Executive Summary

The Task Force takes pride in being part of a university that is committed to the well being of its faculty, staff, graduate students and their dependents. Syracuse University has a responsibility to provide an environment that ensures that all employees are able to perform their duties optimally. The University recognizes that many of its faculty and staff members are challenged to balance their work with a variety of familial responsibilities. Policies and practices that help employees manage these potential stresses will benefit all members of the university community whether they are currently dealing with dependent care issues or not.

The Dependent Care Task Force was formed to deliberate about the diverse dependent care needs of university employees. The Task Force was intentionally composed of a diverse group of people to ensure a thorough examination from multiple perspectives. The Task Force researched existing dependent care resources, both on and off campus, compared SU’s programs and services to those offered by other benchmarking institutions, and considered possibilities for innovation, flexibility and planning. Representatives from outside academic institutions and community agencies met with us and shared their perspectives. Our recommendations focus on unmet needs, recognize the changing nature and complexity of contemporary culture and family relationships, and include features designed to reduce obstacles to productivity while enhancing the well-being of all University employees. Our recommendations seek to:

- Strengthen the administrative commitment to work-life balance by incorporating that commitment into the University’s mission and vision statement.
- Strive for a sense of equity across all employment classifications (with regard to access to available benefits and services for all life phases).
- Provide a dependent care program to meet a broad spectrum of family needs, including but not limited to child care, elder care, and care for dependents with disabilities.

A highlighted summary of key findings and recommendations follows.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Key Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>SU conveys information about benefits and services poorly and inconsistently compared to other institutions</td>
<td>Starting with a clear commitment from the Chancellor, establish an HR position focused on dependent care. Part of the responsibilities of this position is to convey information clearly, accurately, and frequently, using a variety of means, to SU employees.</td>
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<td>Equity</td>
<td>SU's leave policies (parental, administrative, sick) differ widely across faculty and staff. These disparities cause confusion, hard feelings, and damage morale.</td>
<td>Make leave policies as uniform and inclusive as is possible. Provide a percentage match to dependent care spending accounts.</td>
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<td>Elder Care</td>
<td>This is a rapidly rising and major concern at SU with few existing benefits or services.</td>
<td>Flexibility and managerial support are the most far-reaching initiatives organizations can provide. We need to acknowledge the need for elder-care services, develop programs, and partnerships with community agencies ASAP.</td>
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<td>Child Care</td>
<td>The two main concerns are affordability and availability. There is a county-wide unmet need</td>
<td>Address availability concerns by increasing daily hours and available services at existing and planned SU-operated centers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area for infant care.</td>
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<td>Affordability will be partly addressed by implementing the percentage match program.</td>
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<td>Flexible Work Arrangements</td>
<td>The precise nature and number of flexible work arrangements is unknown in HR. Given that flexibility is important to employees in a variety of legitimate circumstances, a focus on flexible work arrangements is needed.</td>
<td>Three types of flexible work arrangements (at least) should be considered: (1) emergency, (2) short-term, and (3) long-term. Policies and procedures for each type need to be clarified, communicated clearly, and implemented consistently across campus.</td>
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</tbody>
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Dependent Care Task Force Members

Kelly Chandler-Olcott, School of Education, Reading & Language Arts
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Rochelle Brimmer, Office of Academic Administration, Recorder

Dependent Care Task Force Charge

In response to surveys and other input about employee needs, the University developed an initiative to increase the subsidization of, and access to, dependent care. The expansion of affordable dependent care options to support a variety of family needs was a priority. Kal Alston, Senior Associate Provost, appointed a University Task Force to propose a specific plan for this program. This Task Force researched and studied dependent care options in order to make recommendations to the central administration by the end of the 2010-2011 academic year.

Preface

Syracuse University takes pride in its commitment to its faculty, staff, graduate students and their dependents. It also has a responsibility to provide an environment that ensures that all employees are able to perform their duties at an optimum level. The University recognizes that many of its faculty, staff, and graduate students are challenged to balance their work with a variety of familial responsibilities.

The creation of this Dependent Care Task Force reflects the University's commitment to help meet that challenge by evaluating the diverse needs of these families, developing programs and services for them, and helping them access existing programs and services, both on and off campus and in the community. The Dependent Care Task Force was intentionally composed of a diverse group of individuals in order to ensure a thorough examination from multiple perspectives.
perspectives. The purpose of the Task Force has been to research existing dependent care resources, both on and off campus; compare those programs and services to those offered by other benchmarking institutions; and consider possibilities for innovation, flexibility, and planning. In addition to conducting their own inquiries, Task Force members invited representatives from academic institutions and community agencies to inform the group and share their perspectives. The recommended plan places attention on certain areas of unmet need, recognizes the changing nature and complexity of our contemporary culture and family relationships, and includes features designed to reduce obstacles to productivity while enhancing the well-being of all University employees.

**Overarching Goals:**

- Strengthen the administrative commitment to work-life balance by incorporating that commitment into the University’s mission and vision statement.
- Strive for a sense of equity across all employment classifications (with regard to access to available benefits and services for all life phases).
- Provide a dependent care program to meet a broad spectrum of family needs, including but not limited to child care, elder care, and care for dependents with disabilities.

**Definitions:**

**Dependent**
The Task Force defines a “dependent” as a person for whom the benefits-eligible Syracuse University employee has significant responsibility for care, income, and/or support. Given the diversity of SU employees’ family structures and needs revealed by our inquiry, we believe that the University definition should be as broad and inclusive as possible. We recognize that some situations exist where inclusionary guidelines are set by external factors (e.g., flexible spending accounts for dependents must abide by federal tax laws) and that it may be necessary to delineate more specific criteria in relation to specific benefits. We believe that an inclusive, rather than narrow definition of dependent sends an important message that all members of the University community are valuable and deserving of support to fulfill their work and personal responsibilities. The Task Force found this definition to work well and therefore recommends the University adopt this broader definition.

**Benefits vs. Services**
For the purpose of this report, the Task Force recommends clarification between the terms benefits and services.

The term “benefits” applies to those items for which a direct monetary value to the individual employee can be ascertained. Benefits include: paid leave (vacations, holidays, sick leave); supplementary pay (premium pay for overtime and work on holidays and weekends); retirement (basic and voluntary retirement plan); insurance (life insurance, health and dental insurance, short-term disability, and long-term disability insurance); tuition (dependent/remitted tuition); child care services (Bernice Wright and SU Early Education and Child Care Center) and legally required benefits (Social Security and Medicare, Federal and State unemployment insurance taxes, and workers’ compensation).
The term “services” applies to items for which a direct monetary value for the individual employee cannot be readily established. Employee services encompass resources offered by employers to help employees manage work/life issues. They include information about programs and services designed to provide families with choices that best addresses their individual and family needs. Information about dependent care programs, wellness programs, homebuyers’ programs, child care, after school programs, and recreation programs fall into this category.

**Employees**
The categories of benefits-eligible employees addressed by this report include: faculty (tenured, tenure track, and non-tenure track), staff (exempt, non-exempt), and graduate students on assistantship or fellowship. Some members of the University community – for example, graduate students not on an assistantship or fellowship or non-benefits eligible faculty or staff members – may still be eligible for specific services described in the report.

**Findings and Recommendations**

**Information - Findings**
Through review and comparison of Syracuse University’s benefits and services in relation to what is offered at other benchmarking universities, the Task Force found that there were some similarities. There was a large difference, however, in how the information was conveyed to University employees. While some universities had websites in which an employee could easily navigate to any resource they may need, Syracuse University’s website for Human Resources (HR) sorely lacked in comparison. There were times when, in using the University’s HR website, Task Force members would make note of something important, but could not navigate their way back to the page. When employees are going through a stressful period due to dependent care needs, finding resources should be as simple and efficient as possible.

In addition, the Task Force spoke with other universities and companies, and noted that benefit and service information is distributed to employees in a myriad of ways. E-mails, mailings and postings around campus were strong additions to the companies’ websites. The University needs to be cognizant of employees who do not have regular access to a computer, and who would benefit from a campus or home mailing.

Another concern of the Task Force is the different levels of knowledge held by deans, directors and department heads regarding dependent care benefits and services offered by the University. These differing levels of knowledge may affect what information is shared with employees and how requests are managed in local departments. The Task Force understands that benefits and services are communicated centrally from HR; however, the local departments must have a working knowledge so that employee requests and/or inquiries may be managed appropriately and consistently.

**Information - Recommendations**
- Seek a statement of commitment from the Chancellor that would be disseminated via SUNews, posted on the University website, and included and/or excerpted in other University communications.
• Establish a position within HR focusing on dependent care issues. Because these issues may be addressed with both benefits and services (including those that exist as well as those proposed within the report), we recommend that the person in this position work closely with HR benefits staff and representatives of the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, and representatives from the child care centers.

• Develop a better website (w/proper directives and IT training) and create a page for dependent care.

• Use social media (e.g., Twitter, blogs, Facebook) to disseminate information about dependent care benefits and services.

• Offer regular communications and workshops through HR related to benefits/services.

• Establish a multi-disciplinary advisory committee to identify ongoing needs.

• Communicate employee discounts available at external vendors.

• Establish Craigslist-type resource for exchange of information and needs assistance.

**Equity (faculty vs. staff, exempt vs. non-exempt, gender, etc.) - Findings**

Currently, the University provides a variety of dependent care benefits and services. However, the level of benefits received and the administration of those benefits differs based on the employee’s employment classification. For example, exempt employees receive more flexibility to manage their dependent care needs compared to non-exempt employees. Further, non-benefits eligible employees have significantly less access to the support services or resources provided by the University. Based upon the research conducted by our Task Force, we recognize that most employees have or will have dependent care needs during their tenure at the University.

The Dependent Care Task Force proposes that where possible, the University create consistent dependent care benefits and services, and administer those benefits and services equitably across employee types. In doing so, the University will demonstrate its commitment to all employees who contribute to the daily operations of this institution.

The table below highlights current dependent care benefits where the Task Force identified particular issues around equity or coverage gaps. Proposed changes and benchmark examples are also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Benefit/Service</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Inconsistencies</th>
<th>Proposed Change</th>
<th>Benchmark Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leave of Absence-Parental (LOA)</td>
<td>Reduction in duties or relief from duties for up to one semester with pay for the primary care taker (M/F). Available up to 12 months after the birth of a child or at time of adoption of a child 7 years or younger</td>
<td>Available to tenure track and tenured faculty only. Benefits-eligible female employees, only, are allowed disability/maternity leave following the birth of a child. Currently, there are no paid staff leaves to accommodate adoption or</td>
<td>Expand LOA to include all benefits-eligible employees</td>
<td>Cornell Univ., Duke Univ., Univ. of Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Benefit/Service</td>
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<td>Leave of Absence-Administrative</td>
<td>Relief of duties for up to one year to accommodate a variety of purposes including personal business, government service, or family needs. The leave may be granted with or without salary and/or benefits.</td>
<td>Available to tenure track and tenured faculty only. Other benefits-eligible employees do not have the flexibility or job security to take a paid (or unpaid leave beyond that guaranteed by the Family Medical Leave Act) leave to address long-term personal matters such as caring for a spouse/partner, parent or a child. Further, this difference creates challenges in how staff responds to family situations outside of NYS or the United States.</td>
<td>Expand the LOA to include all benefits-eligible employees. The LOA could be with or without pay.</td>
<td>George Mason Univ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sick Leave</td>
<td>Paid time off to care for ill/injured child, spouse/partner, or parent. There are different time allotments for nonexempt vs. exempt staff.</td>
<td>This benefit is governed by a narrow definition of “dependent.” It does not allow for flexibility to include others the employee may be financially or personally responsible to care for.</td>
<td>Expand to include persons designated by the employee or consider changing the sick leave benefit into a personal time benefit. Personal time would have a specific time allotment and could be used as the employee desired.</td>
<td>Univ. of Arizona, Univ. of Notre Dame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care Benefits</td>
<td>Medical, dental, vision coverage options.</td>
<td>No benefits are available if a child is not the legal dependent of the employee but the child of the domestic partner.</td>
<td>Reflect the proposed definition of dependent.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Spending Account</td>
<td>Pre-tax reimbursement for dependent care expenses.</td>
<td>Lower-income employees may not be able to afford to use the spending accounts and may settle for lower quality or inconsistent care.</td>
<td>Match a percentage of what the employee contributes to the account.</td>
<td>Cornell Univ., Johns Hopkins Univ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Equity (faculty vs. staff, exempt vs. non-exempt, gender, etc.) - Recommendations**

- Make types of leave more uniform and inclusive (e.g. sick leave, parental leave, administrative leave). Minimally, all employees should have the opportunity to apply for unpaid leave.
- Offer a matching percentage for funds designated to dependent care spending accounts.

**Elder Care - Findings**

Elder care refers to providing short-term and long-term assistance and support to those individuals who are challenged performing daily activities due to cognitive and/or physical impairments. Demographics indicate that caring for the elderly is becoming an increasing responsibility for many people, most of whom are working. With a substantial aging population,
workplaces are experiencing the need to accommodate the elder care responsibilities of their employees by providing increased workplace flexibility, days off to accommodate elder care, caregiver support, counseling and education, and referrals to elder care resources in the community.

Elder care concerns impact employees in a number of ways:

- Employees are less productive at work when they are worried about caring for an elderly family member.
- Employees may be concerned about how utilization of resources may impact their career.
- Caregivers often bring their care-giving stress into the workplace.
- Employees appreciate working for an organization that supports their elder care needs.

Elder care research shows that flexibility is the most far-reaching initiative an organization can provide to help employees with their elder care responsibilities. This need was also reflected in the Family Care Study at SU in 2009. Task Force members heard and gave examples of how people who have elder care responsibilities need flexibility in their schedules so they can be available to take a family member to a doctor’s appointment, drop them off at an adult day care or wait at home until an aide arrives. Extending flexibility to encompass these duties is important. Equally important is manager support. It is essential that managers receive training to understand the bottom-line value of providing employees with flexibility and services to meet their needs.

As the Task Force explored the area of elder care it became clear that just as many members of the SU community have concerns pertaining to elder care as they do child care. Yet, campus-based resources to support employees with elder care concerns are extremely limited. The Syracuse community has several community-based organizations focused on an aspect of elder care or aging. The growing need for elder care presents an opportunity for innovation. We believe the University and the community have the breadth and depth of experts and existing programs/centers that would allow for truly effective and innovative services in the area of elder care to grow and flourish.

Offering services is a win/win proposition. These services will not only help existing employees, enabling them to perform their best, but they may also help the University in recruiting and retention efforts.

**Elder Care Recommendations**

- Acknowledge need for elder care services.
- Develop a range of elder care services on campus (e.g., support groups, elder day care, social programs and information and referral).
• Develop partnerships with the Department of Aging and Youth and other community elder care service providers.

Child Care - Findings
The following findings are based on data and comments from the 2009 Family Care Assessment. Current information is provided by local academic institutions which provided on-site child care, including SU’s centers, as well as Child Care Solutions of CNY, the key child care referral resource in the community.

Child Care Solutions is a nonprofit resource and referral agency that is committed to ensuring that families find high-quality, safe, affordable care and that the providers have the knowledge and skills needed to support children’s early learning and healthy development. They also provide information on financial assistance and New York State regulations as well as guidance on how to evaluate and select a program that meets the unique needs of each child and family.

The two main concerns of faculty, staff and graduate students regarding child care are affordability and availability of quality care. SU employees are most frustrated by the current low capacity and limited hours of operation of our existing on-campus resources.

It is also evident from the research that there is a county-wide unmet need across all employee levels for infant care. Other identified needs include: sick care, before and after school care, evening hours, break and holiday care.

Data shows that approximately half of our parents are seeking child care close to home while the other half would prefer care close to work. While expansion plans for SU child care centers (e.g. Jack Reilly Learning Campus) will increase the number of available spaces, there will continue to be a need for information and referral on a variety of available community resources. Employees are often just not aware of the child care resource options available to them. Information about family day care centers, babysitters, nannies, preschools and camps is often requested.

While some unexpected and unmet child care needs can be met by greater workplace flexibility (e.g. sick care), most needs require some further planning and organizational investment. Our benchmarking institutions (see Appendix III) offer subsidies and/or scholarships to offset a percentage of the cost of care.

Child Care – Recommendations
• While the Task Force realizes that the new Jack Reilly Learning Campus for Child Care Excellence affords the University the ability to increase the number of child care spaces, the Task Force recommends that the Center take this opportunity to increase daily hours and increase overall service, e.g., holidays, over break, summer time, and school closings.
• Develop partnership with Child Care Solutions.

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) - Findings
Syracuse University has a Flexible Work Arrangements Policy (FWA) that states the University recognizes and supports flexible work arrangements as a means to facilitate a highly desirable and productive work environment that is responsive to the changing professional and personal needs of today’s work force and/or to sustainability principles. ([http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/flex_work.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/flex_work.htm))

This process was designed to be employee-driven with necessary supervisory involvement and approval. HR administers the process. Currently, HR reports that each application is handled on a case-by-case basis and that most requests are brought to them via supervisors seeking further clarification and guidance. The number of requested flexible work arrangements compared to the number of approved arrangements is not known. Collecting this data would provide insight on whether or not department managers support a flexible work environment, and indicate the criteria by which flexible work arrangements are granted.

For the purpose of realistically addressing family care needs and simplifying the current process, it may be helpful to distinguish between emergency, short-term and long-term FWA in the workplace (see examples below). Since many family care needs come up suddenly and are unanticipated, it makes sense to provide ease and accessibility to a more informal process on a short-term basis. Our Task Force realizes that these types of informal arrangements may exist in certain pockets of the University. However, we believe that communicating the University’s support of these arrangements can positively affect many more employees.

Additionally, it should be noted that all of these FWAs would be enhanced for both the employee and department through Syracuse University Remote Access (SURA).

**Examples:**

**Emergency**
1. Alice’s father falls ill. If feasible, Alice could work from home for a few days by using remote computer access and forwarding her phone.

**Short-term**
1. Bob’s daughter needs to take summer school classes. For four weeks, he works from home on Monday and Wednesday mornings, so that he can drive and pick her up from school. In the morning Bob transfers his phone extension to his cell phone, and he has access to his University files from his home computer.
2. Sunita’s parent needs to have chemotherapy every Monday morning for the next six weeks. She works 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm on those Mondays and from 7:30 am – 5:00 pm Tuesday – Friday.

**Long-term**
1. Gabe takes a bus to work. The bus arrives at Skytop at 8:15 am and leaves at 4:45 pm, year-round, Gabe’s start and end times for each day are adjusted accordingly.
2. Biao has a 30 year old son with Down syndrome who works in the maintenance department at a hotel under a supportive work arrangement. The son’s work schedule is M-F 7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. There is no public transportation close to the hotel.
Biao needs to drive his son to and from work and therefore Biao’s work schedule is 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

3. Margaret’s husband was transferred out of state for work. He is two years away from retirement, so the family will stay in Syracuse while her husband gets an apartment out of state. Margaret is able to visit her husband every other week by transferring her extension to her cell phone and using terminal server. She therefore “works from home” every other week.

4. Philip has a young child in day care. The day care center closes at 5:00 pm. Philip works 8:00 am to 4:30 pm year-round to be able to pick up his child on time.

In promoting flexibility to meet family care needs, SU should provide a way to handle all three levels of flexible work agreements that may occur. Of course, emergency situations will need to be dealt with in the immediate time frame when they occur with the most flexibility the supervisor can provide given the individual circumstances. However, the University should establish methods to support and track the following two versions of flexible work:

1. **Short-Term** – which encourages access by providing a simple (one page) form to define the request/agreement between employee and supervisor for a short-term change in work schedule to accommodate dependent care needs (see samples above), and

2. **Long-Term** – which uses the existing FWA process that describes a planned weekly schedule designed to be long-term and contractual in nature, involving HR administration.

Documenting the flexible work arrangements provides clarity of expectations and protects both the manager and employee if the situation changes.

Training is needed to more effectively support the process and increase usage. In addition, encouraging departments to cross train their employees will also affect the usage and support of flexible work arrangements.

**Flexible Work arrangements -Recommendations**

- Implement flexible work policies and procedures to handle the varying needs of employees.
- Broaden remote computer access policy.
- Promote and provide training and information for flexible work arrangements.