustained.

The College administration makes the following recommendation to the Board of Education:

- Transition the operation of the Ford Childhood Enrichment Center to a community partner. The transition means the College is no longer responsible for running the center and no longer employs the staff.
- Solicit a community partner through an RFP process. A mutually beneficial agreement will provide preferential enrollment for children of UCC students, allow use of the center for our practicum students, and maintain the Ford name in some capacity. Additional details regarding utilities, custodial services, maintenance, and so forth will be negotiated.

Submitted by
President Thatcher