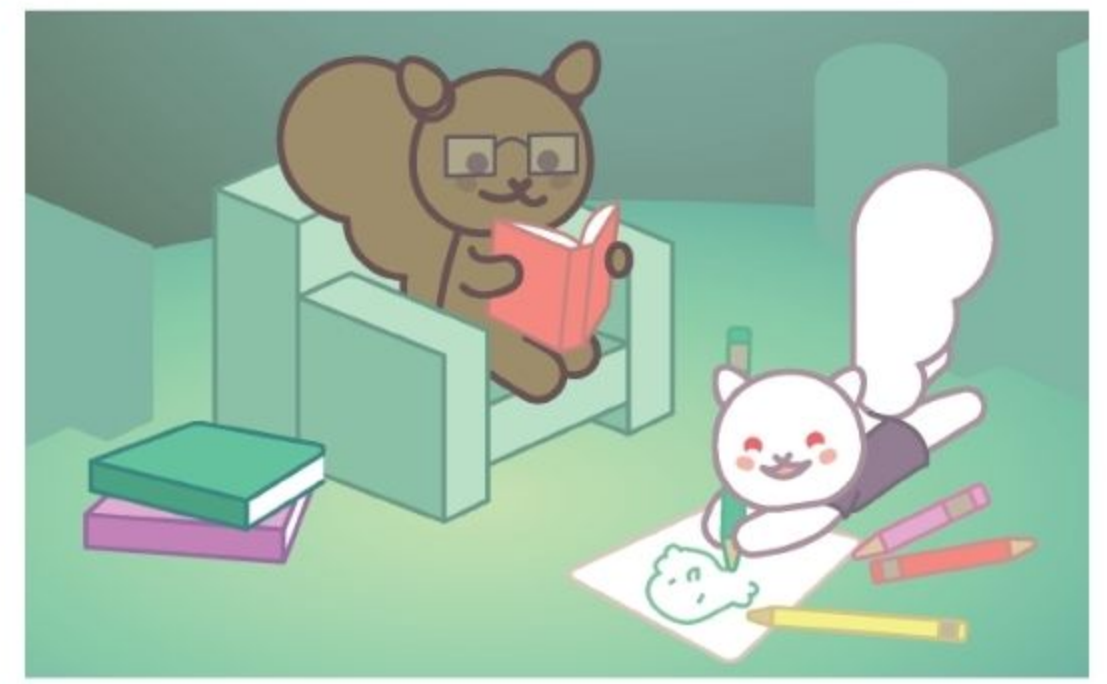


SUPPORTING STUDENT PARENTS IN WILLIS LIBRARY

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, academic libraries were designed without consideration of student parents. However, the "traditional" student and structure of academia has evolved with a growing recognition for inclusivity and accessibility for student parents and families.

As the student and structure of traditional academia changes, UNT efforts have been improved or added for student parents. This includes data collection, updated policies, family-friendly spaces, services, facilities, family programming, and accessible information and resources. It is recommended that colleges/universities use their libraries to help support student parents and to find cost-effective ways to retain the growing group of student parents, (Keyes, 2017). College campuses need to identify and recognize their student-parents and offer support for the challenges they face as both student and parent.

Several projects and initiatives I have been involved with include updating the student parent LibGuide with current information and resources, organizing Family Study Hour events, promoting Kids Activity Kits, adding Family Workstations, extensive research, and planning other projects.

INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY: LIBGUIDE UPDATE

In Spring 2024, a revamp of the Student Parent LibGuide began.

Having relevant information and resources accessible is important, but so is consistent promotion of family-friendly services and resources with regularly updated information on all library platforms. Consistent updates and additions about services, facilities, and resources can contribute to student success and retention.

We have added information regarding family-friendly spaces/facilities, Family Study Hour events, Kids Activity Kits, and resources such as parenting books, audiobooks for nursing mothers, children's books, campus resources, family-friendly fun, and more. We wanted to include resources that were not only helpful in the library but also on campus and in the Denton community.

The student parent LibGuide is a work in progress and is planned to have more information that can be helpful for parenting and pregnant students at UNT.

FAMILY STUDY HOURS

This semester, bi-monthly family study events were held. Family Study Hours are a dedicated time and space for families. Student parents can complete homework, study, or receive research assistance while their child enjoys crafts, activities, story times, snacks, Kids Activity Kits, and child-friendly furniture.

We planned each family study date, craft, activity, story time, and set up each event accordingly. Planning Family Study Hours as a whole included coordinating with Denton ISD Early Release days, planning activities to relate to chosen dates, promotion, craft research and trial runs, story time planning, and costs breakdowns.



Craft for 3/19



Family Study Hours



Family Study Hours



Science Kids Activity Kit, Ages 4-9

KIDS ACTIVITY KITS

Drawing inspiration from public libraries, Kids Activity Kits were created for student parents to check out for their children to use in the library.

Available for ages 1-9, Kids Activity Kits consist of a fun backpack, games, activities, toys, and books that each follow a theme. Themes of our kits include: Five Senses, Developing Motor Skills, Nature, Space, and Dinosaurs. We currently have 11 Kids Activity Kits available for families to use.

Kids Activity Kits can be checked out at the Library Services Desk on the first floor with a student ID. The Kits are currently offered for a 6-hour checkout, but a longer checkout can be accommodated. Kits can be used in the library, but can also be used around campus or taken home with accommodations.

Kids Activity Kits are a fun, educational, and interactive way for children to be entertained while their parents can study or work on homework!

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

In addition to the projects and initiatives I have been part of, I also do extensive research on libraries, student parents, and how higher education serves student parents, families, and pregnant students.

Literature Review: Since November 2023, I have gathered resources about supporting student parents, families, and pregnant students in higher education and academic libraries. I have also gathered resources that includes Texas family and student parent legislation, how public libraries support families, family-friendly amenities and spaces at libraries, children's services, and the unique challenges that student parents face.

In December 2023, I conducted research on public and academic libraries that have family initiatives. According to my data, many academic and public libraries are supporting families by providing dedicated spaces, amenities, services, and events.



Family Workstation, TMC Furniture Inc.

FAMILY WORKSTATIONS

To make the library more inclusive for families, four family workstations have been purchased to be put on the first floor. These workstations include a space for student parents to work and a secure space for their child to engage in play with interactive learning panels or a Kids Activity Kit.

Prior to purchasing, I had the task of creating an overview for the family workstations. The overview included information on location, availability, cleaning protocols, library student workers roles and responsibilities, biohazard policies, and other pertinent information. Due to my research on family initiatives in libraries, I was able to create an overview that is fitting for Willis Library.

The Family Workstation Project is a work in progress and more is planned for the safety and needs of all.

CONCLUSION

My position at the library has completely changed my views on student parents in higher education. I truly love the work I have done and been part of. Of course, there is still much more work to do and continuing advocacy for UNT families.

The library is for everyone. Everyone has a place and space at the library. Libraries should continue to be welcoming, inclusive, and meet the needs of groups that have been historically underrepresented and underserved. Student parents should always be supported as a student and as a parent. Supporting student parents and families is a 2-generational initiative.

I hope these projects inspire more initiatives that support student parents and families on campus and in all UNT libraries.

"When everyone is included, everyone wins."

**-Jesse Jackson
POLITICIAN, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST**

Photo courtesy of Madison Brents, Jonathan Miller, TMC Furniture Inc., and Emma Ramos.

REFERENCES
Keyes, K. (2017). [Welcoming spaces: Supporting parenting students at the academic library](#). *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*.

