



Channel Islands

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

**Pilot Program for Early Childhood Education
through Community Engagement & Care Center**

Concept Business Plan | April 2019

INTRODUCTION

Increasing access to high quality childcare and early childhood education programs is a critical need for the local region, as well as for the state. Early childhood education is positively correlated with school readiness, and the California Department of Education points out that “Children’s school readiness is one of the strongest predictors of school success and life-long learning.” However, in Ventura County alone, an estimated 12,000 preschool age children cannot access or participate in preschool due to space, costs, and program limitations and only 4 percent of the region’s demand for infant and toddler childcare is being met.

Two populations especially impacted in our County are children whose parents are enrolled in college or who are farmworkers. The disproportionate impact on these populations is documented in other agricultural communities across the state as well.

The region’s scarcity of preschools is not only impacting the children and parents directly, but is also impacting the preparation of future educators. CSUCI offers the only Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Studies in Ventura Council and the severe limitation of high-quality pre-schools within the region results in a tremendous challenge for placing Early Childhood Studies students into student teaching assignments which model innovative and research-informed practice.

CSUCI has been working on this challenge since the inception of the campus, and engaged in wide-scale planning and research to determine unmet needs and outline a plan for addressing this critical challenge. Although this was a priority for the university, as a new and fast-growing institution (currently CSUCI is the fastest growing CSU in the system), the difficult decision to prioritize academic and core facilities needed to take precedent.

We are now at a time where the childcare priority has risen with a number of key constituents. The CSU system and state legislature has prioritized an increase in graduation rates and an elimination of the equity gap; Governor Newsom has earmarked funding specifically for early childhood care and education; our Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF), which represents hundreds of donors, has made early childhood care a significant funding priority; and a major local grower has engaged in a robust study, which has highlighted the critical unmet need for childcare. Initial funding

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from the state can serve as the crucial foundation, from which numerous entities can then be leveraged.

As outlined below, a deeply committed group of Ventura County and regional stakeholders is poised to take on this challenge. This group has developed a conceptual solution to address these critical challenges, in a manner that effectively meets the community's needs while also generating broader benefits for the state.

OUTLINE OF NEED

CSUCI Need

CSUCI students, like university students nationwide, are in need of affordable, accessible and high-quality childcare. About half of CSUCI student parents earn less than \$23,000 annually. The average annual cost of local childcare is \$8,000. Research indicates that on-campus childcare contributes to higher education access, retention and graduation among student parents, particularly for female students and students of color. At CSUCI, 64 percent of students are female and 53 percent come from historically underrepresented populations. As CSUCI works to eliminate the equity gap and reach its CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 goals, attention to childcare accessibility is essential.

As mentioned, CSUCI offers the only Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Studies in Ventura County, and, as such, is the largest producer of the regional Early Childhood Education Workforce. Yet, due to the severe lack of preschools in the region, CSUCI students do not have the ability to complete their student teaching in learning environments that evince exemplary culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, meaningful family engagement, models of collaboration, and interdisciplinary creativity/play.

Community Need

Agriculture is one of the local region's largest industries. Approximately 36,000 farmworkers support Ventura County's agricultural growers. A 2017 community needs assessment found affordable and accessible childcare and education is a critical need among our regional farmworkers. This need is increasing as US and California agricultural workers migrate less, yet eligibility for childcare and preschool subsidies remains dependent on migrant status.

According to the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE), agricultural workers who migrate within the US has fallen by 60 percent since the 1990s. Data from the California Department of Education's Migrant Program shows a 36 percent decrease in migratory children ages 3-21 between 2011 and 2015. The state-supported Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program, which operates in eight counties, shows a 38 percent decrease in the number of migrant children ages 0-5 between 2008-2016. A 2017 survey conducted in Ventura County found that 77 percent of farmworkers were not migrating in search for work.

Agricultural workers are further challenged by stringent income threshold eligibility criteria for federal and state-funded childcare centers and preschool programs. As minimum wage slowly increases, farmworker families teeter on the income threshold to qualify for federal and state level subsidies. Moreover, state subsidy enrollment periods during peak season times obscure income data and cause some farmworkers to exceed the income eligibility threshold. As a result, many must make the difficult choice to temporarily leave their jobs or work fewer hours so as to not lose these valuable subsidies.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Local and regional stakeholders including agricultural growers, community organizations, local government, CSUCI, private foundations, philanthropists, and elected officials are collaborating to develop a solution that effectively meets the community's need.

The conceptual plan consists of establishing an early childhood education and care center at CSUCI that would address both student parent and farmworker childcare needs. CSUCI is located in the heart of the agricultural landscape within the region, making it accessible for both populations.

Beyond childcare, this center would also include a teaching and learning lab to provide early childhood providers professional development opportunities and a public policy and community engagement institute to help the state of California address the systemic barriers to equitable access to early childhood education. This community-collaborative approach would serve as a model for other universities and communities across the state in meeting this critical need in that it would create the framework for culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate learning experiences where children develop respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery.

Children and Families Served

The initial phase of the center would serve approximately 100 children and their families. Approximately one third of the center's enrollment capacity would be reserved for children of farmworkers. The range of services considered under the conceptual plan include infant-toddler care, preschool, and after-school programs. The conceptual vision also includes parental and faculty engagement, parent support groups, workshops and classes, and guided observations of children by parents in the classrooms.

Teaching and Learning Lab

The center will serve as a hub where community members can access quality early learning resources and research, as well as a laboratory school where prospective early childhood educators can experience an optimized research-based, community-engaged, and equity-focused early learning environment.

Research dating back to the 1970s illustrates the monumental importance of apprenticeship and observation in teacher preparation. The center will offer educational opportunities for current and aspiring early childhood care educators to prepare and refine early childhood care educators' abilities to create effective and powerful learning environments that are responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity, promote interdisciplinary creativity and play, foster meaningful family engagement, and develop innovative models of collaboration.

In addition, the center will also provide the opportunity for other CSUCI programs such as Nursing and Psychology to contribute to, collaborate with, and increase the potential for a holistic experience with wrap-around services for families and children.

Research and Policy Institute

The early childhood education and care center at CSUCI is conceptualized as a holistic framework, including an environment to conduct research and gather data to inform public policy, as well as best practices.

In 2019, some two-plus decades into the "information age," the unceasing publication of groundbreaking research and steady announcement of vital resources related to early childhood is daunting, even for early childhood professionals. Asking community and family members, many lacking in social and cultural capital, to derive from reams of research the most impactful work in

neuroscience, cognition, multilingualism, creativity, and constructive play, just to name a few topics, seems an impossible task. The same is true for early learning resources. Guidance for locating and making available quality resources in childcare and family services is an ever-increasing need.

CSUCI and its Early Childhood Program are uniquely poised to address these issues, as the center will serve as a central location, physically and virtually, where stakeholders can engage with policy advocates, grassroots organizers, scholars, and even legislators to better understand current practices touted by early learning scholars. This center will serve as a place where community members can collaborate to become aware and take advantage of local resources.

Sources of Funding

The state's \$5 million budget allocation investment in the early childhood education and care center at CSUCI will provide critical funding needed for the initial feasibility study, site development, and infrastructure planning.

The state's allocation provides an opportunity to leverage the momentum that is occurring in Ventura County around the desperate need for quality early childhood education to bring private philanthropy together with public investment. By launching the project, the state will put CSUCI in a position to pursue federal grants from the Department of Education and Hispanic Serving Institution funding to support programmatic funding needs, and also enable the University to bring philanthropic partners together in a central location. The University is working with local agricultural partners seeking to invest in providing access to childcare for their farmworker employees, as well as the Ventura County Community Foundation and the Ventura County Office of Education.

BUDGET and TIMELINE

Preliminary Budget - \$30 Million

Capital

- Phase 1: \$5 million to cover a feasibility study, site planning and infrastructure
- Phase 2: \$25 million to cover facility design, working drawings and construction
- Operating Scope: Serve 100 Pre-K children (infant to pre-kindergarten)
- \$1 – 1.5 million (depending upon number of children in each age group)

Schedule

- Year 1 would include a feasibility study, site planning, infrastructure and environmental work
- Year 2 would include design and working drawings
- Year 3 would include construction and occupancy



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Ventura County Community Foundation®

April 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

As President and CEO of the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF), I would like to express my enthusiastic support for CSU Channel Islands and their leadership on addressing one of the most pressing challenges facing our community. The lack of available, affordable and quality preschool education creates devastating consequences in preparedness of our children for their success in school. This leads to negative impacts on our local economy as students attempt to enter the workforce without the necessary skills and confidence. We are grateful to CSU Channel Islands for confronting this gap in high quality preschool education for low-income families and the associated need for creating additional well-trained teachers.

There is a desperate need for child care centers in our community. New advances in neural development show that children's brains grow and develop 85 percent of their full capacity by the time they are 5 years old. Imagine the consequences of the harsh reality that an estimated 12,000 preschool age children in Ventura County go without access to preschool programs. We have witnessed firsthand the closing of many preschool programs in our county whose centers could not be sustained due to lack of professionally trained teachers necessary to propel our students to success. In a county where the need for early childhood education is at its highest, the access to these programs is at its lowest.

CSU Channel Islands and their collaborating partners are at a unique juncture to address this problem for our community in a highly collaborative manner with impacts reaching far into the future. Through their plan to build an onsite child care center this pilot program would not only provide early childhood education to the most vulnerable children in our community, but would also create learning labs for faculty and students. This pilot program will allow for deep, meaningful research to take place aimed at addressing the systemic challenges to early childhood education in Ventura County. Furthermore, once established, this pilot program and its framework can be replicated and used throughout the state at other universities to continue to address the lack of early childhood education in the region.

VCCF believes that intervening early to support children and strengthen families is critically important and can be addressed by the proposed child care center at CSU Channel Islands. We must ensure that the families in our community are able to access these programs for their children at such crucial stages in their development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vanessa Bechtel', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vanessa Bechtel
President and CEO

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