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Swarthmore College  
Dependent Care Survey Results

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Introduction/Overview

In January, members of the College community received an exploratory survey designed to better understand community opinions and needs for child care and dependent adult care. Staff, students, and faculty interested in pursuing additional employee benefits developed a survey based on a historic document, the Women’s Concerns Committee’s 1991 survey. A subcommittee of students, faculty, and representatives from Human Resources, the Staff Advisory Council, and Institutional Research the revised and conducted the survey. Below are the results of this survey, as compiled and analyzed by that committee.

Survey Participants and Demographics of Respondents

This survey was emailed to the faculty-staff listserv in late January. In addition, paper surveys were available at various around campus. Of the 958 employees on active payroll, 224 completed the survey (23 percent of total employees on payroll). Of those 23 percent, 62 percent were staff members, and 28 percent were faculty (10 percent did not disclose their employee status). It is important to recognize that the views represent those held by 23 percent of our total faculty and staff. Sixty-seven percent of our employees did not take the survey so we do not know their views on the specific questions below.

The survey included several closed-response questions (e.g., multiple choices) as well as questions that permitted respondents to write open-ended comments. These larger open-response questions were evaluated to identify themes within the responses. Finally, percentages presented below are based on the number of responses to each question, not the total participants in the survey.

Respondents’ Views on Additional Child Care and Adult Dependent Care

Child care

The survey asked participants to share their views on whether or not the College should offer additional child care. Sixty-three percent indicated that they thought the College should consider offering additional child-care benefits. Fifteen percent believed that current offerings were sufficient and that the College should not consider offering additional benefits. About a fifth of respondents (22 percent) said the issue was not important to them. (See chart.)
Many respondents (127) offered additional thoughts, and several themes were apparent within these responses. These themes were at times contradictory, highlighting the range in views that our community has on this topic. Examples of responses to these themes are presented below in descending order of frequency.

**Not having additional child-care benefits increases stress from financial and logistical issues.**

- A significant portion of my salary is dedicated to providing child care. It would be helpful if the College offered child-care benefits, and I would go so far as to say I would be even more effective at my job, were I not juggling the constraints of finding quality, affordable childcare.
- As a new faculty member with a small child, I am struggling to arrange (and pay for) sufficient child care to accommodate my on-campus commitments.

**Current benefits are adequate and already favor employees with families. Adding child care is not feasible and is not a College responsibility.**

- As much as I wish our resources were unlimited, I don’t see how it’s possible to offer the full-time, quality, licensed, and insured care I would want for my child at a cost that makes it even remotely possible.
- Care needs and affordability ranges are so vast and variable, even in the same family from year to year—better to let people know what is available in the community.

**Having additional child-care benefits would be a tool for recruitment, retention, and productivity.**

- I do not have young children but feel in order to attract and keep quality staff and faculty—who most likely have young children—we need to consider offering additional child-care benefits.
- The College has great benefits, and I have taken advantage of all the above options. The only benefit I feel is missing is having a campus child-care center where parents can be close to their children and perhaps have reduced rates to help meet needs for young families and to retain employees who young families.

**We should provide benefits comparable to peer institutions.**
• It is a great benefit to keep employees working here. Other colleges are offering the benefit.

• But I am not aware of what other like-minded and like-placed schools or companies are doing, and I’m always interested in Swarthmore maintaining pace or being slightly better in their benefits than other places. So, if we are not up to what our peers are doing, then I would think we should look into offering additional benefits.

**Additional child-care benefits would reflect our stated community values.**

• If diversity is a true goal of Swarthmore, then it is essential that the College offer additional child-care benefits or facilities.

• Swarthmore community ties can be strengthened by staff and faculty children receiving care together. I believe it will also benefit children to have access to the values of the campus community.

**The lack of additional child-care benefits disproportionately affects women and young families.**

• The struggle to keep up with research, teaching, service AND family care is at times providing an unhealthy and unjust labor relationship—specifically for women!

• The supply of quality child-care facilities near the college does not meet the demand. Child-care needs fall disproportionately on staff and junior faculty (the ones without the voice to make noise), and it is a HUGE stressor in their lives. Swarthmore should strive to be a workplace with family-friendly policies and benefits.

**Adult dependent care**

Almost half (46 percent) of respondents indicated that they think the College should consider adding additional adult dependent care benefits. About a fifth (22 percent) of respondents said that current adult dependent-care benefits are sufficient. Almost a third of respondents (32 percent) wrote that this issue is not important to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your view about Swarthmore offering additional dependent care benefits at this time?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College should consider offering additional adult dependent care benefits: 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current offerings are sufficient: 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This issue is not important to me: 32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many respondents (98) offered additional comments, and several themes were. These themes were at times contradictory, highlighting the range in views that our community has on this topic. Examples of responses are presented below in descending order of frequency.
I don’t know enough about this issue; more research is needed.

- Again, because adult dependent care is not important to me at this time, I am not aware of what is offered and how it compares to the outside world.
- My response is NOT an endorsement of a proposal to DO it, just to consider it.

Current adult dependent care benefits are adequate. Adding additional adult dependent-care benefits is not feasible and is not a College responsibility.

- Again, adult dependent care is an individual and unique matter, and the College cannot and should not be expected to provide adult dependent care that meets each unique circumstance.
- Child care and adult dependent [care] are family issues that are personal matters. … I am aware of the pressures that are involved, but I do not feel it is an employer’s responsibility to cover the cost of child care or adult dependent care.

If child care were offered, adult dependent care ought to be offered to ensure that everyone can benefit.

- I am not as well versed in this issue (because it is not currently affecting me)—but I think it would [be fair] to offer this benefit in addition to child-care benefits because not everyone chooses to have kids, but everyone has parents.
- I am a single employee. I can’t participate in the great college tuition benefits that the College provides employees with children. I do, however, take care of my aging parents and will need additional help in the near future.

This benefit would reflect our stated community values.

- High-quality adult dependent care is even harder to find than child care, and the labor of caring for an adult dependent is generally given even less consideration than the labor of caring for a child. In light of Swarthmore’s commitment to addressing various types of “shadow labor,” I think this would be a valuable issue to address.
- Swarthmore should strive to be a workplace with family-friendly policies and benefits.

Respondents’ Current and Future Needs for Child or Dependent Adult Care

About half (51 percent) of respondents indicated that they do not currently have or expect to have (in the short term) child or adult dependent care needs. About a third currently need or are using care services, with 28% using child care and 6% using adult dependent care. Similarly, about a third (34%) expects to have care needs in the next two to three years. Note that respondents to this question could offer multiple responses. That is, they could indicate needs of both types and timeframes.

Respondents’ Interest in Additional Dependent Care Services

The survey asked which additional services might be of interest, if offered by the College. The most popular options, which interested about half of respondents, were subsidized off-site child care and out-of-home backup child-care services (with 53 percent and 50 percent interested, respectively). Almost as popular were
in-home backup child-care services and subsidized membership in child-care networks (with 43 percent and 40 percent, respectively). About a third of respondents (32 percent) were unsure of their interest, and a fifth (20 percent) checked other. Half of the respondents that checked “other” indicated an interest in on-site child care. Note that respondents could express interest in multiple possible services. In addition, responses to a later question expanded on services in which participants could indicate an interest.

Of those who were not interested in additional benefits, the most common reason for lack of interest was non-need of child care (85 percent). Twenty-seven respondents (19 percent) believed that the College’s funds should be allocated other benefits. Three percent cited satisfaction with current child-care arrangements.

**Attitudes Concerning On-Site Child Care**

To explore attitudes about on-site childcare, the survey included a question that added on-site child care to the options noted above. (The College is not currently considering this; this was an exploratory question.) Fifty-eight percent of the respondents checked “Subsidized on-site child care.” More than half of respondents (54 percent) also checked “on-site childcare, even if not subsidized.” Some respondents also checked “subsidized off-site child care” (32 percent), “in-home backup care services (for example, day care center)” (29 percent), “Out of home backup care services (for example, day care center)” (25 percent), and “subsidized membership in child/dependent-care networks (this would include subsidizing the annual fee for employees to become members of networks)” (25 percent). Respondents could check multiple options for this question.

Note that 13 respondents wrote in the “other” category that the question was poorly worded, indicating some confusion around what this question was asking. Specifically, the question asked for views but only offered boxes to check, leaving the question open for interpretation. However, it is still reasonable to view these results as informative.

**Views on the Cost of Operating On-site Child Care**

The survey asked the respondents to indicate how they felt the ongoing cost of an on-site facility should be handled. About half of respondents (53 percent) indicated that parents should pay for on-site child care on a
sliding scale based on their income, with the College covering all remaining costs. About a quarter supported charging a fixed amount to parents and letting the College cover the remaining costs, with parents taking responsibility for most (18 percent) or some (10 percent) of the costs. Just less than one-fifth of respondents (17 percent) believed parents should pay the full cost, while 3 percent wanted the College to cover the full cost of child care.

In a follow up question, participants were asked to share opinions on how the College might fund the cost of operating a child-care facility. Six options for financing the operations were presented and respondents were asked to select one of four categories: “Terrible option —do not consider this,” “Consider this if absolutely necessary,” “Consider this,” and “This is an excellent option to consider.” The first two responses will be classified as “negative” and the last two as “positive.”

Most respondents replied positively to the following idea:
- fundraising to create an endowment fund for child care (82 percent)

Most respondents replied negatively to the following ideas:
- reducing or reallocating other employee benefits in order to add a child care facility (77 percent)
- budget reallocations, i.e., cutting programs or cuts across all departmental budgets (77 percent)
- reducing employee headcount and using salary savings (86 percent)
- raising tuition (87 percent)

**Criteria for Choosing Dependent Care**

When choosing child care, respondents indicated that staff quality (78 percent) and hours of availability (60 percent) were very important factors. Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated that having a child care facility close to home was very important, while 47 percent indicated that having a center close to campus was very important (note: the survey did not ask for respondents to specify where they lived). Cost and services offered by the facility were also considered to be very important factors by a substantial portion of the respondents (44 percent and 48 percent, respectively).

When choosing adult dependent care, respondents indicated that staff quality (80 percent) and hours of availability (64 percent) were very important factors. Services offered was also a very important factor to 57 percent of the respondents. Cost of care and proximity to home were also indicated as being very important to more than half of the respondents (55 percent and 52 percent, respectively).

**Time of Day Needed for Dependent Care**

More than half of the respondents indicated needing child care in the morning (55 percent) and the afternoon hours (57 percent); after-school care was needed by more than a third of the respondents (36 percent) while evening and overnight care were less frequently indicated (10 percent and 2 percent, respectively).

A relatively small proportion of participants responded to the question asking what time of day adult dependent care was needed. Of those that did, 78 percent of respondents needed morning hours for adult dependent care. The same percentage (78 percent) needed afternoon hours for adult dependent care.
One-third of respondents needed adult dependent care during the evening hours, and 22 percent required overnight care. Again, the respondents could offer multiple responses.

**Type of Care Utilized**

*Child Care*

The respondents indicated using a range of child-care options including: “Child-care center in closer proximity to your home” (47 percent), ‘Family, friend, or neighbor’ (40 percent), “Child-care center in closer proximity to Swarthmore College” (36 percent), “In-home: sitter, nanny or au pair service” (32 percent), and “Swarthmore College student sitter” (21 percent). Sixteen percent of respondents indicated this question did not apply to them. Again, the respondents to this item could offer multiple responses. In addition, some of the respondents offered alternative care options that they use such as: “Nearby co-op,” “School Extended Day Program,” and “On-site at previous employer.”

*Adult Dependent Care*

For their adult dependent-care needs, more respondents indicated utilizing an “In-home care service” (22 percent) or “Family, friend, or neighbor” (11 percent) than an “Adult dependent-care center in closer proximity to home” (9 percent) or an “Adult dependent-care center in closer proximity to Swarthmore College” (2 percent). A small portion of respondents answered this question. Of those who did, more than two-thirds indicated that this question was not applicable to them (68 percent). Again, the respondents to this item could offer multiple responses.

**Respondents Views on Current Dependent Care Arrangements**

More than half of the respondents (59 percent) were satisfied with their current child-care arrangements. Sixty-three percent were satisfied with their current adult dependent-care arrangements. The response options were Yes or No.
Respondents’ Views on Dependent Care Benefits Currently Offered by the College

Twenty-two percent of respondents were satisfied (8 percent) to very satisfied (14 percent) with Carebridge’s child-care referral services. While 39 percent of the respondents were neutral about this service, more than a third were either dissatisfied (25 percent) or very dissatisfied (14 percent) with this service.

Almost half (49 percent) of respondents indicated being satisfied (30 percent) to very satisfied (19 percent) with the use of a flexible spending dependent care account. While 34 percent of respondents were neutral about this service, 18 percent of the respondents were dissatisfied (10 percent) or very dissatisfied (8 percent) with this service.

Respondents Views on Rate of Tuition for Dependent Care

Child Care

When asked about the highest rate of child care tuition per week per child that could be considered, the category selected most frequently by respondents was $201-$500 (46 percent). One in five indicated they could consider $100 or less per child per week, and a third (33 percent) indicated that they could consider paying $101–$200.

Adult Dependent Care

When asked about the highest rate of adult dependent care expense per week per dependent that could be considered, over two-thirds of the respondents indicated willingness to pay between $51 to $200, with the responses between $51-$100 (34 percent) and $101-$200 (32 percent) fairly evenly spread. A substantial portion (one in four) responded that they would be willing to pay $201-$500 per week per dependent. Five percent of the respondents would consider paying less than $50 per week per dependent, while another 5 percent indicated would consider over $500 per week per dependent.

Respondents Additional Comments about this Topic

Some respondents (33) offered additional thoughts, and several themes emerged within these responses. These themes were at times were contradictory, highlighting the range in views that our community has on this topic. Examples of responses to these themes are presented below in descending order of frequency.

Additional dependent-care benefits would reflect our stated community values

- If the College is about “promoting community”, then shouldn’t child care on campus be an essential service? This would be a wonderful example of “action” on what has mostly been talk recently.
- I think that this is worth exploring. I believe that the College could be more “family friendly” in policies and benefit offerings.
Current benefits are adequate and already favor employees with families. Adding benefits is not feasible, and is not a College responsibility.

- I feel it would be completely ridiculous for the College to pay for any kind of child care. The College could spend its money in other needed areas. YOUR children are not your employer’s responsibility.

- My child-care needs are after-school care near my home (which is not in Swarthmore). I do not expect the College to address my child-care needs, and a day-care center on campus will certainly not address my child care needs. I do not think the College should provide child care that meets the needs of some but not all, so therefore I do not think the College should be involved with faculty/staff child care.

Having additional dependent-care benefits would be a tool for recruitment, retention, and productivity.

- An on-campus child-care facility would greatly enhance my ability to balance work and family and would enhance my productivity. It is a necessary benefit for an institution such as this.

- For early and mid-career faculty, child care availability is a central issue. It determines how, when, and what we teach; our availability to students on campus and for extracurricular events (e.g. lectures, dinners); our ability to negotiate a work-life balance (e.g. by splitting child-care responsibilities with a partner). The current lack of institutional infrastructure for on-site child care reflects poorly on us in terms of being able to recruit and retain a diverse faculty, including faculty who inhabit diverse family structures.
Appendix

2014 Dependent Care Committee Members

Kim Canzoneri ’17, Student
Kimberly Fremont, Human Resources
Margaret Hughes ’17, Student
Theresa Maguire, Human Resources
Pamela Prescod-Caesar, Human Resources
Micheline Rice-Maximin, Faculty
Yumi Shiroma ’16, Student
Robin Huntington Shores, Institutional Research
Ben Wilson, Dean’s Office
Benjamin Wolcott ’14, Student