

Dear EBOC,

The GSC is very excited by the recent announcement of TCC Vassar, the new on-campus childcare center, which would nearly double MIT's current on-campus capacity. We are glad to be given the opportunity to offer policy recommendations for TCC Vassar. In this letter, we suggest changes to existing policies that would best address the hardships of graduate families.

As you know, MIT community members with families face special challenges in managing their time and energy to balance the needs of their children; graduate students with children encounter perhaps the most difficult of situations while attempting to satisfy the demands of coursework, research, and teaching while simultaneously fulfilling their duties as parents, all with extremely limited income. The GSC applauds MIT for expanding its childcare to address the long waitlists and wait-times for on-campus daycare (approximately 350 families in line, and average wait time of 2.5 years) and bringing itself more in line with the quantities of childcare slots offered by peer institutions (2006 Family Needs Presentation, GSC).

Despite these anticipated improvements, graduate families remain one of the least supported student demographics at MIT. Graduate stipends (on average \$25,000 pretax yearly income) fall short of the cost of infant care and barely cover toddler or preschool care, effectively leaving no money for other living necessities and forcing many graduate families to sacrifice the spouse's career in order to stay home with their child (Figure 3). Especially it is true of those spouses whose profession would not earn them significantly more than childcare costs. International graduate families, without extended family support, are more dependent on limited on-campus family housing and childcare options. Families where the household income consists of a single graduate stipend often resort to loans or family assistance to be able to afford to remain at the Institute (Figure 4). Besides the price of on-campus childcare, also of great concern for graduate families is the preference for faculty given by TCC. Since 2009, faculty receive preferred enrollment over other MIT community members for infant slots in all TCC facilities; additionally, the Provost's office receives 10 dedicated slots per year for the recruitment of faculty and an unlimited number of skips that allow faculty members designated by the Provost's office to jump to the front of the wait list.

Infant slots are the most coveted and hardest to obtain from the waiting list. From a recent snapshot of the waiting list (November 2011 Wait List), we see that nearly 44% of the level-1 wait list is waiting for an infant slot (Figure 6). Comparing the demographic category percentages between the same November 2011 waitlist and the May 2012 enrollment list (Figure 7), we observe that while only 20% of the waitlist were faculty in Nov'11, 65% enrolled in May'12 were faculty; contrasted with 24% grad students in the waitlist of Nov'11 and *only* 6%

Recommendations to the Employee Benefit Oversight Committee on TCC Vassar

Housing and Community Affairs Committee

Family Sub-committee

grad students in the enrollment list of May'12. Furthermore, combining faculty priority for infant slots with TCC's sensible policies of continuing care and sibling preference (which make it more likely that a growing infant can graduate into an open toddler slot and new siblings of existing TCC enrollees can join their brothers or sisters on-campus) has the unfortunate effect of propagating faculty infant priority to toddler slots.

The faculty priority policy can be further discouraging for graduate students, since a third of graduate families live on campus (Figure 5) and many do not own automobiles, making their exclusion from the nearest childcare more painful than it might be for commuting populations with independent transportation options.

Given the above inadequacies of the current on-campus childcare arrangement, and in the interest of improving the system for the diverse families at the Institute, we recommend that TCC Vassar's policies be structured to address two areas in which on-campus childcare fails to support all families and graduate families in particular: **availability and affordability.**

1. Enrollment availability policies should be egalitarian, and show no preference based on the particular role a family plays in the MIT community. We acknowledge the role the Provost's office's "skips" and faculty preference play in recruiting and retaining talented faculty to the Institute, though we believe such policies ignore the recruitment effect upon future graduate students and, more importantly, operate at the expense of those that are already a part of our community. TCC's current enrollment policies send the message that one community member's child is more important than another's. This is a corrosive distinction to make as it is contrary to the Institute's commitment towards diversity and inclusion and serves to undermine MIT's otherwise effective support of members, irrespective of background and title. Children and family are valued parts of the MIT community, and our commitment to supporting these members, as we would any other, should not be dependent on job title or program duration, or be compromised by attempts to increase competitiveness.

2. Pricing at TCC Vassar should be scaled based on the family's ability to pay. No amount of extra slots or job-title-blind enrollment policies can help MIT families that cannot afford childcare in the first place. Since TCC Vassar's goal is to help all MIT families, and not only those high salaried employees, it has to provide prices that adapt to the vast differences in income between members of the Institute community. MIT currently offers no financial assistance to graduate families. Only informational resources exist to direct student families to off-campus family daycare/preschool options. A scholarship, once offered to a limited number of graduate students to offset TCC childcare costs, was discontinued for graduate students and converted to a "24/7" information resource which, while serving a larger

Recommendations to the Employee Benefit Oversight Committee on TCC Vassar

Housing and Community Affairs Committee

Family Sub-committee

number of students, is not comparable or sufficient as assistance to afford childcare. In examining MIT's peer institutions, we find several that provide substantial financial support to graduate students with families, either in the form of tuition adjustments or portable scholarship awards based on household income (Table 1). Such support makes other institutions more competitive than MIT in this regard. For TCC Vassar, we suggest a sliding price scale, where the childcare price is adjusted by household income, rather than a fixed price for all. We are not necessarily suggesting that TCC run at a deficit or that MIT further subsidizes TCC facilities, simply that the current burden be scaled according to family's income, rather than the current "one-size-fits-all" pricing scheme.

These suggestions may seem like a large departure from existing TCC policies. We encourage EBOC to consider TCC Vassar as an opportunity to experiment and test run alternate policies that, if they succeed, could later be incorporated as general policies in optimized forms. Current policies demonstrably fail part of the MIT community; investigating alternative strategies on a small scale is a reasonable first step toward constructing policies that best serve the greater MIT community and are aligned with our stated values.

The goal of this letter is not to set one MIT group against another; quite the reverse, we urge that TCC should stop treating individuals as separated into the silos of faculty, student, postdoc, or staff with regards to on-campus childcare. *We are all MIT, one interconnected community, and the need for childcare is a communal one.* We hope that this recommendation letter will be just one part of a continuing dialogue between Institute administrators and student leaders. Family engagement is the key to constructing policies that better serve the diverse families of the Institute community, and to that end the GSC's HCA Family Sub-committee is eager to collaborate with EBOC and other TCC policymakers.

We look forward to the opening of TCC Vassar, and hope it is a step toward better support for graduate families at MIT.

Best regards,

The GSC HCA Family Sub-committee

Appendix

Below are a series of plots we reference in the recommendation. All the data presented here comes from the 2011 Cost of Living Survey.

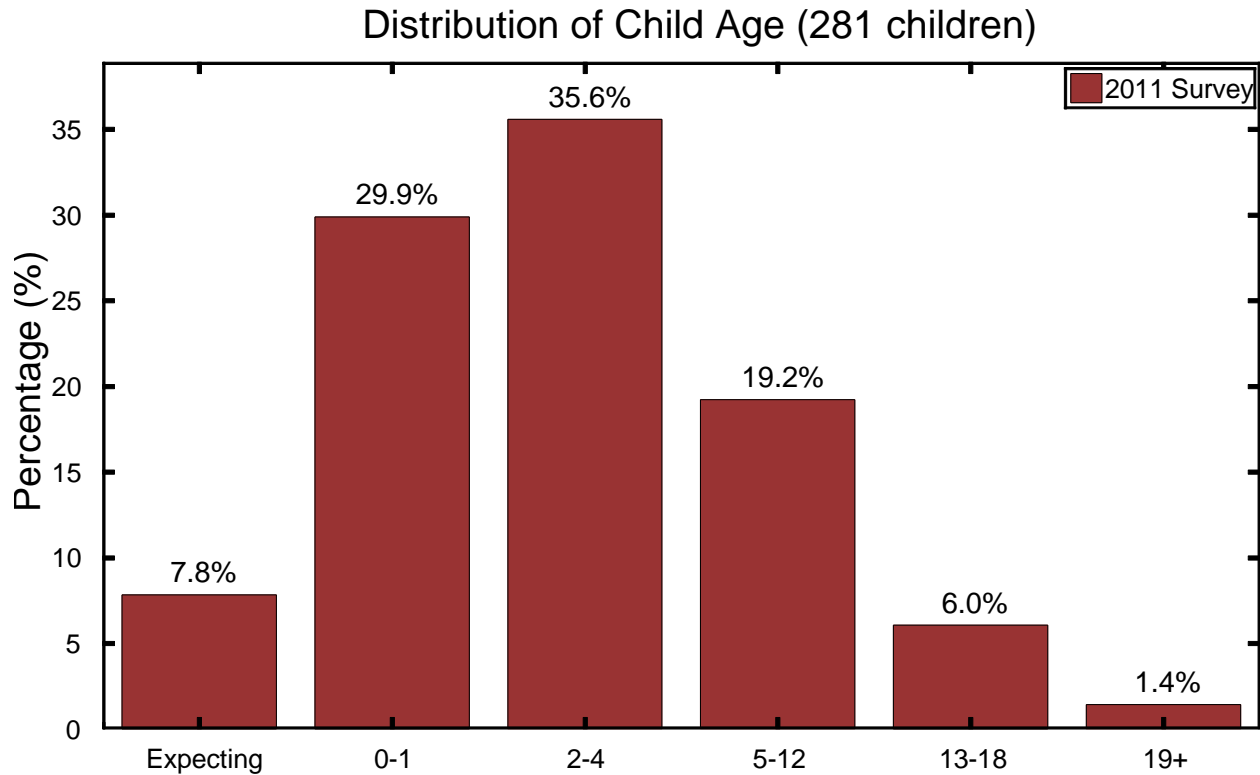


Figure 1, Distribution of children age of graduate student families. Note that the values reflected in this figure correspond only to the families that participated in the Cost of Living survey.

Distribution of number of Children per family (281 children)

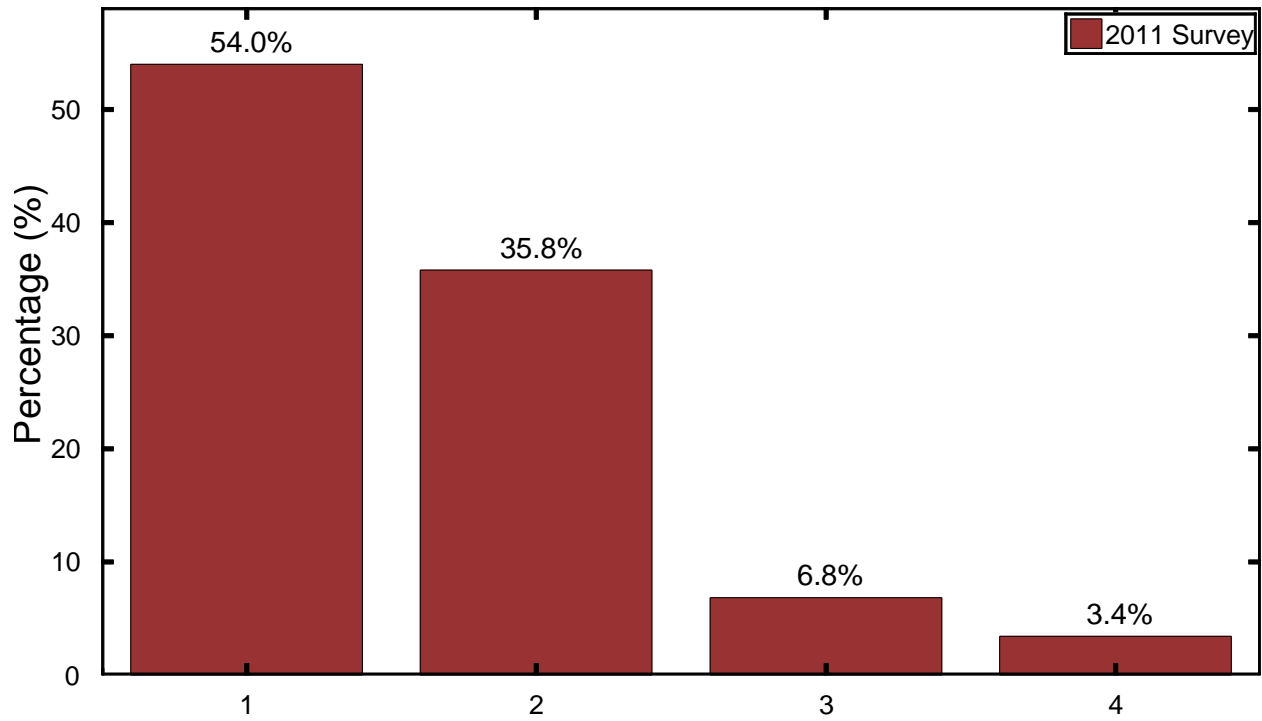


Figure 2, Number of children in graduate student families. Note that the values reflected in this figure correspond only to the families that participated in the Cost of Living survey.

Spouse Occupation

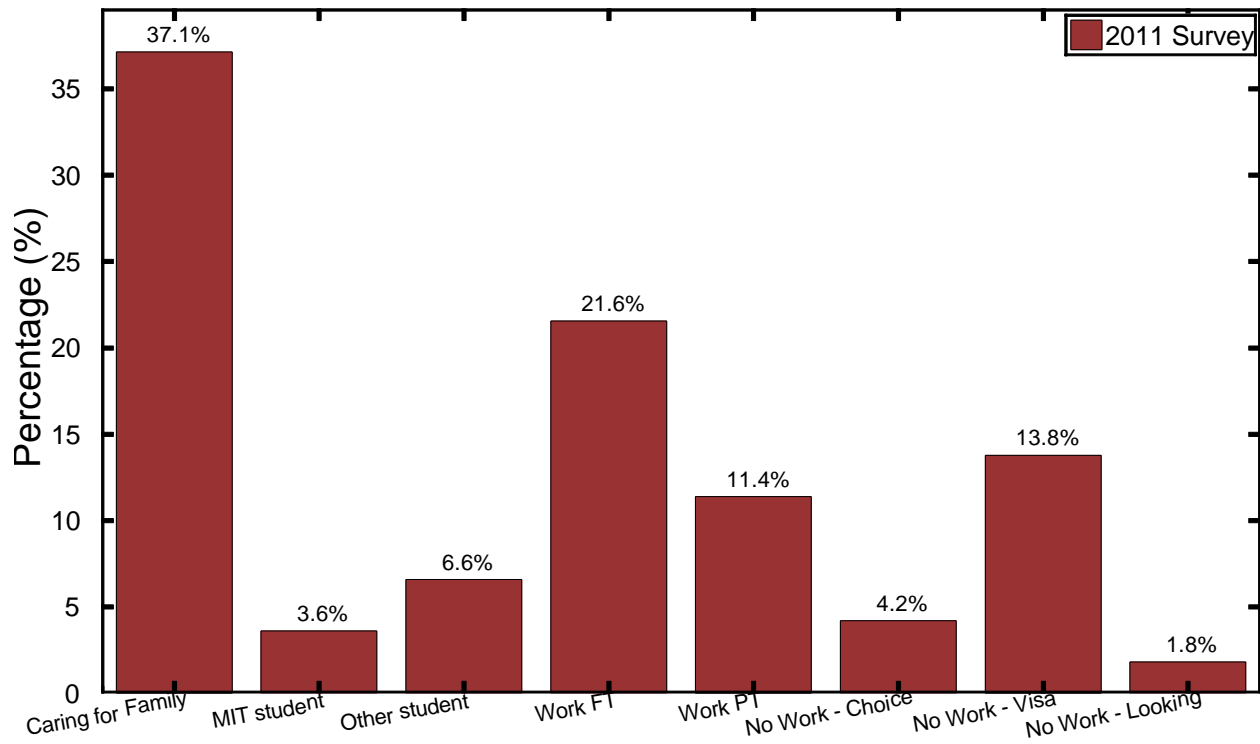


Figure 3, Distribution of Spouse Occupation. Note that the values reflected in this figure correspond only to the families that participated in the Cost of Living survey.

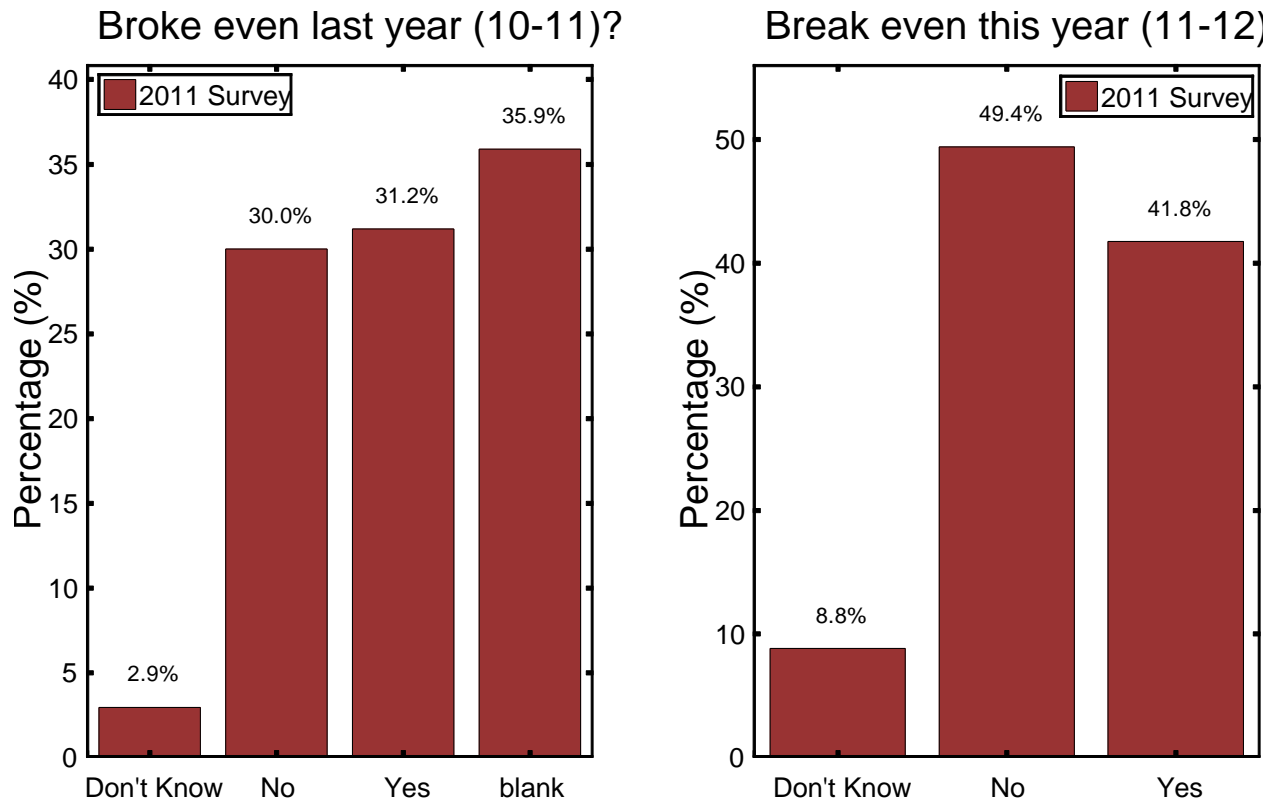


Figure 4, Family breakeven plots (self-reported). This data reflect student entire spending. Cost of Living Income-Expenses calculated breakeven is comparable to self-reported values. Calculated Break even only accounts for living necessities in the areas of: Rent, Food and Beverages, Transportation, Utilities, Books, Medical and Childcare.

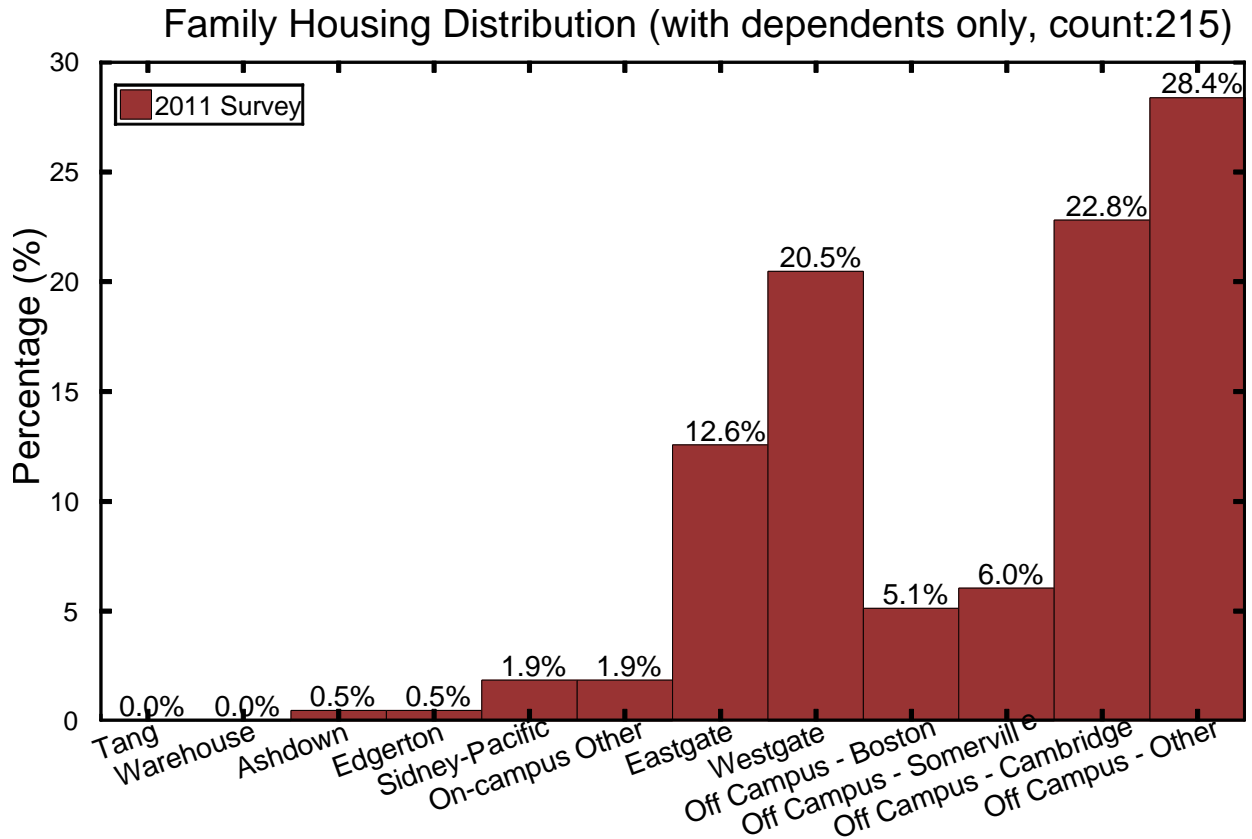


Figure 5, Family Housing Distribution, both on-campus and off-campus.

The following figures were obtained from MIT Work-Life Center.

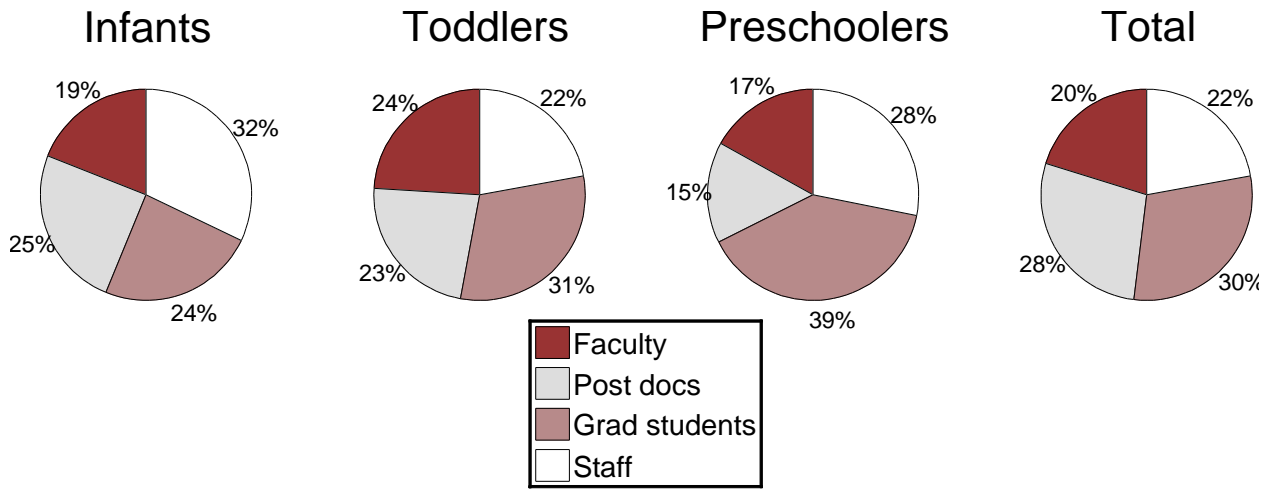


Figure 6, TCC Level One Waitlist Distribution broken out by slot type. (November 2011)

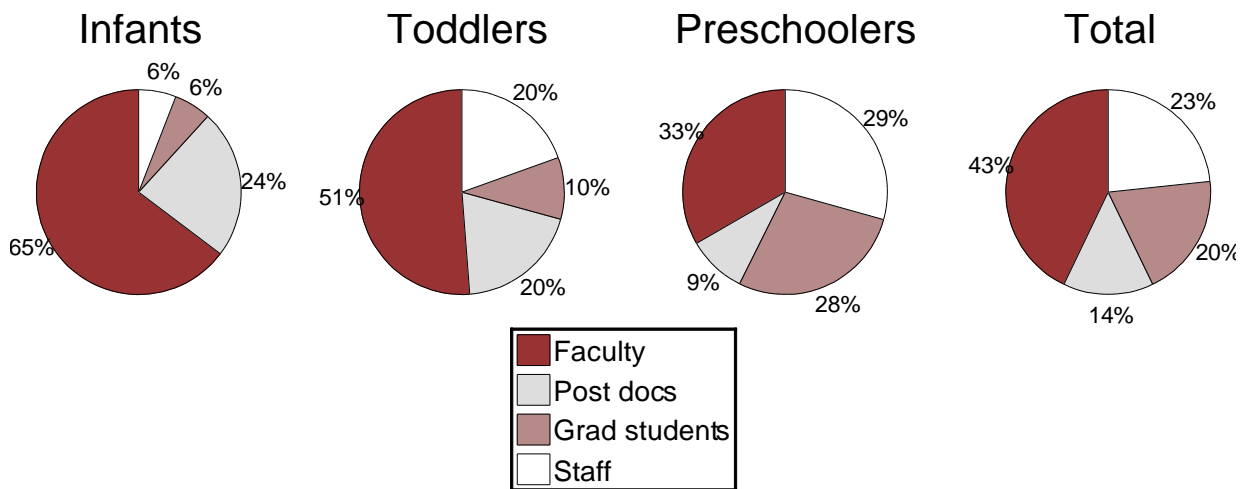


Figure 7, TCC Enrollment broken out by slot type (May 2012).

Recommendations to the Employee Benefit Oversight Committee on TCC Vassar

Housing and Community Affairs Committee

Family Sub-committee

	University						
	CalTech [1], [2]	Columbia [3]	Cornell [4], [5]	Princeton [6]	U. Penn [7]	UC Berkeley [8], [9]	Univ. of Michigan [10]
Type of benefit:*	Childcare	Childcare	Childcare	Childcare	Grant	Grant	Childcare
Benefit for 1 child (\$ annually)	\$750 - \$4,000	\$1,000	\$947 - \$1,893	\$1,000 - \$5,000	\$500 - \$2,500	up to \$8,000	\$6,795**
Benefit for 2 children (\$ annually)	\$750 - \$4,000	\$2,000	\$1,894 - \$3,786	\$2,000 - \$10,000	\$500 - \$2,500	up to \$8,000	\$9,966**
Benefit for 3+ children (\$ annually)	\$750 - \$4,000	\$3,000	\$2,841 - \$5,679	\$2,000 - \$10,000	\$500 - \$2,500	up to \$8,000	\$13,140**
Eligibility							
Available to all eligible students or based on application	Application	All eligible	Application	All eligible	Application	Application	Application
Student Type	Grad	Ph.D. / D.M.A.	Grad	Grad	Ph.D.	Grad	Grad
Requirements for spouses (student, employed, etc.)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	(No info found)	No	Yes
Maximum student income (\$ / annually)	\$93,964	No	(No info found)	(No info found)	(No info found)	(No info found)	(No info found)
Maximum household income (\$ / annually)	\$115,000	No	\$65,000	\$130,000	\$45,000 - \$55,000	(No info found)	(No info found)
Maximum child age (years)	10	5	12	Pre-kindergarten	12	18	12
More information on policy							
	Grant calculated based on the number of eligible children, income, and need demonstrated on the application.	Grant only for fully funded Ph.D. or D.M.A. students, \$1000 / each child under 5 years and not attending kindergarten.	\$1,893/child for children under 5 years, \$947/child for older children. FAFSA needed.	Sliding scale based on household income between \$1,000 and \$5,000 / child. Up to additional \$5,000 for 2nd child.	Priority given to students who demonstrate the most financial need.	FAFSA needed, international students not eligible, but have a separate int'l student parent grant program.	FAFSA needed to determine need, int'l students have a another form by which need will be determined.

Notes!
 * Family Grants can generally be used for any family related expenses, such as housing, healthcare, childcare, and so on. The childcare subsidy can generally only be used for legal childcare services.
 ** For 1 child up to \$2,265/term, for 2 children up to \$3,322/term, and for 3+ children up to \$4,380/term.
 Based on the information on the website, there are three terms, for example (3 x \$2,265) = \$6,795

Table 1, Peer Comparison Table

Recommendations to the Employee Benefit Oversight Committee on TCC Vassar

Housing and Community Affairs Committee

Family Sub-committee

- [1] http://cit.hr.caltech.edu/ccap_program.htm
- [2] http://cit.hr.caltech.edu/policies/CCAP_Policy.pdf
- [3] http://worklife.columbia.edu/files_worklife/public/Worklife_handout_for_grad_students_5_9_12.pdf#
- [4] <http://studentparents.dos.cornell.edu/>
- [5] <http://studentparents.dos.cornell.edu/CCGS%20Subsidy%20Forms/CCGS%20Subsidy%20info%20%20guidelines2012-2013.pdf>
- [6] <http://www.princeton.edu/gradschool/studentlife/childcare/sccap/>
- [7] <http://www.familycenter.upenn.edu/grants.php>
- [8] http://grad.berkeley.edu/financial/student_family.shtml
- [9] http://grad.berkeley.edu/financial/pdf/parent_grant_app_2012.pdf
- [10] http://www.finaid.umich.edu/Home/HowtoApplyforAid/StudentswithChildCareExpenses.aspx#how_much

Table 2, References for Peer Comparison