Graduate Student Family Focus Group

We held two focus groups on two different evenings in February at the Student Family Housing Complexes, Solano and Orchard Park. Approximately ten different families (about 30 individuals) attended both focus groups. Eight panelists including staff, faculty, and graduate students answered questions and listened to concerns of attendees.

Family Housing Concerns:
- Limited communication and lack of transparency about the Parks closure and anticipated costs to families through the transition process
- Concerns about affordability and family-friendliness of new housing developments
- Need for an adequate standard of living (in terms of Parks maintenance) during the closure process; difficulty in maintaining a cohesive community due to moving families around

Childcare Subsidy Concerns:
- Childcare is a significant expense in a student family budget, but it enables parents to thrive in graduate school
- Many graduate student families don’t qualify for the subsidy because of the funding pool limitations. Families find it difficult to utilize child care subsidy due to:
  - Income eligibility standards
  - Limited capacity of centers for infant care
  - Facility location requirements
- Available funds are limited, so the subsidy only serves a small number of families

Family Childbearing Leave Concerns:
- Limited communication/outreach about this program
- Only available to Teaching Assistants and Instructors
- Graduate Student Researcher leave is unregulated, and GSRs need to negotiate with supervisors on their own

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- Create a Student Family Liaison position – an individual who is a resource for all matters related to student family needs
- Develop a Graduate Student Family portal for families or students planning a family, as a strategy to draw applicants to UC Davis and retain current students
- Improve communication strategies aimed at graduate students – dialog and transparency

“It would be good if the University was focused less on the budget, and more on the students' welfare.”
-Solano Park Resident

“Whenever it comes down to student families versus business, the families always lose.”
-Orchard Park Resident

“The University takes a very long time to change anything, but students' voices make a difference.”
-Panel Member