

[“Letter to the editor” from Dale Goldhaber, founder and former Director of the Campus Children’s School that was sent to Seven Days and VT Digger]

The UVM Campus Children’s School — Clearing Up Some Misperceptions

The UVM administration has recently issued statements concerning its decision to permanently close the UVM Campus Children’s School (CCS). These statements however provide misleading rationales for the decision to close the CCS and I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight. I served as the Director of the CCS from its inception in 1990 to my retirement in 2011. Since then, I have continued to keep abreast of the School’s efforts.

The CCS was established in 1990 as a result of the then UVM Women’s Commission report that a lack of campus early education and care disproportionately affected female faculty and staff since they then, and now, continue to provide the majority of childcare in the United States. As such, the establishment of the CCS was seen as addressing an equity issue on the campus and the now closing of the CCS only serves to again further this inequity.

The original document that formally established the CCS provided a subsidy equal to one-third of the CCS budget. It was understood from the start that a high quality corporate sponsored early education and care program needed to be provided a subsidy so that the tuition rate charged to parents would not be so high as to make it impossible for families to use the service. This was especially true for the CCS since it has always enrolled infants and toddlers, a very costly service given the required child to adult ratios. As such, arguments that the CCS is running a deficit, that it is not able to function within its generated budget, is also misleading. The notion of a subsidy is really no different than how we fund our public schools. Imagine the financial burden on families if they were each asked to bear the full cost of providing a P-12 education for each of their children.

The statements from UVM administration make reference to a lack of scholarship coming from the CCS. This is simply incorrect. From its opening in 1990, CCS teachers and administrators have consistently published articles and books as well as presented at regional, national, and international conferences related to the CCS curriculum, its preparation of future early childhood educators, its inservice program of staff development, and its efforts to provide support to the Vermont early childhood community.

The statements from UVM administration also expresses concerns for the safety of children at the CCS, especially in terms of protecting them from exposure to Covid-19. This is commendable although it begs the question why the statements don’t also express equal concerns for the students who will return to the resident halls once classes begin. Presumably any efforts to protect undergraduates would equally benefit

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the children and staff of the CCS. It is not unreasonable to wonder if the administration's concern for the welfare of children is simply an effort to free up more dormitory space given the need to create safe distances between students.

There is never enough money to do what one thinks needs to be done. But the reality is that for any budget of any size, the issue is not one of not having enough money but rather one of deciding how to allocate the money you do have. Apparently, UVM has decided that the support of the nationally recognized CCS and the furtherance of equity among all faculty and staff is of lesser importance than some other pursuits.