

UC San Diego's Early Childhood Education Center Offers Caring Learning Environment



UC San Diego Early Childhood Education Center is for children months to kindergarten. Photo Credit: Rhett S. Miller

For a growing number of working parents, finding a great childcare solution is as important as finding a great job. And for some, like UC San Diego lecturer Leslie R. Lewis, they even credit their childcare facility for career success.

“The UC San Diego Early Childhood Education Center is outstanding, and it has been pivotal in enabling me to complete my doctorate as well as to teach, write and undertake research,” said Lewis, who has had four children in the campus childcare center over the years.

The [Early Childhood Education Center \(ECEC\)](#) is open to the children of full-time UC San Diego students, staff and faculty, as well as a limited number of non-UC San Diego affiliates. The center, located in the Mesa Graduate Student Housing on Regents Road, is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The program offers a carefully designed environment that encourages the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of young children. The center includes certified teachers and age-appropriate curriculum. ECEC plays an important role in supporting the mission of UC San Diego, which includes excellence in research and education.

“Knowing that my children were in such capable, loving hands, I was able to focus exclusively on my work for many hours each day,” Lewis continued. “As a direct result of this—and it would not have been physically possible without this support—I earned multiple grants and awards, honorable mentions for my book, ‘The Cairo Chronicles,’ and an Outstanding Professor Award at UC San Diego this past year.”

The Early Childhood Education Center enrolls 210 children aged three months to kindergarten, with a waitlist of more than 450 children. According to ECEC Director Kathryn Owen, tuition rates for the facility have not been raised since 2009. But she noted that to preserve the program and continue to provide child-to-teacher ratios which support quality care and education, there will be a rate increase beginning Sept. 1, 2012 to serve the best interests of the university, parents and ECEC students.

Ioana Patrington, public information officer for UC San Diego's Jacobs School of Engineering, believes that even with the rate increase, ECEC is very competitive compared to other childcare facilities. "I created a whole spreadsheet before I started looking for childcare four years ago," she said. "If you look how long they are open, their teacher-to-student ratios and the fact that they will provide two meals and one snack, they were actually cheaper than anyone else on a per-hour basis. I'm sure that's likely still the case today." The mother of two has had her children enrolled in the UC San Diego Early Childhood Education Center for a total of about four and a half years.



ECEC student Sophie Buibas during an event presented by Jolla Symphony and Chorus.



One of the ECEC's goals is to provide a high-quality childcare for children of UC San Diego's student, staff and faculty. Photo by Rhett S. Miller

Patrington added, "There is a waiting list, and I think it's because of the competitive rate, the quality of care or convenience – or all three combined. And I think the staff does a great job. When we were registering my older daughter for kindergarten in a local public school, they tested her for English, math and other subjects—and she was one of the highest kids based on her scores. I think that has a lot to do with the education she received in preschool. Research shows that crucial stages of brain development occur between the ages of 0 to 5. It's important for them to get a head start at that point."

Added Lewis, "I have visited many child development centers, in the U.S. and abroad, and ECEC stands out among them all. It is the best model of childcare I have seen. I feel like I have had a genuine partner in raising my kids, and I am deeply grateful."

To help keep costs down and maintain the excellence that is the UC San Diego Early Childhood Education Center, private support is needed. Visit www.givetoucscd.ucsd.edu and click on "Other Campus Initiatives" to give now to Friends of UCSD Daycare Center Fund (#1563), an unrestricted fund to support enrichment activities, daycare operations and other ECEC programs. For more information about the Early Childhood Education Center, please visit <http://child.ucsd.edu>.

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