

Students With Dependents

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SPEAKERS

Heather Romero-Kornblum, Eric Snyder, Olivia, Jasmine Alicia, Andrew Hua

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Andrew Hua 00:00

Welcome to Triton Tools and Tidbits, a talk with UCSD's family pack. I'm your co-host Andrew Hua, and I serve as the Student Affairs Case Manager and Outreach Specialist.

Olivia 00:11

And I am your other co-host Olivia.

Andrew Hua 00:14

Today's episode focuses on experiences of students with dependents, which we have defined to encompass parents, caregivers, and care providers. We will listen and discuss what unique challenges students with dependents face, what resources are available to our students with dependents, and how to continue to keep the experience of our students with dependents in our daily practices.

Olivia 00:39

During the last year, much of our community has experienced loss: whether it's loss of jobs, loss of income, loss of health, losses as significant events and social events, and most importantly, loss of loved ones. In addition, we have noticed how much the pandemic has increased the responsibilities and needed support for UCSD students with dependents. In this episode, we will discuss how the campus has navigated resources to support this population of students.

Andrew Hua 01:11

Joining us today is GPSA Students With Dependents Representative, Eric Snyder and Heather Romero-Kornblum. And associated students, undergraduate representative Jasmine Alicia, they join me to talk about this special series and how they can help our community experience move forward. So, with that being said, Hello, Heather, Eric and Jasmine, thank you for joining us. Today. I'm hoping all of you will share information about your experience being part of efforts and initiatives related to students with dependents. Specifically, how it started, what initiatives have you engaged with, what resources you recommend, and how are other students with dependents can engage and get involved

with some of the amazing work and community spaces. But before we jump into all of that, I'd love for you to introduce yourselves. Just to start up, Eric, would you like to go first?

Eric Snyder 02:09

Yeah, I'm Eric Snyder. My pronouns are he/him/his, I'm a fourth year PhD student at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and I'm the parent of soon to be six year old.

Jasmine Alicia 02:23

Hi, everyone, my name is Jasmine, my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'm a fourth year I recently just graduated early actually. My major is human developmental sciences with a specialization in equity and diversity. And I'm actually not a parent or caregiver but I am very passionate about helping with the students-with-dependents community and have been involved with the community for the past four years now. Thank you for having me.

Andrew Hua 02:55

Then Heather, would you like to introduce yourself?

Heather Romero-Kornblum 02:58

Sure. I'm Heather Romero-Kornblum: she/her/hers or they/them/theirs also works. I'm a first year PhD student at the Rady School of Management. And mom have a seven year old who's going to be eight in the summer. So yeah.

Andrew Hua 03:18

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for all of you being here. We'll just kind of jump straight into the questions we have. I'll start with Heather. So, Heather, you have been on this journey with students with dependents before I even started my role. You have advocated for resources, highlighted gaps of support that students who have dependents have been needing. Do you mind sharing some of those challenges? And how are—how have some of those challenges been addressed by efforts and initiatives of the students with dependents workgroup?

Heather Romero-Kornblum 03:53

Sure, guests, so students with dependents have very unique responsibilities. We need to be present in our academic programs as well as present in our children's lives and be able to carry out those duties. When I was going to start my PhD program this past fall, I realized that this school wouldn't be open. That SDUSD skull—the schools would remain for homeschool or online school and remote schooling and there was no childcare available for my son to attend. And I was concerned about how I could be effective as a first year PhD student in my first quarter, starting my program, while having a child with no child care.

Heather Romero-Kornblum 04:50

And when I started advocating or started my, my experience here, it was very important for me to highlight that it would be extremely difficult to be a student and that it is extremely difficult to be a student who is a parent of a school age—a young school-aged child, while also needing to be present academically and undertake pretty intense academic responsibilities: research responsibilities, a TA-ship, classes. And as many people probably know, it's really hard to actually work from home while

having a child at home. That work-from-home with a young child isn't—it doesn't necessarily really exist. You can be interrupted pretty frequently, it's a constant split attention. And that's, that's not a good recipe for diving deep into research duties, such as writing or data analysis that require intense and uninterrupted periods of concentration. So that's, that was definitely a concern I had.

Heather Romero-Kornblum 06:01

And then there was an additional concern that when some private options that become available for childcare, they were prohibitively expensive, costing, basically like, a second rent for students, as a grad student on a grad student stipend. I also had the unique experience of my husband being an undergrad student at the same time, and it was a little bit tough to figure out how to, how to balance that. I really enjoyed utilizing the space in the Students With Dependents Work Group, because it allowed me to bring the struggle to light and describe it, which may not have been foreseen by university officials, it may have fallen through the cracks, and there definitely was a gap here in how our students with dependents who have to deal with children and are on student budgets going to attend to their schools and not have a solution for their—for childcare. And this definitely was part of the early dialogue that I—that was important to me to put forward.

Heather Romero-Kornblum 07:10

It definitely took some time to organize the response, but on the part of university resources, but I am extremely happy to say that the collaboration with the students with dependents workgroup allowed for a basic needs grant to emerge that is now available for students to apply for to assist in covering unexpected pandemic-related expenses, including unexpected childcare-related expenses, due to school closures. The Knock Around After School Camp option emerged out of this dialog. And the need for students to be able to access this affordably also was something that, that was highlighted in this dialogue and there is now a subsidized option for emergency childcare with this Knock Around Camp after school program as well, which hopefully can start benefiting students.

Andrew Hua 08:14

That's awesome. Well, you know, thank you, Heather, for sharing those perspectives. And I love everything that you've been sharing. I'm gonna pass it off to my co-host, Olivia, she has a couple of questions as well for our panelists.

Olivia 08:28

Yeah, so my question is for Jasmine. As the Associated Student's, undergraduate student, representative of the Students With Dependents workgroup, what have been some of your new discoveries that you've learned about the undergraduate population? And also, what resources do you recommend for undergraduates, if not all students take advantage of?

Jasmine Alicia 08:55

Thank you, Olivia, for your question. So again, I just wanted to preface that I am not a student with dependent myself. And my work throughout the four years has really been trying to bridge the gap between the student voice and the institution. So again, I don't really have the student voice, but some, some—a new discovery that I found while working with the Student With Dependent population was that a lot, many of them actually want to strive towards creating a more accessible campus and accessible life for them as a student, but simply don't have the time. And so, I think having

representative—representatives—staff and students are really key to amplifying their voices and making sure that they're being heard. So, we, the staff, and the students really want to be a part of their movement and not, and not the movement itself, right? We don't want to get that confused.

Jasmine Alicia 09:56

I also really think this is important because while we're listening to their input, prospective students with dependents who are looking into applying for undergrad or graduate school might lean more towards UCSD and pursuing a higher education here because of its increased accessibility for their, for their community. In terms of resources, we do have the Knock Around Camp over the summer, which is awesome—priority enrollment for students with dependents. Also, basic needs, as mentioned before, this department has a lot of assistance forms from graduate packages with caps and gowns and stoles etcetera, to housing and living situations. Also help filling out the CalFresh application for EBT help for food or cash. Resource centers on campus are great: The Woman Center, Raza Center, Black Resource Center, etc. They are also extremely helpful resources for, for students in those communities and other communities as well. I know that the Mesa Grad Housing also has a family friendly space, which is really nice. As mentioned before, there are daycares the MCDC and ECEC daycares that can be subsidized.

Jasmine Alicia 11:20

And lastly, I wanted to talk about the professors, or not lastly; there's one more thing after this one. I wanted to talk about the professors and staff; professors and staff can be very accommodating. And when given notice about situations in the beginning of the quarter—when speaking to a student with dependent a couple years ago, she was mentioning how her, how her professors were very accommodating to her, including her child in class when she didn't have childcare, and, and so on. Lastly, I wanted to talk about the Buy Nothing page. I don't know if y'all have heard of it. It's a Facebook page in communities, in little communities that can be very, very helpful where you're—the whole point is to buy nothing so people are in the communities are just swapping things. And I'm in my community, in my community's Buy Nothing page. And there are many child options, from toys to formula, and etc.

Andrew Hua 12:27

That is awesome. Jasmine. And you know, I just want to share thank you for your participation engagement within the Students with Dependents work group. Although you may not be a student with dependents yourself, the input that you bring that the, the insight from an undergraduate perspective and their own experience does bring us light to how to better serve and make it holistic and inclusive. So, I appreciate everything you've been sharing, and I learned something new. I did not know there was a Buy Nothing Facebook page. That is super awesome. So definitely will look into that and probably will poll size it as soon as we can on our website as well. So, I have a question for our panelist, Eric. I know you have also been involved with GPSA and the start of a new student organization on campus. Do you mind sharing a little bit more about Parents and Caregivers? And how do students get involved?

Eric Snyder 13:22

Thank you. So, we were initially formed as sort of an ad hoc committee specifically to address the needs of students with dependents during the pandemic. So, I give a quick shout out to Travis Chamberlain, who led that initiative. And he got other people involved, including Heather and I. And so,

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Heather and I, along with our third co-chair Eric DeSilva, formed the Parents and Caregivers student org as a way to continue this work, post-pandemic as well. So more long-term resources for students with dependents. And so, we, we spend a lot of time advocating to various university officials and, and pushing for resources and also spreading awareness of resources is another one of our goals, and then just helping build a community of students with dependents at UCSD.

Eric Snyder 14:14

And so yeah, we, we welcome involvement from anybody who wants to participate in those goals. Like Jasmine was saying, you don't have to have a dependent to be involved. One of the challenges that students with dependents are often face is that because we have so little time to advocate for ourselves, it's kind of easy to overlook us so, so anybody that wants to get involved in advocating for more inclusive campus is welcome to join us. So yeah, if you're interested in getting involved in either advocating for resources or just highlighting Students with Dependents and their experiences or whatever it is, or just being involved in our social circles, you can you can reach out to us at ucsdstudentscaregivers@gmail.com. And I—we could probably link to that somewhere, soon. We also have a Twitter, which is [@caregivers_UCSD](https://twitter.com/caregivers_UCSD) and UCSD is in all caps there. And we also have a blog, at parentsandcaregiversatucsd.wordpress.com and a Slack channel and a Facebook group. And we can link to all of those. And those are great ways to connect with us. And yeah, feel free to email us with questions or suggestions or anything if you're interested in getting involved there.

Olivia 15:42

Thanks, Eric, we, we know about the, the amazing work that you all do. You're all very active. And so, we appreciate you sharing a little bit more about that with us. So, my next question is for Heather. We are aware that you have been a participant of the Students with Dependents assistance form process. Would you mind sharing a little bit about your experience with this process and how the assistance has been impactful for you?

Heather Romero-Kornblum 16:13

Sure. So, I want to highlight for students that filling out this form is pretty simple, that this form can be found on the Resources for Student Parents page. Oh, and Andrew has links for that as well with—through—from a lot of his pages. And I also have a blog post at the blog that Eric mentioned, parentsandcaregiversatUCSD.wordpress.com that does go into how to apply specifically step-by-step what students will need to apply for this assistance. But it is pretty simple, straightforward to apply. It, in my experience, it was tapping into myself with what experiences I had during the pandemic that caused expenditures that were unexpected and had a financial impact, which mostly was the childcare, the unexpected childcare expense, for me. That was our biggest heavy hitter in terms of unexpected childcare expenses, and they can rack up fast. We were paying \$1,200 a month for the childcare. And it's basically can be a prohibitively expensive, expensive amount. It's, for us, it turned out to be the only way that, that I could participate in my grad program and that my husband could complete his undergrad program. He was a re-entering student and finally went back to school and for him getting there was also a bit of a road and it was important to be able, for him to be able to succeed as well. So, for both of us, it did turn out to be a choice that we made. But we were definitely left a little financially stunned as a result of that expenditure.

Heather Romero-Kornblum 18:06

And it is extremely important that students know that the pandemic has brought many, many challenges; sometimes unexpected medical bills, sometimes—we recently had one of those as well, this, actually past few weeks. And unexpected other types of bills, these things crop up and they're definitely more so in a pandemic that they crop up. The pandemic has brought many challenges that have hit us students with dependents financially hard especially. And the impact of this for us was that we felt that we were able to breathe and catch our breath and then we wouldn't be extremely behind or disadvantaged due to these unexpected pandemic-related expenses. And that's, that's the impact for me it has been an incredibly impactful impact for me and my family. Positive impact. And I think my, my most important message for students is, is to not, to, to, to feel comfortable in applying for this and to realize that the pandemic has hit a lot of us hard and that's, it's, the resource is there. Because we do understand how difficult the pandemic has been both emotionally and financially for students with dependents. I would, I would hope that that students can feel comfortable to reach out and utilize it.

Andrew Hua 19:33

Thank you, Heather. As you were speaking and sharing your impact it, it just makes me feel so warm. And also, just like thank you for sharing your story. Right. My hope was that your story and the impact that you shared today will reach other students and encourage them to reach out for support, reach out to us. We hope to continue to provide that support. Right? So, thank you so much for sharing Heather. You know, the next question I have, is geared towards Eric and Jasmine. And we'll hopefully have Eric start off first. Just to give a synopsis, and I know of Jasmine, you touched upon this earlier, what resources would you recommend? Or what kind of advice would you give to graduate and undergraduate students to explore on- or off-campus?

Eric Snyder 20:23

Yeah, that's a, there are quite a few resources, like Jasmine had mentioned earlier. Great list there. I would also like to point out that there is a childcare reimbursement through, if you're a graduate student, or researcher or an academic student employee, you're likely qualified for this. And if your child is under the age of 12. And it's \$1,100 per quarter, so it doesn't cover all of your childcare expenses. But it definitely can help a lot of people. And so many people qualify for this and don't apply for it because they're unaware of it or aren't sure how to apply for it. So yeah, feel free to reach out to us if you have questions about it. But yeah, that's something that more people should be applying for, because it's just money for students with dependents sitting there. And it's easy to access.

Eric Snyder 21:13

The second thing, Jasmine mentioned this as well. But I know from personal experience, that navigating a lot of this state and federal aid programs like CalFresh is pretty challenging. UCSD's Basic Needs group does have somebody that can assist with this process. If you just go to their website, basicneeds.ucsd.edu and you select the CalFresh assistance form. And it's, that's under the Assistance Forms drop-down menu. And somebody from Basic Needs can help with all that paperwork and navigating that system and even connect you with a county worker who is specifically assigned to UCSD if needed.

Eric Snyder 21:53

And lastly, on a more somber note, cases of domestic violence have been increasing during the last year and a half. So, if you're in a situation that you need to escape from, you can contact the Sexual Assault Resource Center at 858-534-5793. That's 858-534-5793. And they may be able to help you find temporary housing to escape a dangerous situation and point you towards more resources that can keep you and your loved ones safe.

Andrew Hua 22:30

Thank you so much. Jasmine, any words for you?

Jasmine Alicia 22:33

Yeah, thank you, Eric, for, for that, for all those important resources, it was greatly appreciated. Some things that I would like to add, just really take advantage of what the campus can give you. You're paying so much intuition already. So really, really take advantage of UCSD, for lack of better terms, but there's the Triton Food Pantry that has, that has food, there's The Hub that can help you out. So—and a bunch of other resource centers on campus, as, as I mentioned before, that, that can really help you with amazing, amazing staff. And if you speak with them and talk with them, they, they can direct you to any other assistance you might need.

Olivia 23:26

Thank you, Eric and Jasmine, for sharing all of those really important resources. You know, I think you're right, Eric that, that some people just don't know about these resources. And so, we really appreciate you both sharing these with us today. So, all of you are involved in some way or form related to the Students with Dependents efforts and initiatives. How can UCSD continue to advocate and keep students with dependents in the forefront of our practices?

Heather Romero-Kornblum 24:01

Well, I'll jump in if that's okay. I think what I would like from UCSD is to understand that students with dependents come from often very diverse backgrounds, different experiences. Students with dependents can be traditional students, non-traditional students, different types of socio-economic backgrounds, and to understand that students with dependents face challenges that perhaps the academic life was not previously designed to accommodate, that academic life traditionally may not have been designed to accommodate students who have child caregiving needs or other caregiving, caregiving responsibilities, and to keep this in mind as they continue to move forward in the academic mission and design.

Eric Snyder 24:57

Yeah, I think I could back up what Heather said there as well. There's a, there's a, an analysis done by the Institute for Women's Policy Research that found that students with dependents are far more likely than the general student body to be women or people of color. And so not taking care of students with dependents is an equity issue. That's something that I would like the university to be aware of as well. And there are some great things happening. Hopefully, we can keep this momentum going and get some more resources implemented. But, but yeah, I think what I hear the most from, from students with dependents is available and affordable childcare is an absolute must for, for so many student-parents. And then I think it would also be great to see di—the definition of students with dependents expanded a

little bit. And I think Andrew had a great definition at the beginning of the episode here. But so often, the resources that are available are specifically for parents with children who are under the age of 18, or even under the age of 12. And there are so many other scenarios that people find themselves in where they do have dependents to take care of, so it'd be great to kind of see resources expanded to more people, and then more resources made available as well.

Jasmine Alicia 26:22

Thank you, Eric. And just to piggyback off that, I think UCSD can do a lot with student-parent or student with dependent voices, and, and student caregiver voices. So really, really allowing them to, to, to speak and maybe bringing them into discussions with professors. I wanted to go into that as well. And UCSD speaking with their staff and their professors and possibly having training sessions, including a blurb at the end of a syllabus about it, kind of addressing, Oh, if you're a student with dependent, please let me know. I can have X accommodations. So, working, working with the faculty, working with the staff, and really bringing the student with dependent voice in the forefront of, of their practices.

Andrew Hua 27:21

Thank you all so much. You have pried so much information, so many resources, and I can't thank you for your experiences that you have shared with us today. I know that we all hope that students who are dependent struggling will consider getting involved with Students with Dependents resources and the community. But special shout out to all three of you. Your involvement, your advocacy, even as you answer that last question, right? I'm running with my head like these are things that need to be on the forefront. We focus on policies, how we focus on resources to really be supporting our students with dependents. So, with that being said, thank you all so much for joining us today with this episode of Triton Tools and Tidbits and we'll see you all next time. Thank you all.