



Supporting Student Parents:

Results from Research on
Colleges & Universities in
Florida

Autumn R. Green, Ph.D.

Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College

Annie Pham

University of Houston

with Sheila M. Katz, Ph.D.

University of Houston

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Florida is the second most populated state in the South, and the third most populated in the United States, with a population of 21,993,000 people. Florida's 77 postsecondary institutions are accredited and overseen by the South Association of Schools and Colleges, under the direction of the U.S. Department of Education. The National Center for Education Statistics classifies Florida within the Southeast region for statistical purposes, also including the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 23 percent of postsecondary students in Florida attend college while raising and supporting families as student parents. According to these estimates there are 234,409 student parents attending colleges and universities across the state.¹

Student parents attend diverse postsecondary institutions across the Southeast. At Southeastern community colleges 35 percent of students are parenting. At its four-year institutions 16 percent of students are parents. For profit-colleges enroll the largest proportion of student parents with enrollments at 52 percent of their student bodies.²

Most Southeastern student parents are women (72 percent). Southeastern student parents are also disproportionately Black. Among female Southeastern students, 47 percent of Black students are mothers, as compared to 29 percent of Latinx students, and 28 percent of white female students. Dads are also overrepresented among Black male students, whereby 22 percent are fathers. Among Latinx male students and white male students in the Southeast 17 percent of each demographic are dads.³

Southeastern student parents are also disproportionately low-income, with 65 percent qualifying for a \$0 expected family contribution (EFC) based on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), an indicator of low-income status, as compared to 42 percent of all Southeastern undergraduate students; the number of Southeastern student parents with a zero dollar EFC increased by 56 percent between 2004 and 2012, indicating increased need within the region for supportive programs, services, and scholarships.⁴ Students with an EFC of zero are not expected to pay out-of-pocket toward their educational costs of attendance, however Federal Student Aid dollars often fall short before covering all of a student's cost of attendance (a situation referred to as having "unmet need"). The average unmet need for Southeastern student parents is \$5,393, and single-parent students the average unmet need is \$6157 per year.⁵

We reviewed each accredited Florida postsecondary institution to find available information about student parent support services. Specifically, we searched for: family housing, child care centers or programs, scholarships specifically targeted to parenting students, women's centers, food pantries, clothing assistance, emergency loans and specialized programs targeting student parents or other overlapping groups such as "Women in Transition" or "Non-Traditional Students" and/or providing academic support services that are inclusive of these populations.

Table 1: Florida Postsecondary Institutions with Student Parent Support Services by Type

	Family Housing	Child Care		Scholarships	Women's Center	Specialized Programs	Food Bank	Clothing Closet	Emergency Loans
		2YR	4YR						
		TOTAL							
State-wide	3 (4%)	15	15	3 (4%)	17 (22%)	8 (10%)	8 (10%)	3 (4%)	4 (5%)
		30 (39%)							
N=77 (Public – 41, Private – 36)									

Overall, we found that 39 percent of Florida institutions offered child care but other types of programs were represented at less than or equal to 10 percent of Florida postsecondary institutions ($\geq 8/77$) including: scholarships (4 percent), family housing (4 percent), food pantries (10 percent), clothing closet or support programs (4 percent), emergency loans (5 percent), or specialized programs targeting parenting students (10 percent). However only two of these programs are specifically for parenting students: University of Florida's *Students with Children* program, and Miami Dade College's *Single Stop Center*.

While college's with women's centers are more common (22 percent), we noted that many women's center programs did not seem to offer specific services to student parents, although we decided to leave these programs in the database. Because of these findings we started subsequent qualitative research to learn more about the role of work/life and women's centers in supporting student parents in New England and the Mid-Atlantic. The findings of this subsequent research are forthcoming.

Comparing these statistics to our data in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, postsecondary institutions in Florida are less likely to offer family housing (4 percent versus 10 percent and 4 percent respectively), and were less likely to offer targeted scholarships for student parents (4 percent versus 19 percent and 7 percent respectively). While we identified eight programs with specialized student support (10 percent), only two of these institutions were specific to student parents (3 percent) as compared to 11 percent in New England, and 2 percent in the Mid-Atlantic.

Importantly, we found that the availability of a program or service did not necessarily guarantee that students would be able to access it. While child care centers were the most common program for example, these programs also accepted faculty, staff, and community families and admissions waitlists were often lengthy. Many campus child care centers have wait lists. Furthermore, the cost of campus child care center programs can be prohibitive for student families. Many campus child care programs offer discounted tuition rates, provide child care tuition scholarships or subsidies to student families, or accept state child care vouchers to help cover these costs, however many others do not.

One option to support student child care funding is the US Department of Education funded *Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS)* grant, providing federal funding to support child care for enrolled student parents. Florida's Colleges and Universities have more CCAMPIS programs than many other states, with 17 institutions receiving CCAMPIS funding as of 2020; 15 of these institutions house on-campus child care centers. Importantly, because CCAMPIS funding can be used to support student child care programs on- or off-campus, the presence of a CCAMPIS program does not necessarily mandate the presence of a campus child care center. The number of institutions with CCAMPIS funding may point to the drastic differences in the percentage of Florida postsecondary institutions offering child care (39 percent) in comparison to other student parent support strategies. Additionally, while Florida's Temporary Cash Assistance and SNAP Education & Training Programs are more restrictive of postsecondary education than many other states which allow college to count towards work requirements, The Florida Office of Early Education and Care's *School Readiness Program Voucher Program* specifically states that college or trade school of at least 20 hours per week, is allowable to meeting the requirements to receive a child care voucher.

Only three of Florida's 77 higher education institutions offer students the opportunity to live on campus with their children: Baptist University, Landmark Baptist College, and the University of Florida. Researchers at Temple University found that 66 percent of student parents experience housing-insecurity and 16 percent are houseless with their children.⁶ While Florida's costs of living may be comparatively lower than expensive parts of the country like New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and California, for many low-income student parents, housing costs remain unaffordable. Family housing has the potential to offer student parents and their children an affordable, safe, and convenient place to live, ensuring the baseline of security necessary to succeed in college. Additionally, because of the benefits of living on campus, family housing is an inclusionary program that extends these benefits to students with children.

Even at the few colleges where family housing is provided, there are no guarantees that student parents will be able to live there. Some family housing programs maintain waitlists. Others have secondary admissions requirements or eligibility criteria. Florida Baptist refers to their family housing program as “*Married Student Housing*,” a term that remains common nomenclature despite the fact that these programs may not legally exclude single-parent students under the Fair Housing Act. However, some “married student housing” programs are designed for childless couples and do not allow children to live in residence. Landmark Baptist College does not clearly indicate nor advertise that they offer family housing, but a check box is available on the college application form to indicate that the applicant is married or has children and needs to request family housing. The University of Florida’s *Graduate and Family Housing* allows graduate students with or without children, and any student (undergraduate or graduate) with a child to live in family housing regardless of marital status, or other secondary criteria.

While neither Florida Baptist nor the University of Florida publish their rental rates online, and Florida Baptist provides no public information about their family housing program at all, concerns about whether student parents can afford to live in family housing have also been raised in our broader research. If campus family housing proves cost-prohibitive for student parent families, many student parents may turn to other off-campus housing options or become homeless.

Throughout our data collection the University of Florida stood out specifically for its campus-wide and multi-faceted approach to supporting student parents. In addition to family housing, UF offers campus child care, which is subsidized by the CCAMPIS program, facilitating affordable child care for UF student parent families. UF also offers a women’s center and a food pantry, but does not offer clothing assistance, targeted scholarships for student parents, nor emergency loans. The UF Dean of Student’s Office maintains a resource page for Students with Children on their website, and the UF Graduate School offers similar information on a page titled, *Spouse and Family Resources*. Two student organizations *UF PhD Moms*, and *UF Student Parents* provide peer support and opportunities for community building between UF’s parenting students.

Miami Dade College was the only other college in Florida to offer a program specifically targeting support services to student parents through its *Single Stop* program. The Miami Dade College Single Stop website describes the program as “a ‘One-Stop-Shop’ for students to get connected to resources that will provide additional services to aid them in their journey.” The program provides screenings for public assistance benefit qualification, financial coaching, individual counseling, tax preparation services, a food pantry, and other services. All services are free to Miami Dade College students and their immediate family members. While the program is not exclusive to parenting students, supporting student parents is core to the mission of the Single Stop program. Miami Dade’s former president, Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón was an outspoken advocate and champion for student parents during his time at Miami Dade, and considered support for student parents part of his core agenda and mission at the college.

Our most alarming finding was the generalized lack of support services and programming for student parents at Florida’s higher education institutions. While Florida colleges and universities are ahead of many other states in the number of CCAMPIS funded institutions, other services to support student parents in the state are far less common.

Furthermore, even at the institutions where we did find services, we often had to dig deeply through the websites to mine for this information, as it was not clearly advertised or linked on institutional homepages or departmental micro-sites in a way that would make it easy for a prospective student parent to find this information. The three institutions with family housing gave minimal information about their programs. In fact, one of our researchers had missed Landmark Baptist College’s family housing program entirely, because the only information indicating that it existed was a small checkbox on the college’s application form. It was often easier to find clearly worded statements that family housing *was not available* than to find information identifying family housing programs. Twenty-first century student parents seeking information about support services turn to the web for this information. If it is difficult for our research team to find, even with the protocol, list of keyword terms, training, skills, and experience that we brought to the research process, we can only imagine how much more challenging it must be for student parents seeking out this information on their own.

Furthermore, while this research was conducted from 2017-2018, we anticipate through both anecdotal evidence and the findings of our parallel research to develop a nationally comprehensive *Campus Family Housing Database*, that some of the listed programs may have closed. Nationally, between 2016 and 2019 we found that 28 colleges and universities shuttered or moonlighted their family housing programs.⁷ Fortunately, as of January 2021, Florida's three campus family housing programs appear to remain in operation. However, two other colleges where our research team had previously identified family housing programs in 2016, no longer appear to be in operation. Emmaus Baptist University in Brandon, Florida, no longer appears to have a website at all and may have closed. The links that we previously recorded documenting a family housing program at Johnson University of Florida in Kissimmee are now broken, and our keyword searches for any program or support service for student parents no longer generate any results. Our research team has adopted the millennial term “ghosting” to describe what we have seen as a common practice in closing family housing programs: web links are broken, information is no longer there, and nothing is left remaining to indicate that a family housing program ever existed. To our knowledge, our research team is the only group tracking these trends.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research also reports that the Southeast region saw a 11 percent decrease in the number of postsecondary institutions offering campus child care between 2004 and 2012, even as student parent enrollment rates climbed by 26 percent during the same period.⁸ The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated concerns about potential current and future program closures, particularly campus child care and family housing programs.⁹

Finally, while this portion of our research is still emergent, we have learned through subsequent interviews and site-visits that many college faculty and staff are unaware of existing protections for student parents afforded within Title IX. Title IX specifically protects pregnant and parenting students from discriminatory treatment or exclusion based on their parenting status, and regulates specific required accommodations for pregnant and breastfeeding students. Additionally, our findings may illuminate broader systemic concerns to higher education equity that may potentially further violate Title IX, as well as the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, and/or the Fair Housing Act. For anyone concerned with higher education equity, student parents are thus an important matter of consideration.

Non-Profit and State Programs

Where their home institutions do not provide support, student parents often turn to state assistance programs and nonprofits to connect to the resources that they need. Some colleges and universities have also established partnerships with both nonprofits and for-profits to provide on- or off-campus services to their student parents. For example, Borough of Manhattan Community College partnered with *Education Alliance*, a historic settlement house and community services provider based on the Lower-East Side to provide college classes and support services through *Generations Learning Together*, a two-generation college access program offered to families in the Head Start program. In Boston the *Jeremiah Program*, a nationally-established non-profit single parent student success program, has partnered with Endicott College, and a network of community child care providers, to launch a wraparound support program serving single-mother students from across the Boston Metropolitan Area. The Ohio State University partnered with Columbus State Community College and a community housing developer, *Community Properties of Ohio*, to build an off-site residential program with child care and individualized support services for single-parents attending either institution. To date, we have not seen these types of partnerships developing in Florida. The exception is Miami Dade College, which partnered with *Single Stop USA* to create its on-campus Single-Stop Center.

At the state level, state assistance programs, such as the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance program, child care vouchers, and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP—still referred to colloquially as “Food Stamps”), may vary in their policies regarding allowing participants to attend college. Florida is far less lenient than most when it comes to postsecondary education. The Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program (Florida's TANF program) is explicit that only vocational education lasting 12 months or less may

count toward meeting the program's mandatory work requirements. Education may only be used to satisfy work requirements in high school diploma and GED programs, vocational education, or job-training programs.

While Florida's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) states that college students are exempt from meeting work requirements, if they are enrolled at least half-time, it is unclear whether they may receive education support benefits and child care through the SNAP Education & Training program to support their studies.

Florida's School-Readiness Program provides income-eligible child care vouchers for families pursuing work or work-readiness activities. The program explicitly states that parents attending college or trade school at least 20 hours per week are eligible to receive a voucher.

Recommendations for Florida Colleges and Universities

- Florida's colleges and universities should conduct needs-assessment studies to determine their institution's student parent demographics, evaluate how effectively the institution is serving these students, and develop an action plan for addressing their needs. Endicott College's Program Evaluation & Research Group has developed a free open source resource, The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit, that can be used to help guide this process: <http://familyfriendlycampustoolkit.endicott.edu>
- College and university administrators should consider the impact of student parent support programs on institutional goals such as recruitment and retention, degree completion rates, and educational equity.
- Colleges and universities should conduct internal audits of their websites to ensure that information about student parent programs can be easily located and accessed.
- Colleges and universities with existing programs should assess whether barriers such as affordability, capacity, and restricted eligibility criteria for their programs should be addressed and remediated to better serve the needs of their student parent population.
- Colleges and universities might consider exploring local off-campus resources to support their student parents such as nonprofit organizations and state programs, and offer their students information and referrals to these resources.
- Colleges and universities that determine that they do not have capacity to provide student parent support services directly might explore potential partnerships with community-based organizations and companies to provide contracted services such as housing, child care, and/or individualized case management.
- Florida's colleges and universities should train their faculty and staff about strategies for supporting student parent success and the mandate of compliance with Title IX protections for pregnant and parenting students.
- Florida colleges and universities should work with their institution's general counsel to study the potential legal implications of exclusion of pregnant and parenting students from support services that the institution regularly provides to non-parenting students to ensure compliance with local, state and federal laws.
- Florida colleges and universities should expand current inclusion-program efforts to include student parents.

Recommendations for the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges

- Develop guidelines within accreditation and recertification processes that include self-assessment of accessibility and support for student parents.
- Require accredited colleges to collect demographic data on their student parent populations, as is common-practice with other high needs student demographics such as low-income, first-generation, and minority students, and to report this information as part of their self-study, as required for the accreditation process.
- Require all regionally accredited Southern institutions to ensure institution-wide compliance with current Title IX guidelines as issued by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf>
- Conduct further research on the systemic trends on student parents studying at Southern institutions of higher education to inform future inclusionary policy for student parents.

Recommendations for State and Federal Policy

- The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights should further consider the matter of protection from “exclusion from any educational program, service, or activity based on one’s parenting status,” in consideration of our data, and develop strategies for further addressing higher education inclusion and equity for student parents at the federal level.
- State policy makers may look to other states such as California, who recently passed the Equity in Higher Education Act mandating that the state’s public colleges and universities provide reasonable accommodation and support for breastfeeding students. Furthermore, California’s Sex Equity in Education Act, mandates that all California higher education institution’s comply with Title IX, specifying specific provisions and guidelines that must be followed in order to do so.
- Florida’s Department of Children and Families should reconsider rules that do not allow college to count as a stand-alone work readiness activity for TCA and SNAP E&T support services, and should create attendance and verification forms for students to document attendance and program hours that match the structure of a college program as current forms are designed for workforce development training, and are confusing for college faculty, staff, and students.
- State and federal Departments of Education should consider supporting further research to inform inclusion efforts directed toward student parents through federal and state policy.

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Appendix A:

Lists of Colleges and Universities by Student Parent Program Type

Florida Colleges and Universities with Family Housing

- 1) University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
- 2) Baptist College of Florida, Graceville, FL
- 3) Landmark Baptist College, Haines City, FL

Florida Institutions with Child Care Programs

- 1) State College of Florida-Manatee-Sarasota, Bradenton
- 2) Daytona State College, Daytona Beach+
- 3) Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale
- 4) Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Meyers
- 5) Indian River State College, Fort Pierce+
- 6) Broward College, Ft. Lauderdale+
- 7) Sante Fe College, Gainesville+
- 8) University of Florida, Gainesville+
- 9) Florida National University, Hialeah+
- 10) Florida State College at Jacksonville, Jacksonville+
- 11) Jacksonville University, Jacksonville
- 12) University of North Florida, Jacksonville+
- 13) Palm Beach State College, Lake Worth
- 14) Florida Southern College, Lakeland
- 15) Chipola College, Marianna
- 16) Eastern Florida State College, Melbourne
- 17) Florida International University, Miami+
- 18) Miami Dade College, Miami+
- 19) Pasco-Hernando State College, New Port Richey
- 20) Northwest Florida State College, Niceville
- 21) College of Central Florida, Ocala
- 22) University of Central Florida, Orlando+
- 23) Pensacola State College, Pensacola
- 24) The University of West Florida, Pensacola+
- 25) New College of Florida, Sarasota
- 26) Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Tallahassee+
- 27) Florida State University, Tallahassee+
- 28) Hillsborough Community College, Tampa
- 29) University of South Florida, Tampa+
- 30) Rollins College, Winter Park

CCAMPIS Programs

Additionally, although the following institutions were not found in our original data collection to house campus child care centers, as of 2020 each had a child care initiative on campus supported by the CCAMPIS program. These programs are not counted in our database statistics, but will each be thoroughly reviewed in our upcoming database update.

- 1) Gulf Coast State College, Panama City+
- 2) St. Petersburg College, St. Petersburg+

+ Indicates that the college currently received a federal CCAMPIS Grant to support student parent child care initiatives as of 2020.

Florida Institutions with Student Parent Scholarships

- 1) Broward College, Ft. Lauderdale
- 2) Baptist College of Florida, Graceville
- 3) Seminole State College of Florida, Sanford

Florida Institutions with Women's Centers

- 1) Lynn University, Boca Raton
- 2) University of Miami, Coral Gables
- 3) University of Florida, Gainesville
- 4) University of North Florida, Jacksonville
- 5) Beacon College, Leesburg
- 6) Eastern Florida State College, Melbourne
- 7) Florida Institute of Technology, Melbourne
- 8) Florida International University, Miami
- 9) Northwest Florida State College, Niceville
- 10) University of Central Florida, Orlando
- 11) Valencia College, Orlando
- 12) St. Petersburg College, St. Petersburg
- 13) University of South Florida – St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg
- 14) Florida State University, Tallahassee
- 15) University of South Florida, Tampa
- 16) The University of Tampa, Tampa
- 17) Rollins College, Winter Park

Florida Institutions with Specialized Programs

- 1) Daytona State College, Daytona Beach
- 2) Sante Fe College, Gainesville
Student Service Center
- 3) University of Florida, Gainesville
Students with Children Program
- 4) Miami Dade College, Miami
Single-Stop USA
- 5) University of Central Florida, Orlando
Social Justice Advocacy
- 6) Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Tallahassee

- 7) Florida State University, Tallahassee
 - 8) University of South Florida, Tampa
- Office of Academic Advocacy*

Florida Colleges with Food Pantries

- 1) Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Meyers
- 2) University of Florida, Gainesville
- 3) University of North Florida, Jacksonville
- 4) Miami Dade College, Miami
- 5) University of Central Florida, Orlando
- 6) Valencia College, Orlando
- 7) University of West Florida, Pensacola
- 8) University of South Florida, Tampa

Florida Colleges with Free Clothing Programs

- 1) University of North Florida, Jacksonville
- 2) Valencia College, Orlando
- 3) University of South Florida, Tampa

Florida Colleges with Emergency Loan Programs

- 1) University of Florida, Gainesville
- 2) University of North Florida, Jacksonville
- 3) University of West Florida, Pensacola
- 4) University of South Florida, Tampa

Florida Non-Profits Supporting Student Parents

WE ARE NOT CURRENTLY AWARE OF ANY NON-PROFIT PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA THAT PROVIDE DIRECT SUPPORT OR SERVICES TO STUDENT PARENTS.

Unlike the above lists reflecting postsecondary institutions, which are regionally comprehensive, this is an ad hoc list that we continue to build as we learn about other non-profits supporting student parents in the Southeastern states. Because there is no easily accessible list of these organizations from which to conduct both a feasible and comprehensive review of non-profits supporting student parents, this is the only possible way to include what information we do have about non-profit student parent programs. As we continue to learn about and connect with other higher-education focused non-profits in the region, they will be added to this list.

Appendix B:

Florida Public Assistance Program Work Requirements & Educational Support Programs

TANF: Florida’s Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) Program allows education to count toward meeting “core” work requirements only if the participant is enrolled in Vocational Education limited to 12 months or less. Education may also be counted as a supported supplemental “non-core” work activity, but only if the participant has not yet finished a high school diploma or GED or is enrolled in “job skills training directly related to employment.”

SNAP E&T: The Florida Department of Children & Families website states that participants may be exempt from SNAP work requirements if they are “A student enrolled at least half-time in any recognized school, training program, or an institution of higher education.” However the site does not specify whether college students are eligible to receive supplemental SNAP E&T services such as child care vouchers.

Child Care Vouchers: Florida’s School-Readiness Program provides income-eligible child care vouchers for families pursuing work or work-readiness activities. The program explicitly states that the: “Parent(s)/guardian(s) must be working or participating in an educational activity such as attending college or trade school at least 20 hours per week,” to be eligible for a voucher.

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