

## **LIASION REPORT for UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY CHILDCARE (UCC)**

ASSET Liaisons - Max Ruehle, ISU Student Government UCC Director-Stacy Lehman  
Neil Upadhyay, City of Ames Volunteer  
Mary Beth Golemo, City of Ames Volunteer

### **Need for Program**

- Primarily Iowa State University (ISU) students, faculty and staff use University Community Childcare (UCC). A small number of community members also use this service along with UCC staff members.
- Currently using UCC: 44% ISU students; 43% faculty/staff; 10% community members and 2-3% staff
- Children ages 6 weeks to 11 years attend UCC.
- Programs offered are for Infants, Toddlers, Pre-School and School Age (Before & After School as well as breaks).
- The Comfort Zone program for sick children is no longer offered. That space is being repurposed for another Infants program which will add 8 spaces by Fall 2021. Presently it is being used for Covid mitigation; if a child feels sick, they are isolated in this space with a staff member until they can be picked up.
- With Covid-19, UCC is limited to ten (10) children per classroom. If Covid-19 weren't an issue, numbers would continue to be high even though ISU enrollment has decreased.
- UCC's services are similar to two other campus childcare facilities (Lab School and Vet Med). In comparison to other childcare programs in Ames and Story County, UCC offers a different quality program. UCC has a 5-Star certification rating through the State of Iowa's Quality Rating System (QRS).
- If UCC's services ceased to exist, it would greatly impact the ISU students they serve and those students' education. Using current numbers, close to 60 other families would be impacted with that number higher in non-Covid times. Also, UCC employs as many as 25 ISU students providing invaluable experience and supporting those students' education as well.

### **Facilities**

- Stacy "walked" us through their facility that was remodeled in 2004. The building continues to nicely meet their needs. They have classrooms, rumpus rooms, office and meeting space, kitchen and the former Comfort Zone space (Infant program in 2021).
- Iowa State's Facilities Planning & Management (FP&M) provides most of their maintenance needs. UCC employs a private cleaning service.
- Their kitchen area and staff provides three food activities daily: breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack.

### **Program Strengths**

- The QRS 5-Star rating is strength as this state rating indicates that UCC goes the extra mile to offer exceptional childcare.
- UCC's commitment to quality and maintaining their accreditation standard.
- UCC has an excellent candidate pool to hire from as well as great support from student teachers, practicum students and others who want to learn while helping UCC deliver their quality services.
- Their participation in Iowa AEYC's **T.E.A.C.H.** (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) a comprehensive scholarship program that provides early childhood staff access to educational opportunities including tuition assistance.

### **Program Weaknesses/Matters of Concern**

- Retaining full time staff due to wages paid at UCC is an ongoing concern. UCC staff are not ISU employees and thus do not receive ISU benefits (though they once did). UCC's

rate of pay is comparable to area childcare centers. Long-term staff leave because they can make more money elsewhere. It's hard to employ fully licensed teachers at the UCC rate of pay.

- Even with the lowest fees on the UCC Sliding Fee scale, the fees can be challenging for ISU students.
- The waiting list to attend UCC remains a concern. Their normal Wait List includes 90-100 Infants and 70-80 Toddlers.
- **Note** – UCC's ASSET request is for dollars to support the sliding fee scale and also for small raises for staff.

### **Financial Outlook**

- UCC is funded by several sources. Besides fees and ASSET, they receive support from Iowa State University, the ISU Department of Residence, statewide grants, BOOST (Boone and Story County coalition), CCAMPIS (US Department of Education grant that supports student parents) and the federal College Work Study program (helps pay the ISU students they employ).
- While they have less money coming in due to the required smaller classroom sizes, they also have less money going out due to smaller staff numbers. They have received CARES money through the State of Iowa for Covid-19 supplies. Getting these supplies has been a challenge but a statewide childcare organization has been helpful.

### **Staff and Management**

- UCC currently has 25 full time staff members (teachers, office and kitchen staff). They have two part-time staff members and 4-5 ISU students serving as Assistant Teachers through the College Work Study program. In non-Covid times they would employ 20-25 ISU students.
- While retaining teachers due to lower wages is a concern, UCC has been fortunate to retain several staff members; one for over 30 years; others for 20, 15 and 12 years. Lead Teachers that can make better salaries working elsewhere so UCC Lead Teacher turnover is high.

### **Board of Directors**

- Max Ruehle and Mary Beth Golemo attended UCC's Board of Directors' Zoom Meeting on October 22. We were welcomed as were several new Board members. Reports were distributed via CyBox so we did not have access to the financial or Executive Director's reports.
- There are 12 Board members with 4 being ex-officio. The rest are parents using UCC's services and three are past clients.
- The Board meets 10 months each year. Officers are elected in November.
- The Board selects, supports and evaluates the Director; approves financial matters, contracts and agreements; assists with strategic planning; and more.

### **One Year From Now?**

- To see Covid gone and back to their regular quality standards and to see the new Infant program up and running.

### **General Assessment**

UCC continues to provide quality childcare for Ames/Story County. The Covid-19 virus has impacted the numbers they can provide services to, with social distancing protocols only allowing a limited number of children in a room at a given time. The staff is adapting well to the current situation. The board is continuing to meet virtually. Overall, the services being provided have not changed, but the number being served has decreased.