

# UC Riverside

## UCR Honors Capstones 2023-2024

### Title

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT-PARENT EXPERIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
RIVERSIDE

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### Author

Rodriguez, Trina L

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UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT-PARENT EXPERIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

By

Trina Leane Rodriguez

A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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University Honors  
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APPROVED

Dr. Jennifer Syvertsen  
Department of Anthropology

Dr. Richard Cardullo, Howard H Hays Jr. Chair  
University Honors

## ABSTRACT

The University of California, Riverside is one of the top two UCs with the biggest undergraduate student-parent population (parenting students' experience, 2019). Student-parents are an invisible population amongst undergraduate students that not only have to maintain higher education coursework, jobs, and survival, but also the well-being and survival of their child/ren. This research aims to highlight the effects of parenthood on student-parents' mental, emotional, physical, and economic struggles while trying to be successful in academia at UCR. This will be achieved through interviews with UCR staff, undergraduate student-parents, and student-parent UCR alumni. Staff interviews within the ethnic and gender programs and supportive services on campus such as the Women's Resource Center, Chicano Services Programs, Underground Scholars program, and UCR Center for Early Child Education will explore resources and programming that support student-parent activities and what services they offer in order to adhere to UCR guidelines. The lived experiences of student-parents call attention to trends in adaptation in order to survive and needs that are not being met by the university. These recorded interviews at UCR in comparison with student-parent services offered by two other local UC campuses which have a high percentage of undergraduate student-parents, University of California, Berkeley, and University of California, Los Angeles, will be used to outline recommendations for UCR campus leadership which can be implemented as practical solutions for the success and well-being of student-parents.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my sons, Bo and Anakin, always take up space wherever you are, break barriers, and know that you have a village rooting for you and supporting you through it all. To my fiancé, Michael, I could not have done any of this without your unwavering support throughout my educational journey, during my pregnancy while going to school, and returning to school postpartum, I love you, you are my rock.

To my fellow student-parents that are being superheroes every day, this is for all the sacrifices you have made to get where you are today and to all the hard work that you have done, and still do. I write this to make a voice for those student-parents that struggle in silence, that cannot advocate for themselves due to their many responsibilities, that do it all with the love of their children at the forefront of their minds and still come home to give their children an abundance of love.

To my faculty-mentor, Dr. Syvertsen, thank you for introducing me to the love of Anthropology, and guiding me through this important work to provide an insight to the experiences of the marginalized community that is student-parents.

And to my dear friend and mentor, Yvonne Chamberlain-Marquez, thank you for sparking the light within me that ignited my passion for the advocacy of student-parents, for validating my emotions through the difficult times, for seeing the leader within me and providing me with loving energy, motivation, and support, always.

## BACKGROUND

Being a parent is a unique experience and identity, one that is indescribable if one has not experienced it. When I wake up in the morning, I would like to say that I try to find calm in the morning hours by being mindful of having another day to experience life as Trina. But truthfully, the one thing I am reminded of every morning is that I am something more than that, I am “Mom.” I have been “Mom” for the past 11 years of my life and will have this identity for the rest of my life. While I am a graduating senior at the University of California, Riverside (UCR), in the University Honors Program, and set to attend graduate school this Fall of 2024, the thing that I am most proud of is my children. Their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being is what fills me with gratitude. As previously mentioned, being a parent, before everything, is a part of my identity but after that I have many intersecting identities such as being a person who identifies as a woman, a person of low-income, a Latina, a non-traditional, former foster-care, formerly incarcerated, and first-generation student.

Navigating higher education as a parent has been one of the greatest challenges I have faced, and this has been the motivation behind the following research. Arriving at the University of California, Riverside for orientation as an incoming junior transfer student, I was overwhelmed with information that did not apply to me and had numerous questions that went unanswered. My journey in higher education at UCR has led me to this place where I am able to contribute my experience and use of qualitative research to highlight the voices of student-parents on campus at the University of California, Riverside.

Student-parents are an invisible population on campus due to the little research conducted on their specific population. Data retrieved from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or enrollment information received by the University of California system

is not sufficient when determining the number of student-parents on campus. This is due to many people not claiming their children on taxes or having formal custody, therefore steering away from mentioning this in their applications or enrollment forms. Because of this lack of research, there is a lack of resources provided for student-parents, especially at the University of California, Riverside. At UCR, the student-parent population is known to be the highest of all ten UC campuses even with minimal data; therefore, there are even more student-parents unaccounted for that do not have support from the campus in order to be able to succeed in their academic endeavors.

The University of California, Riverside currently has scattered services for undergraduate student-parents on campus. The first place that one tends to look is the Center for Early Childhood Education (CECE). Other programs on campus that provide services to student-parents are the Riverside Underground Scholars Program, Chicano Services Programs, and the Women's Resource Center. There is no one unified place for student-parent programming, which can make finding resources difficult. The interviewing of student-parent support staff on campus was vital to this research to understand how staff from these programs support the student-parent population on a day-to-day basis.

The unique experiences of student-parents at the University of California, Riverside are crucial when it comes to the goal of this research which is highlighting their stories, struggles, and giving a voice to their specific needs. If student-parents fall into multiple categories of vulnerable populations, it is even more important for their needs and voices to be highlighted because as these populations face their specific struggles, they are more likely to fall through the cracks of research like this which is searching for ways to help marginalized communities such as student-parents. This research will present recommendations to the University of California,

Riverside and these experiences will show the institution the reality of the barriers that student-parents face due to the lack of support provided by the institution.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study, undergraduate student-parents are defined as undergraduate students that have a child/ren, dependent/dependents, who are living in or out of their home. This is to be inclusive of parents who may not have their children in their homes but still provide financial, physical, mental, and emotional support to their children.

### **Policies**

Student-parents have rights that are protected by Title IX federal law which states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (US Department, 2021). The scope of Title IX further details the specific groups included who are entitled to these rights when it states, “Some key issue areas in which recipients have Title IX obligations are: recruitment, admissions, and counseling; financial assistance; athletics; sex-based harassment, which encompasses sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence; treatment of pregnant and parenting students; treatment of LGBTQI+ students; discipline; single-sex education; and employment” (US Department, 2021). Title IX including parenting students shows how including this specific group is especially important when considering equal opportunities in educational institutions.

In California, there has been a recent push for more attention and systematic support to be brought to student-parents in higher education. CA Assembly bill 2458 was passed by the California State Assembly Higher Education Committee April of 2024 and is due to be heard by the Assembly Appropriations Committee in May (Yu, 2024). According to the CA Legislative

bill text, “The bill would require each campus of the California Community Colleges and the California State University, and would request each campus of the University of California, to, among other things, to, on or before the start of the 2026–27 academic year, (1) develop and implement a campus policy for estimating and adjusting cost of attendance information for student parents, as specified, (2) establish a data field in the campus’s data management information system to identify student parents for certain purposes, and (3) update its campus net price calculator to include a baseline student parent cost estimate, as specified. By imposing new duties on community college districts, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program” (California Legislative, 2024). This bill would be a huge victory for student-parents in California, however, the University of California schools are only recommended to implement these policies, while California community colleges and California State Universities would be required to implement them.

### **Diversity and Equity in Higher Education**

“According to US census data, in 2011 4.8 million undergraduate students were completing their studies while raising dependents” (Riley, 2022). The growing number of student-parents in higher education has been a contributing factor in continued advocacy and research on student-parents in recent years. While updates have been made to include student-parents in policies such as Title IX, there is still much room for improvement which is why the push for more student-parent support remains an important topic. For example, according to California Competes policy research published in 2020, (current) net price calculators underestimate the costs for low-income student parents. This is due to net price calculators not taking into account the expenses that come with being a parent such as childcare, transportation, and medical expenses.



For student-parents to be successful in higher education, they need a strong support system. This includes support from their learning institution. The number of student-parents on campus in higher education is common, however, it is difficult to determine who is a parent and who is not, which is why they are an invisible population. Without an institution that is supportive of student-parents, the less likely that student-parents will feel comfortable with sharing their identities as student-parents, whether it is when filling out enrollment information, asking for resources, or bringing their children with them to campus.

Just because there are student-parents on campus, does not mean that they are fully supported or feel supported by the institution. For example, “Because student-parents are common, the presence of children on college campuses is plausible. While this might be the case sometimes, their presence in academic buildings, dorms, and campus childcare centers varies drastically from institution to institution. This variance comes regardless of the number of student-parents in attendance; it is a result of the culture that has been shaped by each institution’s policies and practices” (Riley, 2022).

Student-parents feel supported when resources are available to them and their unique circumstances are being taken into consideration by institutional staff including advisors, administrators, and especially by the professor’s that teach their classes. “Without confident, secure professors who not only speak out on behalf of female and family rights but who also live out those rights, students have little assurance that they will be supported if they themselves become pregnant while in academia. The result is that students who do become pregnant experience high levels of fear and uncertainty, even among those who are married and decide to grow their families” (Riley, 2022).

## **Funding**

The Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program is a program approved by the Higher Education Act and administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The CCAMPIS Grant is awarded to universities and “funds are used to support or establish campus-based child care programs primarily serving the needs of low-income students enrolled in IHEs (Institutions of Higher Education). Grants may be used for before- and after-school services. In addition, grants may be used to serve the child care needs of the community served by the institution” (US Department, 2023). Many schools including the University of California, Riverside have been awarded the CCAMPIS grant to provide childcare services for student-parents.

For the 2023-2024 project year, the University of California, Riverside was awarded \$955,799.00 (US Department, 2024). While this was seen as a major win for student-parents at UCR, much of the funding is used to provide childcare for low-income students enrolled in the Center for Early Childhood Services, which only provides childcare for children 0-5 years of age. Funding was also distributed to the Women’s Resource Center, which hosted activities and programming for student-parents at the University of California, Riverside. The way that this funding has been highlighted by the institution can make it seem to someone that does not attend UCR as a student-parent that there is more than enough support for student-parents at UCR. However, this funding is very restricted and limited to a small portion of student-parents, making the gap of access for student-parents even bigger and silencing the voices of many who are still in need of support at UCR.

## **Theoretical Approach**

According to the 2019 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) by the University of California Institutional Research and Academic Planning, responses showed that 52 percent of undergraduate student parents at UC's are more than 30 years old, 80 percent are transfer students, and 39 percent are members of underrepresented groups. UC Riverside is shown to have the highest percentage of undergraduate student-parents of all ten campuses, which make up 1.7 percent of undergraduate students at UC Riverside. The two-year graduation rate at UC's for 2015 transfer entrants who were parenting students is 54 percent, six percentage points lower than that for other transfer students (parenting students' experience, 2019). These statistics were important for me to reflect when taking an approach to my research because student-parents are already a small group of students on campus, so taking into consideration their overlapping identities was central to highlighting their stories.

From my experience as an undergraduate student-parent at UCR, I have used parts of my other identities to obtain resources, such as the Underground Scholars Program, Women's Resource Center, or Chicano Services Programs and have met other student-parents in these programs. None of these departments on campus are specifically tailored for student-parents, so when I approached my research, I wanted to use intersectionality as an approach to understanding the barriers of being a student parent on top of other barriers that they might face.

Intersectionality acknowledges that everyone has different experiences of overlapping forms of oppression and discrimination. Intersectionality is important when looking at student-parent experiences from a different perspective. Student-Parents are not just one thing, they are many intersecting identities that all come together to create a certain experience for that person. As Patricia Collins mentions in her book, *Intersectionality as a Critical Social Theory*, "Because

race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, nation, and ability were conceptualized as separate phenomena, their interactions remained invisible because no one thought to look for them. Using intersectionality as a metaphor fundamentally challenged this taken-for-granted assumption, and using intersectionality as a heuristic developed new knowledge as evidence for intersectional claims. In this sense, intersectionality was not just an adjustment to business as usual. It pointed toward a fundamental paradigm shift in thinking about intersecting systems of power and their connections to intersecting social inequalities” (Collins, p. 43, 2019). This shows that it is important to shift the perspective in how we look at student-parents and consider the different identities, perspectives, and experiences of each student-parent, as I will highlight and discuss in this research.

## METHODS

Qualitative research and analysis through interviews were used for this study. I interviewed student-parents who are current or former University of California, Riverside undergraduate students, student-parent support staff at the University of California, Riverside including department directors, program directors, program coordinators, campus faculty and former UCR staff, and took place either via Zoom or in-person. Interviews were one-on-one between the participant and myself. The purpose of the formal interview depended on the role of the participant. For student-parents, the purpose was to highlight their experience as a parenting student, learn about their background, challenges, and journeys through life, academia, and being a parent. For current and former student-parent support staff, the purpose was to learn about what resources are available to student-parents, and what are the experiences of student-parent support staff with witnessing unmet needs of student-parents on campus.

All participants were given a copy of a consent form with the outlining of my research. In the consent form research participants, both student-parents and support staff, were able to choose whether they consented to being audio recorded or not and whether they wished for me to use a pseudonym in place of their real name in my completed research for confidentiality purposes.

There were multiple questions I had when approaching this study. First, who are undergraduate student-parents at the University of California, Riverside and what do their personal journeys as well as present day lives look like? What support is available to undergraduate student-parents on campus at the University of California, Riverside? What are the needs of undergraduate student-parents on campus and how are they being met, or not being met, by the University of California, Riverside? And last, what recommendations can be made to the University in order to better serve their undergraduate student-parent community?

### **Site of Study**

The study took place on campus at the University of California, Riverside, as well as some online components where I used Zoom for online video conferencing for those who were not able to meet in person, and utilizing Google forms as an online component to gather demographic information of student-parent participants.

I met student-parents, staff, and UCR alumni at the time and space best for them either on campus or via Zoom. I was as accommodating as possible, especially for student-parents to interview them during the best time and place that worked for their schedule. Access from the institution was obtained by approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) due to the interviewing of human participants in my study who are current or former students and staff from the University of California, Riverside.

## **Participant Population**

Two groups of participants were involved in the research and the research was conducted in two parts:

1. One formal interview and informal follow-ups via email about research outcomes with student-parent support staff at the University of California, Riverside including department directors, program directors, program coordinators, campus faculty and former UCR staff.
2. One formal interview, one informal check-in 4 weeks after formal interview, and follow-up emails regarding research outcomes with student-parents who are current or former University of California, Riverside undergraduate students.

Participants were involved in the research through interviews, email communications, informal interactions when I was seeking participants, check-ins with student-parent participants to see how they are doing and follow up interactions about the research study outcomes.

When interviewed on Zoom, interviews were audio recorded using the sound recorder app on my personal computer and saved as an audio file. When interviewed in-person, interviews were audio recorded using my personal hand-held audio recorder. The hand-held audio recorder was then connected to my personal computer after the interview to transfer and save the audio files from the recorder. Audio recording was optional and was discussed when I presented the participation opportunity, and again when I went over the consent form with the participants. The duration of the study lasted six months and participant interviews ended April of 2024.

## **Zoom Interview Procedures**

Before the formal interview, participants were emailed a written statement regarding the research prior to the interview. If the participant was a student-parent I provided a link to the Google Forms survey to be filled out by the participant to collect demographic information. All participants received a copy of the interview questions for the participant to have ahead of the interview so they would be more comfortable with what questions would be asked during the interview. I communicated with each participant via email to set a date for the formal Zoom interview. A confirmation email with a date, time, and Zoom information with Zoom link and password was then sent to the participant. A unique Zoom link and password was generated for each session.

The day of the formal interview participants signed into Zoom from their personal computer or mobile device. They were able to choose to join with or without video, or if preferred, they were able to call into the Zoom meeting through a phone call if that worked best for them. I only recorded an audio file of the Zoom session. I then asked the participant if they were ready and obtained verbal consent from the participant. Once the participant gave verbal consent, I informed the participant that I would begin recording and then began the interview.

## **Compensation**

Currently enrolled University of California, Riverside undergraduate student-parents and student-parent UCR alumni were given an incentive in the form of a \$25 Target gift card for participating in the research. After the formal interview was complete, I sent the \$25 Target gift card incentive to the participant's email address and confirmed the receipt of the gift card via email. A requirement for student-parents being interviewed on Zoom to receive the incentive was

to verbally consent to participating in the study. Student-parent support staff were not eligible for compensation.

### **In-Person Interview Procedures**

Before the formal interview I emailed participants to schedule a date, time, and place on campus for the formal interview. In this email a copy of the informed consent form was sent and I asked each participant to read the informed consent form ahead of time and let them know I would be going over the informed consent form in-person to make sure that the participant was able to understand it. At that time, I also emailed a copy of the interview questions for the participants to have so they can be more comfortable with what questions will be asked during the interview. If the participant was a student-parent, I also provided a link to the Google forms survey to be filled out to collect demographic information.

On the day of formal Interview at the scheduled date, time, and location, I went over the consent form in person and answered any questions that the participant had. If the participant agreed to participate in the formal interview the consent form was then signed. Once the informed consent form was signed, I let each participant know when I would begin the audio recording and started the interview.

If the in-person interview was with a student-parent, once the formal interview was complete, I gave a physical \$25 Target gift card incentive to the participant. As long as participants engaged in at least five minutes of the interview and consented to allow their interview to be used in the final research study, they were eligible to be compensated. Student-parents were required to sign the consent form and participate in at least five minutes of the interview in order to be compensated.



## **Interview Questions**

The interview questions for current and former undergraduate student-parents were focused on three main areas: background/personal information, health information, and institutional support information. I took a qualitative approach of introducing open-ended questions so that student-parents were able to freely speak about their unique experiences. Background/personal information consisted of questions about the experience of being a student, the experience of being a parent, what support they had, and what struggles they have experienced. Health information consisted of asking student-parents how being a student-parent has affected their physical, mental, and emotional health. Institutional support information included questions regarding how familiar they are with student-parent resources on campus, which ones they have utilized if any, and what institutional support they wish that UCR provided (See Appendix A).

Interviews with current and former student-parent support staff included a general set of questions asking about their role, what services their department/office provides, what resources they had for student-parents, and what they felt that the institution could do to further support services for student-parents (See Appendix B).

## **Check-Ins with Student-Parents**

After the formal interview, I facilitated one check-in with each of the current UCR undergraduate student-parent participants via email. The purpose of check-in was to see how the student-parent participant was doing mentally and emotionally, to discuss any current challenges they are facing since the initial interview and discuss anything that is helping them during that time if they are facing challenges. It was also a chance to provide the participant with contact

information to on-campus resources if needed. An amount of one check-in was required within four weeks after the formal interview.

### **Follow-ups on research outcomes**

Follow-up communication with current and former undergraduate UCR student-parents as well as current and former student-parent support staff on research outcomes occurred via email.

## **RESULTS**

### **Student-Parent Interviews**

I interviewed nine student-parents, four of which were former undergraduate UCR student-parents and five which are current undergraduate UCR student parents. One former undergraduate UCR student-parent participant was also a former UCR support staff for the Women's Resource Center and agreed to be interviewed from the perspective of a former undergraduate student-parent perspective and then be interviewed from the perspective of a former student-parent support staff at UCR. The trends of difficulties amongst student-parents will now be outlined in the following.

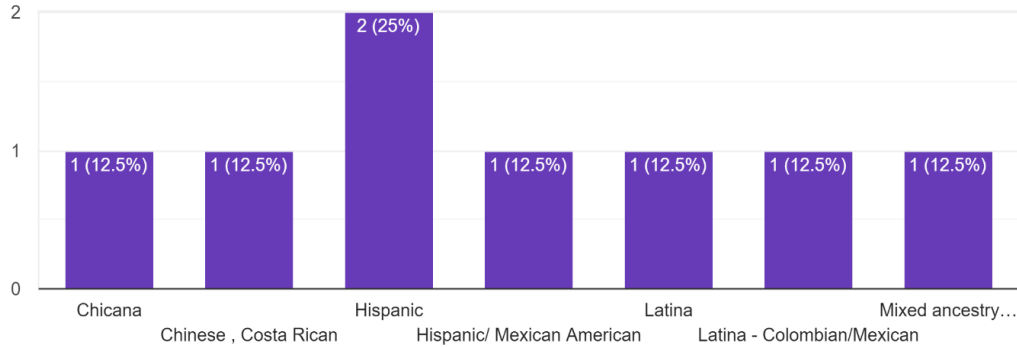
### **Demographic information**

Eight out of the nine current and former student-parent participants completed the Google forms survey which I asked them to complete prior to their interviews. The following shows the responses from those eight participants who completed the survey.

**Table 1. Participant Demographics by Race/Ethnicity**

With which race(s) and/or ethnicity(ies) do you identify?

8 responses

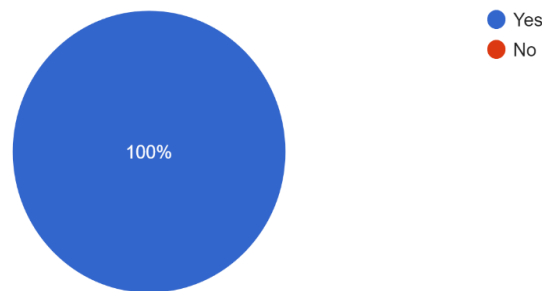


All eight student-parent participants identified as other than white as their race/ethnicity. Student-parents that completed the survey identified with a wide variety of races and ethnicities. Seven out of eight participants identified as some form of Latinx.

**Table 2. First Generation Student Status**

Are you a First Generation college student?

8 responses



All student-parents that completed the Google Forms Demographic Survey identified themselves as First-Generation college students.

**Table 3. Undergraduate Major and Age**

Undergraduate Major at UCR 8 responses	Age 8 responses
Psychology	20
Political science & education, society, and human development	37
History	25
Sociology	41
Education, Society, and Human Development	38
Anthropology	30
Psychology	43
Psychology	35

The student-parents that completed the Google Forms Demographic survey had a wide range of undergraduate majors. All student-parents that completed the survey are of non-traditional student age.

### **Gender Identity**

The eight Student-parents that completed the Google Forms Demographic Survey all identified themselves as some form of femme identity in their own words. Such identifying identities were worded as Female, She/Her, Ella, and cisgender woman.

### **Accessibility to Courses**

Student-Parent participants had a common need for flexible class availability and modality. Participants mentioned how during the COVID-19 pandemic, they were able to access classes online while being home with their children, which helped tremendously when trying to further their education. Student-parents expressed that they would prefer that same flexibility

from professors that was given during the pandemic when it came to attending classes either online or in person, as well as being given the option during the registration process to find online classes.

### **Range of Class Times**

Many student-parents mentioned how there was a limit on the days and times available for classes that were needed to graduate. This is because student-parents have to adjust their schedule according to child care, school hours for school aged children, and work. Common courses needed to graduate were noted to be only offered for one day and time option for the entire quarter.

### **Expansion of Childcare**

Participants shared that the Center for Early Childhood Education at UCR had a long waitlist for childcare. In addition, because the center only provides childcare for children ages 0-5 years old, many of their children did not qualify for childcare.

### **Mental and Emotional Health**

Many challenging life experiences came up when student-parents were asked about their physical, mental, and emotional health in regard to being a parent and a student that attends higher education. Some focused more on the mental and emotional toll that parenthood combined with education brought upon them, while others mentioned how they were always physically tired and drained from either studying, parenting, working, or all three.

### **Unified Space for Student Parents**

When it came to asking about student-parent resources, the participants had a different range of where they sought resources on campus. One common theme was the hope for a unified area where student-parents could access resources and community.

## **Expanded Access to Family Housing**

The mention of the fear of homelessness was a major stressor for student-parents who were interviewed. Most of the student-parent participants experienced housing insecurity while attending UCR as an undergraduate student-parent. The mention of the years-long waitlist for family housing was like an unachievable dream to them. Participants had to find ways to survive and find housing in any way possible for them and their children. Some participants mentioned feeling tricked by the University that claimed to have family housing available for student-parents when family housing was so impacted.

## **Student-Parent Support Staff Interviews**

In addition to the student-parent participant group, four current student-parent support staff at UCR were interviewed. Each current student-parent support staff participant was from a different center on campus that has student-parent support services. The following are themes that arose from the interviewing of student-parent support staff.

## **Expansion of Childcare**

Student support staff mentioned how an expansion of childcare would greatly benefit student-parents in need. This includes opening new childcare centers on campus and expanding the age groups that are being cared for. In addition, student-parent support staff noted that having childcare available for student-parents who take evening classes would also be a great benefit and support to them.

## **Connection with Off Campus resources for student-parents (In Riverside and neighboring counties)**

Student-parent support staff participants discussed how many student-parents commute from Los Angeles and neighboring counties. This fact told them as student-parent support staff that there is a need for a connection between the institution and off-campus resources, not only in Riverside, but also connection to community resources in neighboring counties like Los Angeles.

## **Institutional Support with Creating Student-Parent Support Positions**

Student-parent support staff mentioned working hard to serve not only the student-parent population, but the other undergraduate students that are being supported by their department as well. Support staff mentioned how job titles specifically tailored to supporting the student-parent group in each department are needed in order for undergraduate student-parents to not fall through the cracks and be left behind. Student-parent support staff expressed being stretched thin because of all the different areas they are working to serve the whole community of undergraduate students that it is hard for them to focus just on student-parents.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Student-Parents**

Connecting with fellow student-parents was eye-opening, even as a student-parent myself, from the very first interview I conducted it was clear that each experience was unique, with different struggles that came up for different parents and their families. Even with trends in common struggles, they all looked different. At this point in my research, I will be highlighting the stories of three student-parents who I interviewed in order to give an in-depth understanding of their lives, struggles, and resilience as student-parents at UCR.

Rocio is a 38-year-old student-parent, identifies as a Latina, is a first-generation college student and is majoring in Sociology. She is also a commuting student who lives in Los Angeles and drives to UCR for school. Rocio has two children and also cares for her elderly mother. When asked how her life changed when she became a parent she said, “I started thinking about someone else other than myself. One word sums it up, and it's selfless. You know, it was...it was anything but selfish. I was always thinking about the greater good of every situation that I came about. And I always talk about my children being my moral responsibility. So I hold that very highly” (R. Sanchez, personal communication, March 29, 2024). Rocio mentioned how since her father passed away four years ago, she has taken on the role of being the head of household; caring for her mother and paying the bills, all while still being a mother herself and pursuing her education at UCR. Financial insecurity is a reality for Rocio as a full-time student and she shared about not being able to depend on the institution to provide funding in a timely or reliable manner. Whether it was in regard to an internship or a scholarship, the uncertainty of when she would receive her funding has been stressful. Rocio explained, “Yes, I have, you know, unfortunately, come across some internships at school. Because they're handled by somebody administrative at school, it's kind of hard to get those scholarships or that money paid at times. It's hard to be waiting on money that, you know, you're owed, and to be counting on a certain amount” (R. Sanchez, personal communication, March 29, 2024). Rocio shared that whenever she felt defeated, she clung onto faith and “things working themselves out.” But nonetheless, it was always challenging being in a situation where she had to wait for much needed funds.

The community of people that Rocio has connected to on campus are a vital part of her support system. She values the people that she has met along the way that have been through what she is going through and utilizes her network for mental and emotional support. In addition,



Rocio relies on state funded services like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which allows participants to pay for food using SNAP benefits (Snap ebt, n.d). Rocio emphasized that she needs these state funded services in order to achieve her academic goals, and that she is taking advantage of her resources for a greater purpose when she said, “I represent that low income, I fit certain statistics, and I am that. But I'm not just sitting there, just waiting, or letting life pass by. I'm actually trying to move forward with my life and make the change for my children, so they don't have to experience that” (R. Sanchez, personal communication, March 29, 2024).

In regard to needed support, Rocio shared how she could use more financial support and suggested that gas gift cards could be very beneficial to student-parents who commute like herself and who drop their children off at childcare. In addition, she pointed out the lack of understanding of student-parents as its own group from the university, who tends to treat all students the same as if students are all navigating higher education with the same life experience. She stressed how important it is for UCR to understand that student-parents have specific needs that are different from the traditional college student and that the university should be putting effort into learning about these specific needs and sharing them with all faculty and staff. Rocio further expanded on this when she shared an experience that she had with one of her Sociology professors, who decided to have a pop quiz on the day that Rocio had expressed to them ahead of time that she would not be able to attend class due to a parenting obligation. “It kind of gets in your head” Rocio shared, “like, are these professors doing this purposely? Or do they not care? Did she even read my email? I don't know. I just think the lack of understanding sometimes, again, is because of the uniformity that tends to occur. It's just that, you know, we all have different needs, and we cling to the idea that these institutions serve us or are proud that they

have us here, but they don't really dig deep into the needs of each individual student” (R. Sanchez, personal communication, March 29, 2024). Rocio utilizes resources like the Student Disability Resource Center for accommodations, Chicano Services Programs for community and connection to people who will explain resources to her, health services, dental services, and the career center on campus. When asked what resources she wished that UCR provided she mentioned that the need for a Student-Parent Center on campus is vital to create community, connect with other student-parents, have a place to study, and connect with staff that understand student-parents and their specific needs.

Donna is a 35-year-old student-parent, identifies as a Hispanic female, is a first-generation college student, and is majoring in Psychology. Donna became a parent when she was 17 years old. “I was still a *mocosa*” she laughed, “you know, I was still a child myself, still in high school” (D. Alvarez, personal communication, April 5, 2024). Donna shared about her experience with being a teen mom, having to hide her pregnancy from her family, and having the experience of being a mother to her child taken from her. She shared more about this experience saying, “I had to grow up fast but at the same time...they didn't let me take much of the responsibility because my mom was there, like she didn't let me do much of the caring for my daughter. So it was kind of, like, confusing” (D. Alvarez, personal communication, April 5, 2024). Donna now has three children and is raising them by herself as a single mother. Donna shared the difficulties of being a single mother while going to school, especially after transferring to UCR. She shared how when she was attending community college, she was able to take online classes which made it easier for her to care for her children, maintain her household, and engage in classwork at her own pace. Now being in person, Donna has to be on

campus for classes, still do more schoolwork when she gets home, tend to her household, and care for her children.

Donna relies on section 8 housing, CALWORKS, and CalFresh, all state funded resources for low-income households. She mentioned taking advantage of all the resources she could on campus at UCR, including financial aid, scholarships, programs where she can find a mentor, and the honors program. Donna also relies on her parents for moral support, however, she expressed the difficulty in asking them for financial support, even if she knew in an emergency, she could depend on them. On that note Donna told me about a time of economic struggle in December of 2023 when her Cash Aid was affected by a scam and all her benefits were stolen. She explained, “Last December. I think they call it...we got scammed. So they took all our benefits. I was left with nothing. It was scary because I had to pay rent and I had to pay the bills, and I was like, what am I going to do? Thankfully, my dad was able to lend me money and I had some leftover from financial aid and obviously used it to cover everything I needed to cover. But, you know, it just made me think about how important it is for me to follow through on obtaining this degree so that I can have, like, a job that will be able to give me that economic stability for my children” (D. Alvarez, personal communication, April 5, 2024).

When asked what were the three things that Donna could use more support with as a student-parent, she mentioned help with time management, childcare options for older children, and more family friendly activities on-campus. Donna shared, “One that's a biggie for me is...so my daughter is going to start college and she's the one that I counted on to watch my two little ones whenever they were on vacation because her time off aligned. I know UCR has a childcare system for very young children and mine aren't that age. So, maybe establishing something for older kids, you know, for when they're on vacation and the parents still have to be at school. I

think that will be a big help, you know? And maybe some more student-parent activities where parents can bring their children to school. To pass that, or plant that seed already and get them excited. I remember when I took my middle child to the Highlander day he was so excited, like, ‘mom, I want to come here when I get older, I want to go to UCR, this is where I want to come’ So, I feel like that will be amazing for them” (D. Alvarez, personal communication, April 5, 2024). Donna expressed how she wished she could be more consistent with her children but being a single mother made it difficult to find a balance. “Since I’m doing it alone, I’m not as consistent as I would like to be at times, and that can affect the structure that I am trying to build with them” (D. Alvarez, personal communication, April 5, 2024).

When describing her health, Donna mentioned how being a student-parent was physically tiring, so she is always too tired to practice self-care such as working out, even though she wishes she could. Emotionally, she feels stressed, and described this as feeling always on the run, always moving, with no time for an emotional break. Mentally, she says, it’s draining, and described having to stay up late to do schoolwork and her kids wanting to stay awake with her, so she spends extra time putting her children back to bed and stays up even later than planned to finish her work. Donna shares how sometimes she ends up dozing off in front of her books because of this.

While Donna has taken advantage of various resources on campus, she shared how she is not familiar with student-parent resources that UCR offers. She knows that her children’s age makes her ineligible to receive support with childcare at UCR, but that is it. Donna shared how she wished UCR had more resources for student-parents with older children. “Not all student parents, have babies” she stated. “So, more resources for student-parents with older kids would be beneficial, care for older kids. For example, when I actually went to try and see about the food

and stuff at basic needs, they tell me they have things like diapers and wipes but I also need care items for kids that are older, for emergencies. Also, for older kids, maybe like workshops for parents with adolescents who need to start having talks with their kids or maybe some are having trouble communicating with them. I feel like those will be very beneficial too” (D. Alvarez, personal communication, April 5, 2024). Donna added how more availability for classes and different class times for student-parents would be beneficial as well. “For example, some classes that we need are only available at 8 a.m. And that's the time that we're dropping off our children at school. And for those of us that are single parents, who else is going to drop them off for us?” (D. Alvarez, personal communication, April 5, 2024).

Dallys is a 41-year-old student-parent that identifies as a Latina, is a first-generation college student, and is majoring in history. Dallys shared with me how her life completely changed when she became a parent. “My plan was to go to college right out of high school. It didn't work out that way, because I had to take care of Johnny. I did what I had to do. And he’s good now, I mean he's a student himself now. At the University of Arizona and I’m so proud of him. I don't know, it just completely changed. It’s hard to...like your freedom is gone, right? You're taking care of this little person, completely reliant on me. It's hard to describe. I don't know, maybe it's easier for other people. It's just. It's a big change” (D. Cobain, personal communication, March 11, 2024). Dallys is now married, has three children, and owns a home with her husband, who has been able to support her going back to school because he works from home. Dallys says her family is her support system, her kids cheer her on and her husband takes on whatever duties she is unable to at home. In addition, she has her faculty mentor who she can share her experiences with and who understands her, which she says is really helpful since most professors do not know what she is going through.

When asked about her experience with working and being a parenting student, she spoke about having to cut back on work due to there being no class availability in the evenings or weekends, which made it impossible to go to school while also being a mother. She now has taken on a significant amount of student debt and expressed how she has to pay bills with credit cards sometimes which increases the amount of debt she has even more.

After sharing about her economic struggles as a student-parent, Dallys shared an emotional moment about the hardest part of being a full-time student, and a parent. “My kids say, mom, you're always studying. Mom. You're never here...Mom,” Dallys shared while letting out an emotional sigh and tears, “it's stressful because I need to spend time with my kids. I need to graduate. And I need to make money. So that's just stressful. I didn't mean to get too emotional about it, but I guess talking to you about it, I realize I just, hold it all in. And everyone's like, oh my God, I don't know how you do it. You always seem to have it all together. But that's the image that I want to hold onto. But sometimes it's hard. It's really difficult to balance everything out. And then to be stressed out over making ends meet, when that wasn't really an issue before I came back to school” (D. Cobain, personal communication, March 11, 2024).

Dallys shared about an experience she recently had due to the pressure she was under from school, work, and parenting when she said, “mentally it's exhausting. You can't shut down. Because If I'm not working, I'm at school. If I'm not at school, I'm with my family. And all the time my kids are on my mind, and I'm trying to think, they have doctor's appointments, they practice violin, they have choir, they have electronic stuff and all this stuff. And meanwhile, I'm doing my best to help my oldest child kind of navigate all of his college stuff. So it's really stressful. To the point where I ended up in the hospital because I had an anxiety attack. I had no idea. I thought I was having some sort of stroke. I know it sounds like I'm exaggerating, but I'm

really not. I'm not one to be like, oh let me go to the hospital. I seriously thought I was having some sort of stroke because like my face was numb. And they told me, it's anxiety” (D. Cobain, personal communication, March 11, 2024). Dallys was distressed when describing this experience. She said she felt weak because she was affected this way and that whenever people ask her how she manages everything she does she thinks to herself, because she has to. Because she has no choice, but to do it all.

Dallys expressed how a centralized location for student-parents would make a difference for student-parents on campus. She shared how there are so many centers for small groups and that a student-parent center would be impactful because there are many student-parents on campus and would be a centralized location to help and guide student-parents.

These are only three stories of the nine current and former undergraduate student-parents at UCR that I was able to interview. Each one of their stories looks different and is important when understanding a community that has layers of barriers that make it seem impossible to successfully navigate a research institution such as UCR and succeed academically in their courses. It is also important to mention that the nine student-parents I interviewed were those that were able to make time to meet with me. There are so many other undergraduate student-parents that just did not have the time to participate in the research due to their many responsibilities and challenges.

All nine of the student-parents’ stories are valid, impactful, and require support by the University of California, Riverside. Yvonne shared about her experience with homelessness when first transferring to UCR, due to experiencing violence and emotional abuse from her relationship that she had to get away from in order to keep herself and her child safe, so she had to stay in motels during her first quarter at UCR. All nine student-parent participants; Raysa,

Alison, Janice, Dallys, Jessica, Elizabeth, Rocio, Yvonne, and Donna are all from underrepresented communities, have experienced financial insecurities while being an undergraduate student-parent at UCR, expressed the need for more class availability options, and all expressed the desire for a centralized place for student-parents to have community on campus at UCR. Alison, Dallys, Yvonne, Elizabeth, Jessica, Rocio, and Donna returned to school after their children were older. Raysa, Alison, Rocio, and Donna receive food and cash assistance from state services to help support their family's basic needs. Alison, Janice, Dallys, Yvonne, Rocio, and Donna expressed a disconnect from staff and professors at UCR due to lack of understanding of student-parent realities. All nine student-parents experienced anxiety because of their responsibilities piling up on them. Jessica and Yvonne both have neurodivergent children that need extra support. Dallys, Raysa, Jessica, Elizabeth, and Rocio commute to school from their off-campus homes. Elizabeth and Yvonne both shared about being in unhealthy partnerships with the fathers of their children. All nine student-parents relied on family members to support them with childcare and expressed how they could not go back to school without that support because the institution or outside resources did not provide adequate childcare support.

All of these overlapping and intersecting identities and experiences that are described show how an intersectional approach is needed to take a critical lens and understand the level of barriers that student-parents are facing in higher education. The institution should see these intersecting barriers and create doorways of access, support, inclusion, and empowerment to promote a more just environment at the University of California, Riverside.



## **Support-Staff**

My experience connecting with student-parent support staff during the interview process was encouraging. Support staff were open, flexible, and eager to assist with my research when I reached out. Because student-parent services are scattered throughout multiple programs across campus, I focused on four departments that are commonly known to have undergraduate student-parents in their community. I interviewed a program coordinator from the Center for Early Childhood Education (CECE), the assistant director in the Office of Chicano Services Programs, the director of the Riverside Underground Scholars Program, and the director of the Women's Resource Center.

When speaking with a program coordinator from the CECE at UCR, they mentioned how space is very limited at their center. The program coordinator described how at CECE they oversee communications with the center, put together events for families, familiarize themselves with new laws and policies that are coming in for early childhood education and apply them to the CECE at UCR. When asked about what change or action do they think that the institution would need to take in order to have departments specifically for student parents they said, “I would say. Definitely look at the need. We know a lot of times, yes, we are thankful that we have childcare here on campus, but we only have about 12 classrooms altogether, so it doesn't...It fits a need, but we have a long waitlist, you know, to have, it could be anywhere from infants all the way to toddlers. So, I think the need is definitely there. And I wish that the campus would work on that, to open up more, maybe open maybe another center or more, assistance that we can do or have a referral where, okay, maybe we can't take care of the child at this point because we don't have a space, but we know someone else that can work with you, with your schedule to get that taken care of” (F. Quinonez, personal communication, April 2, 2024). They also mentioned

how there is a lot of support for mothers, but not for fathers, and that there are many single fathers on campus as well, so to include them, give them a voice, it would be beneficial to be able to also provide them with more support.

Dr. Arlene Cano Matute is the assistant director in the office of Chicano Services Programs (CSP), which she shared provides a pathway towards success for all of their community. While CSP's mission is focused on Chicano Latino diaspora, it also serves as a bridge for their community and even post-graduation. Dr. Matute says they are able to achieve this through programs, initiatives, and their physical location (A. Matute, personal communication, April 18, 2024). "The foundation is to acknowledge and honor the process that our students take when they step foot at our institution to ensure that they know that they belong and that they are valued, and that we want to be a part of their *familia* and their journey while they're here" (A. Matute, personal communication, April 18, 2024). Dr. Matute described how when creating a Chicano Latino peer mentor group, she noticed the need for student-parent mentors and mentees, and from that branched more programs specifically tailored to student-parents at CSP such as having a consistent student-parent coordinator in their staff. As a student-parent herself, Dr. Matute stressed the importance of having student-parent normalization, rest and recharge, and advocacy. Dr. Matute shared, "I think not everybody always understands, right. The necessity, the need. And this is true for all of our minoritized populations. But I think for student parents in particular, I really try hard to advocate about the urgency. This isn't a matter of like, oh, yeah, in three years we're going to have an initiative. No. If decisions are made, this is a student-parent being pushed out of the institution because we cannot find childcare, because we don't have priority registration, like all of these things. It's a matter of urgency. And so clearly the state is now also on board about how urgent it is to serve student

parents. So there's this legislation now that is urging all public facing higher education institutions to at least have some sort of central space where student parents can get information right. And so now the next conversations are how is UCR faring? And following that legislation?" (Dr. Matute, personal communication, April 18, 2024). Dr. Matute expressed how she would love to expand student-parent services and that funding from the institution is necessary for that to happen. She expressed how students have been advocating for a center and it takes a financial investment from the institution to make it happen.

Ismael Davila is the director for the Riverside Underground Scholars (RUS) Program on campus, which works to support and increase the number of students who have been formerly incarcerated, and system impacted. Ismael expressed how RUS does have student parents in their community and the program has done things in the past such as collaborating with other centers on campus to help support student-parents. However, Ismael also shared how it has been more challenging recently to work with other centers, as other centers plan their own events for student-parents and do not take the initiative to include RUS, even though RUS is known to have student-parents in their community as well. Being a parent himself, Ismael says he tries his best to connect with the student-parents he serves, but it is also up to them to share that identity with him and that many are difficult to connect with due to outside school commitments or familial responsibilities (I. Davila, personal communication, March 26, 2024). Ismael shared, "The institution needs to acknowledge that, especially at UC Riverside, where we have more nontraditional, first gen, more students of color. And the reason I say this is because those groups that I just mentioned actually have higher rates of having children at younger ages, but also experience more hardships when they have children at younger ages because they could have less social support networks and things that provide them the familial resources, not just for help

with childcare, but also the financial aspect that comes with raising a child because it's not cheap. So, I think the university needs to recognize that through our students that we're serving, those are the services that they need” (I. Davila, personal communication, March 26, 2024). When asked what type of institutional changes he would like to see to bring more equity to student-parents, Ismael mentioned a larger housing facility for student-parents, free childcare, and extended childcare hours for students who want to take evening classes or need time to study.

Nina Ruedas is the director of the Women’s Resource Center (WRC) on campus and shared how the goal of the WRC is to support all UCR students by providing programs and a safe place for students to study. Nina mentioned that the WRC has six areas of concentration, and one of them includes student-parents (N. Ruedas, personal communication, March 25, 2024). For student-parents, the WRC has organized family graduation, and they held the first student-parent conference at UCR in August of 2023. Nina stated that the challenges are that the WRC is currently understaffed and that it would be much easier if she had more staff to share student-parent programming responsibilities. Nina also mentioned how a bulk of her experience working with student-parents has come with her current position and connecting with the CECE to implement student-parent services using the CCAMPIS grant. Nina shared, “I think it would be great to have faculty formal training. Maybe they can get a family friendly ally or something like that, too. I think that would really be helpful. Because I know a lot of the responsibilities fall on the smaller centers where it would be easier if the institution made changes to bring about things that could make it easier for student-parents” (N. Ruedas, personal communication, March 25, 2024). Nina also shared how she thinks a visibility walk would be a great way of showing the institution that there are a large group of student-parents on campus that are in need of support.

Nina mentioned many programs, events, and services that she wants to implement but just does not have the staff to implement them at the moment.

### **Sister Campuses**

Student-Parents are a group of students that attend all UC campuses, and every UC supports them differently. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is known by many for their numerous student-parent resources. UCR has the ability to examine sister campuses to see what is helping student-parents thrive. For example, UCLA has a unique childcare option for student-parents that attend UCLA. “The Little Bruins Clubhouse is free for UCLA students and their dependents and is currently free for UCLA graduate students. Programming is for children ages Diaper Graduate to 12 years” (*Little bruins*, n.d.). School-aged childcare is a need at UCR, and for it to be free at UCLA is an enormous accomplishment for the institution to be able to provide this kind of support and an immense weight that can be lifted off student-parents shoulders when seeking childcare.

In addition to UCLA, the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) also has an element of support for student-parents that UCR can implement as a needed resource. According to their student-parent website at [berkeley.edu](http://berkeley.edu), UCB has a student-parent center on campus that keeps all of their student-parent resources centralized so they are easily accessible to student-parents. According to the *University Wire* article written by Lauren Mandel on March 19, 2023, “the Student Parent Center, or SPC, is home to about 250 graduate and undergraduate students along with their children, who range from babies to adults in their 30s.” This SPC provides community and support to student-parents at UC Berkeley (Mandel, 2023).

The University of California, Riverside, as the UC with the largest number of student-parents enrolled, should, at the least be looking to sister campuses and see what is benefiting

student-parents, if not be the leader in showing how a large number of student-parents enrolled can thrive when given the adequate amount of support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

### **Establish a Student-Parent Action Plan in University Policy**

It is recommended to the University of California, Riverside campus leadership that a student-parent action plan be created that is embedded within University Policy for current and future student-parents to be able to trust that their needs will maintain being met. In order for this to be attainable, a committee should be created to take on the task of creating a student-parent action plan. If UCR would commit to creating this committee, their tasks should be to outline goals and set hard deadlines on when they plan to achieve these goals.

### **Appropriate Funds for Expanded Childcare**

Childcare is essential for student-parents to be successful at the University of California, Riverside. The Center for Early Childhood Education is not enough to serve the diverse child care needs of student-parents and their children. The University of California Riverside should appropriately designate funds for expanded childcare that opens more child care centers on campus, has expanded hours for student-parents attending evening classes, and is inclusive of school-aged children and being able to care for them to help support student-parents when completing their education at UCR.

### **Appropriate Funds to Expand Family Housing**

Expanding family housing to house more student-parents on campus would relieve many families from being homeless and lessen some of the burden that student-parents already carry in their day to day lives. Shelter is a basic human need that many student-parents struggle with attaining. When student-parents are in survival mode they cannot perform to their best ability.

The University of California, Riverside should appropriate funds in order to create more family housing available for attending and incoming students.

### **Hire Student-Parent Coordinators and Require Sensitivity Training for Professors**

Student-Parents are a group that have distinct needs and unique experiences. The University of California, Riverside should hire professional staff that are familiar with working with student-parents, their struggles, and are familiar with connecting to them and helping them navigate the institution. In addition, UCR should hire staff that is able to develop a curriculum for training purposes that should be mandated for all staff and professors, outlining student-parent rights and guiding staff and faculty on how to better support student-parents from their positions.

### **Require Department Scheduling Committees to Expand Class Availability and Times**

The last recommendation for the University of California, Riverside, is to create an action plan that can practically gather data on common student-parent availability to expand the time range and days of classes. This action plan would require department scheduling committees to use the gathered data on student-parent availability and offer more options for evening classes, weekend classes, breadth classes, and upper division classes.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are many challenges when it comes to taking on the challenge of getting one's degree. The journey that a student-parent takes to success in higher education to further not only their quality of life, but the quality of life of their family is one that is not for the faint of heart. Student-parents are caring, determined, and courageous. The University of California, Riverside has a diverse campus community that is home to many groups. Student-parents should have the support they need from their institution to succeed in their future endeavors. While there are

many student-parents on campus in UC Riverside more than at any other UC, the institution has fallen short of providing the necessary resources to provide equal access to their community of student-parents. With these recommendations that I have mentioned being implemented by campus leadership, it can be the beginning of a thriving student-parent community that will uplift them during a time in their lives where they need it the most.



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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Guide for Current/Former Undergraduate Student-Parents at the University of California, Riverside

#### Introduction:

“I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. Your participation and experience is valued and appreciated and will help in the effort to provide better support for student-parents. “

**If the participant is in person:** “Before we begin, I want to start by going over the consent form and gaining your official approval for recording.”

*Researcher will then go over informed consent form with participant.*

#### After informed consent form is signed:

“Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we begin?”

**An answer of “Yes”:** “No worries, let me clarify that for you”

*Researcher will elaborate and answer the participant’s question.*

**An answer of “No”:** Okay, sounds great. I will now begin recording, remember, there are no right or wrong answers, and your story is one that only you can tell.”

**If the participant is remote:** “Before we begin, I want to inform you that your participation in this interview is voluntary and you can refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. Do you agree to participate in this interview?”

**An Answer of “No”:** “I understand. Thank you for your time and have a great day.”

**An Answer of “Yes”:** Thank you. Do you agree to being audio recorded?

**An answer of “Yes” :** “Thank you.”

**An answer of “No”:** “Okay, because I will not be audio recording, I will be recording this interview by taking notes on my laptop.”

#### After verbal consent form is obtained:

“Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we begin?”

**An answer of “Yes”:** “No worries, let me clarify that for you”

*Researcher will elaborate and answer the participant’s question.*

**An answer of “No”:** Okay, sounds great. I will now begin recording, remember, there are no right or wrong answers, and your story is one that only you can tell.”

*Once recording begins researcher will state date, time, and name of participant.*

## **Interview Questions**

### **Background/Personal information**

1. Tell me about your experience as a student at UCR?
2. How did your life change when you became a parent?
3. Did you become a parent after you started college or before?
4. What does your current living situation look like? (If alumni: What did your living situation look like as an undergraduate student-parent)
5. What is your experience with working and being a parenting-student if any?
6. Have you had times of economic struggles while being a student-parent? If so, what did that look like for you?
7. Do you have a support system? If so, who would you say is a part of your support system? (Can be friends, family, school, government, community resources etc.)
8. What are the top 3 things you can use more support with as a student-parent?
9. What is something that you wish you can provide more for your child if you could?

### **Health Information**

10. How has being a student-parent affected your physical/mental/emotional health?

### **Institutional Support Information**

11. Are you familiar with the student-parent resources that the University of California, Riverside offers?
12. Have you utilized any of UCR’s resources on or off campus? If so, which ones? (If alumni: Did you utilize any as an undergraduate student-parent)
13. What resources do you wish UCR would provide for student-parents?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven’t mentioned?

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guide for Current/Former Student-Parent Support Staff

#### **Introduction:**

“I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. Your participation and experience is valued and appreciated and will help in the effort to provide better support for student-parents.

**If the participant is remote:** “Before we begin, I want to inform you that your participation in this interview is voluntary and you can refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. Do you agree to participate in this interview?”

**An Answer of “No”:** “I understand. Thank you for your time and have a great day.”

**An Answer of “Yes”:** Thank you. Do you agree to being audio recorded?

**An answer of “Yes” :** “Thank you.”

**An answer of “No”:** “Okay, because I will not be audio recording, I will be recording this interview by taking notes on my laptop.”

#### **After verbal consent form is obtained:**

“Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we begin?”

**An answer of “Yes”:** “No worries, let me clarify that for you”

*Researcher will elaborate and answer the participant’s question.*

**An answer of “No”:** Okay, sounds great. I will now begin recording, remember, there are no right or wrong answers, and your story is one that only you can tell.”

*Once recording begins researcher will state date, time, and name of participant.*

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What is your current/former position at the University of California, Riverside?
2. What are/were the goals of: (office/department) at UCR?

3. Does/Did your office/department have programming or support specifically for student-parents?
4. What kinds of things do you offer to student-parents as part of your programming? Are there any one-on-one services?
5. How long has your office/department been providing services specifically geared towards student-parents?
6. Tell me about implementing these services; have you had any challenges? any success?
7. Do you have any plans to expand or add to your existing programs/support for student-parents? (If applicable) If yes, tell me about them.
8. Tell me about your experiences working with student-parents
9. What are the needs that you see? Are current services addressing these needs?
10. What type of change or action do you think the institution would need to take in order to have a department specifically for student-parents?
11. What institutional changes would you like to see when it comes to bringing more equity to the marginalized group that is student-parents?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add that I have not mentioned?