

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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APPLICATION AND IMPLICATIONS OF TITLE IX LEGISLATION

- National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 27.8% of females who dropped out of high school did so because of pregnancy. ¹
- Nearly half (48%) of all community college students have been pregnant or have gotten someone pregnant, and 61% of women who have children after enrolling in community college fail to finish their degree. ²
- Title IX legislation clearly protects against discrimination related to pregnancy and parenting, but until recently has not been widely acknowledged or utilized.

¹ US Department of Education: *Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students Under Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972.*

² *National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy Nov. 2009 Newsletter*

WHY NOW?

- Obama administration's goal of leading the world in percentage of college graduates by 2020.
- Obama administration's efforts to increase the numbers of women in STEM, partly by an increased focus on Title IX compliance.
- 2 examples:
 - National Women's Law Center → *A Pregnancy Test for Schools* and other reports and initiatives
 - Institute for Women's Policy Research → *Student Parent Success Initiative*
- We need more:
 - Data – we know little about the incidence, experiences, and challenges of P&P students in higher education
 - Education – the extent of Title IX protections for P&P students are not widely known or practiced

TITLE IX OF THE 1972 EDUCATIONAL AMENDMENTS TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Basically . . . pregnant students have a right to be in school, and must be allowed to participate at the same level as other students who are similarly able or unable to participate in school activities. They must be offered the same access and accommodations as any other student with a medical condition under a doctor's care.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER SUMMARIZES TITLE IX APPLICATION TO P&P STUDENTS:

■ **Parental Status:**

- Schools are prohibited from applying any rule related to a student's actual or potential parental, family, or marital status that treats students differently based on their sex. (34 C.F.R. § 106.40(a))

■ **Harassment**

- Title IX prohibits harassment based on sex, including harassment because of pregnancy or related conditions.

TITLE IX - *CONTINUED*

• **Pregnancy/Related Conditions:**

- Schools are prohibited from excluding any student based the student's pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom. (34 C.F.R. § 106.40(b)(1))
- Schools may only require pregnant students to submit doctor's notes to continue participation in school if this is required of all students with conditions requiring the care of a doctor. (34 C.F.R. § 106.40(b)(2))
- Any separate programs for pregnant students must be voluntary and comparable. (34 C.F.R. § 106.40(b)(3))
- Schools must treat pregnancy under the same policies as other temporary medical conditions with respect to any special services they provide. ((34 C.F.R. § 106.40(b)(4))
- Schools must excuse absences because of pregnancy for as long as the student's doctor deems the absences medically necessary. (34 C.F.R. § 106.40(b)(5))

TITLE IX - CONTINUED**■ Classes and School Activities**

- Schools must allow pregnant students to continue participating in classes and extracurricular activities.
- Special instructional programs or classes for pregnant students must be comparable and voluntary.
- Schools may be required to provide reasonable adjustments.

TITLE IX - CONTINUED**■ Excused Absences and Medical Leave**

- Schools must excuse absences due to pregnancy or childbirth for as long as medically necessary.
- Schools must ensure that teachers understand the Title IX requirements related to excused absences/medical leave.
- Schools must provide pregnant students with same special services provided to students with temporary medical conditions.

TITLE IX VIOLATION EXAMPLES FROM URI

- Scholarship to be withdrawn if leave of absence taken (pregnant single mother in excellent academic standing) (is this a violation?)
- Request to shift from unsafe off-campus internship placement to a safer location (pregnant senior speech pathology major needing internship completion to graduate) was met with an “unequal alternative:” shorter internship on campus under supervision of unsupportive professor.

BEST PRACTICES IN USE AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES

- Formal policies – graduate versus undergraduate (wide range of topics → academic accommodations and leaves of absence and financial support stipulations)
- Student Pregnant/Parent Help Centers
- Child Care centers
- Loans, grants, child care subsidies
- Childbirth accommodation funds
- Student blogs/online forums
- Insurance for children
- Housing/transportation assistance

URI PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENT INITIATIVE

1. Policy (Work-Life Committee)
2. Services (Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity; Women's Center)
3. Data collection (Work-Life Committee)

I. URI POLICY SUITE- THE "DIVIDE AND CONQUER" APPROACH

- Academic accommodations (course, lab, child care)
- Graduate leaves, employment, assistantships
- Health: Counseling and Health Services
- Housing options
- Lactation policies
- Scholarships and financial aid
- Student athletes
- Transitions in and out of full-time enrollment
- Transportation and parking

2. RECOMMENDED UNIVERSITY SERVICES

1 = existing or likely 2 = maybe 3 = not any time soon 4 = in your dreams

- Interactive, electronic student forum (sakai, facebook) (1)
- Better outreach, education and awareness activities – e.g, literature, website, support groups, brown bag lunches, etc. (1)
- Drop-in child care – exploring student co-op model (similar to Rhode Island College) (2)
- Access to Bright Horizons Care Advantage portal (4)
- Child care subsidies (1.5)
- “Go to” person/office - Advice to students regarding policies (e.g., paid leave for grad student employees), resources, student rights, insurance info, complaint process, etc. (1)
- More flexible and accessible academic scheduling, online options, skype into class, etc. (2.5)
- Child friendly spaces – playground (2)
- Better parking options (2.5)

3. THE URI PREGNANT & PARENTING STUDENT SURVEY.

Co-developed with a sub-committee from the Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity. Distributed spring 2014.

165 respondents. Valid percentages include:

- 72% female
- 55% undergraduate (of those, 49 FT, 31 PT)
- 45% graduate (of those, 29 FT, 36 PT)
- 42% agreed that their part-time status was completely or partly due to being pregnant or parenting

PREGNANT AND/OR PARENTING STATUS

- 30% self or partner pregnant (10% are partners)
- 80% caring for dependent child (87 female, 32 male)
- 17% are both pregnant and parenting (17 self, 9 partner)
- 8.5% (13) have a child with special needs
 - 3 autism, 2 PTSD, 2 ADHD, mood disorders, anxiety/depression, physical illness

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

- 59% married or civil union (3% living apart)
- 25% relationship partner (7% living apart)
- 11% single
- 121 (84%) have a partner with whom they share (or plan to share) parenting responsibilities; 5 (3.5%) are not sure; 18 (12.5%) no partner sharing plans
- 32 (24.1%) have a partner who is also a student:
 - 15 (11.5%) have a partner who is also a student at URI
 - 17 (12.6%) have a partner who is a student elsewhere

EMPLOYMENT

- 19 are pregnant and employed
- 85 are parenting and employed
- 9 are pregnant, employed, and parenting
- Employment does not significantly contribute to stress, or academic performance, time to graduate, attending class or completing class assignments

PERCENT MONTHLY CHILDCARE COSTS



No correlation between CC costs and ages or numbers of children

HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE THESE ISSUES ARE A PROBLEM FOR YOU?

	1=strongly agree, 4=strongly disagree
Finding convenient short-term campus parking	1.74
Finding reliable emergency, back-up child care, or care when my child is mildly ill	1.92
Feeling isolated, or like an outsider	2.24
Feeling like my views and/or class contributions are not as highly valued as other students	2.97
Finding reliable on-campus transportation	3.05
Finding reliable transportation to and from campus	3.31

HOUSING & FINANCIAL AID

HOUSING:

- 36% would utilize on-campus housing, if available, 19.4% were not sure

FINANCIAL AID: “Have your P&P responsibilities ever interfered with your ability to receive fiscal aid (financial aid, scholarships, grants, etc.) at URI?”

- Yes 12 11.8%
- No 90 88.2%

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

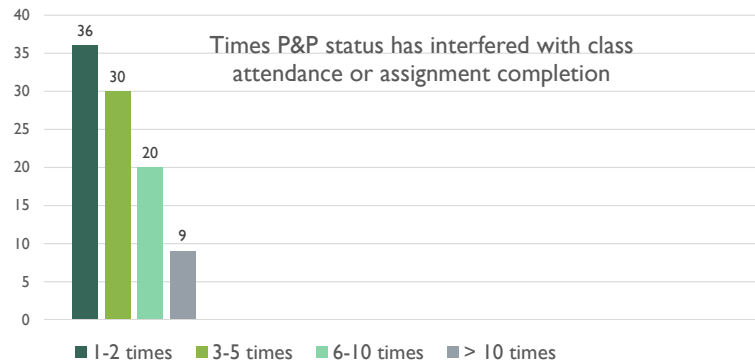
My status as a pregnant and/or parenting student ...	1=strongly agree, 4=strongly disagree
... will likely (or already has) extended the time it will take me to graduate.	1.65
... has interfered with my ability to complete a class assignment or attend classes.	1.92
... has affected my academic performance in a negative way.	2.33

INTERFERENCE WITH CLASS ASSIGNMENTS OR ATTENDANCE

Of the two-thirds who responded:

How often?

- 1-2 times: 34.3%
- 3-5 times: 28.6%
- 6-10 times: 19%
- More than 10 times: 8.6%



ASKING AN INSTRUCTOR FOR SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Why have you NEVER asked an instructor for special accommodations? (N = 87)	Percent who strongly or somewhat agreed.	Mean (1=strongly agree, 4=strongly disagree)
I did not feel I deserved special accommodations.	75.9%	2.0
I did not feel comfortable.	70.5%	2.0
I was worried about the negative consequences from my professor.	54%	2.38
I have not needed special accommodations.	53.5%	2.45

IF YOU HAVE ASKED FOR SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS, WHAT WAS YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S RESPONSE (CHOOSE ONE SITUATION)

	My instructor ...	N	%	Total %
YES	... was understanding and granted my request willingly.	39	64%	82%
	... granted my request but didn't seem happy about it.	11	18%	
NO	... was understanding but did not grant my request.	6	9.8%	18%
	... was not very understanding and did not grant my request.	4	6.6%	
	... did not grant my request but offered an alternative solution	1	1.6%	

STRESS

- Average stress: 3.27 (1=never, 5=very often) – 3.27=sometimes to fairly often
- Stress levels do not differ by gender, employment status, number of children, and are not related to issues like transportation, backup care, parking, or class attendance/assignment completion problems
- Stress is significantly correlated with feeling isolated, or like an outsider, at URI as a P&P student ($r=.23$, $p=.017$)
- Stress is significantly correlated with interference with the ability to complete a class assignment or attend class ($r=.20$, $p=.03$)
- Stress is marginally correlated with academic performance being affected in a negative way ($r=.175$, $p=.07$)

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT – *how are we doing?*

	Percent who strongly or somewhat agreed.	Mean (1=strongly agree, 4=strongly disagree)
URI does a good job sharing information about what resources and policies are available for P&P students.	20%	3.25
As a pregnant and/or parenting student at URI I have felt supported by my institution's resources and policies	21%	3.13

WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE SUPPORT TO YOU AS A PREGNANT AND/OR PARENTING STUDENT?

	Please rank the following in order of value to you (1-7)	Mean	% who ranked it 1 or 2
1	Financial aid for tuition	2.29	72.3%
2	Child care subsidies (i.e., financial help with child care costs)	3.30	44.7%
3	Policies that allow accommodations for class and/or lab participation and/or course completion	3.56	33%
4	On-site childcare	3.83	22.8%
5	Maintaining scholarships if a leave of absence is needed	3.86	23.1%
6	The ability to find support and/or network with other P&P students on campus	5.23	7.8%
7	Access to a list of reliable back-up care child care providers in the area	5.35	13.8%

SOME TAKE AWAYS. PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS ...

1. need financial help (tuition and child care subsidies)
2. likely will have their time to graduate extended
3. do not generally feel supported by the University
4. Are mostly also employed
5. Often have challenges completing assignments and attending class
6. report moderate levels of stress
7. experience stress when their status makes them feel isolated or like an outsider
8. experience stress when their status interferes with their academic performance
9. are generally supported by their instructors, but not always
10. need to better understand their rights, and to feel justified in requesting academic accommodations
11. mostly report being in a relationship with a partner who will help

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES NEED TO ...

1. better understand and communicate Title IX regulations to the entire community, including the students, and ensure their compliance
2. increase awareness among instructors about the extent to which P&P status can interfere with academic success, and encourage flexible solutions
3. educate instructors and the general community about the importance of supporting and accepting P&P students as part of the community
4. find funding to support the needs of P&P students
5. Provide parking solutions and child care assistance