

Elder Care Assistance

A study completed in the early 1990s on the University of California (UC), Berkeley campus found that 63% of UC Berkeley faculty and staff age 30 or older were either currently providing regular and ongoing assistance to an elder/adult dependent, had done so during the past five years, or expected to do so within the next five years. Those providing caregiving reported missing an average of 5 hours of work per month to attend to adult care responsibilities. Many faculty, who on average begin having children in their late 30s, have to meet the complex dual needs of providing care to children and an elder/adult dependent simultaneously.

UC Faculty Comment on the Importance of Elder/Adult Dependent Care Issues

I spent 4 years caring for an elderly father in my home. It was far more time consuming than caring for a child....Now I have a spouse with cancer, a more difficult experience than the joyous positive experience of having a child.

The last four years prior to 2002 were extraordinarily difficult. In addition to caring for my two children, my wife and I were providing a lot of care to my elderly father and my wife's elderly mother..... I suspect many faculty who have had children later in life will find themselves in similar situations. I think this situation -- having to care for both children and elderly parents at the same time represents the most problematic work/family issue confronting faculty today.

I think that at the least, the so-called "family friendly" policies should be broadened to include the need to care for severely disabled children or other family members irrespective of their ages, and the recognition that in some cases, this may be an essentially permanent condition.

Elder care takes a significant amount of time - hours each week even under normal circumstances, even though my parents' care is physically handled by others and managed by a senior care management agency. This obligation has slowed down considerably my advancement through the ranks of associate professor, which, I firmly believe, allows colleagues, including those who are in positions to evaluate my work to consider me a slouch.

Source: UC Faculty Work and Family Survey, 2002-2003

Providing care to an elder/adult dependent is a complicated issue, and each caregiving situation and set of corresponding needs is unique. While most UC campuses provide some amount of elder/adult care *resources*, we recommend that a trained, professional part-time elder/adult dependent care counselor be provided at each UC campus.

The counselor would offer, at no cost, individual confidential counseling, consultation, and resource referrals for faculty who are facing caregiving issues or anticipate doing so in the future. The counselor would also provide caregiver groups, and educational brown bag programs on topics relevant to caregiving. The counselor would offer an essential link to the myriad services and programs in the community, increasing significantly the caregiver's ability to focus on meeting research and teaching obligations.

Many universities, such as the University of Washington, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Arizona have dedicated elder/adult dependent care counselors. Currently, UC Berkeley is the only UC campus to have a counselor. This position can be part-time, including a .25FTE administrative assistant for a total of approximately \$50,000/year plus benefits. Such a provision would be a cost-effective way to support UC faculty in meeting both their work and family needs.