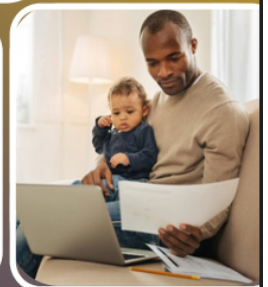# SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT PARENTS

ASSESSMENT FINAL REPORT

JULY 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Student parents are increasingly recognized as a significant population on college campuses across the United States and in California. The California Student Parent Alliance was formed in the past several years and has brought increased attention to the needs of student parents in higher education in California. Several key state policies have been put in place to support student parent academic engagement. This year the California State University Student Parent Taskforce is being formed to support systemwide approaches to ensuring student parents have what is needed to achieve their academic goals. However, serving student parents effectively requires a shift in mindset and approach from "are student parents ready for college" to include "are campuses ready for student parents?"

San Francisco State University (SFSU) has taken many steps to support student parents under the leadership of Karen Boyce, Director of Health Promotion and Wellness. Recruitment, retention and graduation of student parents is a key opportunity for SFSU to be an inclusive campus that supports all students. However, no recent systematic study has been done to understand the needs, experiences and strengths of SFSU student parents.

This assessment was conducted by SFSU Master of Public Health students as their 2025 Applied Practice Experience in partnership with SFSU Health Promotion and Wellness. The focus on student parents was particularly meaningful to the researchers as several were pregnant and gave birth during the assessment, others were the children of student parents, and two were current student parents.

**Resolution in Support of Student Parent Success
at San Francisco State University
#RS25-480**

WHEREAS, a key priority in the California State University (CSU) Graduation Initiative 2025 has been acknowledgement of the supports needed to reduce barriers to parenting students' success; and

WHEREAS, these barriers may result in parenting students "stopping out" or temporarily withdrawing from school with the intention of returning at a later date; and

WHEREAS, before the passage of Assembly Bill 2881, "Public Postsecondary Education: Students with Dependent Children," San Francisco State University was among several CSU campuses that actively sought to address and reduce barriers to parenting students' success and found day care to be among the most vital of supports needed by student parents returning to campus; and

WHEREAS, the Associated Students, Inc. (ASI) Early Childhood Education Center is a critical resource that enables the success and well-being of parenting students; and

WHEREAS, the curriculum at the Early Childhood Education Center promotes the development of children's sense of self and social development as their parents are pursuing their educational goals; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate of San Francisco State University commend the administration, especially Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and Associated Students, Inc., and campus faculty and staff, for their support and commitment to the success of parenting students; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate of San Francisco State University acknowledge the work that has been done already to better support parenting students, including support services available through the library, wellness center, and other campus locations; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate of San Francisco State University urge the continued support of parenting students; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate of San Francisco State University advocate for appropriate allocation of resources to any future student needs in relation to student parent success; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate of San Francisco State University urge campus faculty and staff to inform parenting students of priority registration status; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Academic Senate of San Francisco State University urge campus faculty to include a link to the ASI Early Childhood Education Center and other campus resources for parenting students[1] on their syllabus or course Canvas page to aid in student parent knowledge of these resources.

1As of Spring 2025, current resources include:

https://asi.sfsu.edu/early-childhood-education-center

https://library.sfsu.edu/kids

https://wellness.sfsu.edu/parenting-student-resources

Senate Approval
Jackson Wilson: Professor
05/2025

Policy Owner
Mirna Vasquez: Administrative Analyst/Specialist
05/2025

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT PARENT DATA

Compiled by SFSU Health Promotion and Wellness, Spring 2025

Methods

AB 2881 requires all CSUs to provide priority registration to parenting students. There is no ability to collect this data completely from existing institutional or FAFSA data. SFSU students need to "self-certify" their status as parents meaning that inform SFSU that they provide more than 50% financial support and care for at least one child under 18 years of age. The following student data relied upon this self-certified data and used student IDs to pull existing institutional data about each student.

As of March 2025, 1150, students identified themselves as parents.

- 61% are undergraduates
- 85.6% are transfer students
- 96% are veterans
- 74% female, 26% male
- Male parents and parenting graduate students are more likely to be white

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
Latino/a	25%
Asian	23%
White	20%
Black	16%
Native American	1%
Did not state or other	15%
Total	**100%**

Dependents Age	# of Students	Percentage
Infant (0-1)	139	12%
Toddler to Preschool (2-5)	306	27%
School Age (6-12)	451	39%
Teenager (13-18)	254	22%
Total	**1150**	**100%**

All Parenting Students Age	Percentage
17-25 yrs	5%
25-35 yrs	33%
36 yrs and older	62%
Total	**100%**

Undergraduate Parenting Students Age	Percentage
17-25 yrs	7%
25-35 yrs	42%
36 yrs and older	51%
Total	**100%**

GPA	Percentage
<2.5	12%
2.5-3.0	12%
3.01-3.5	14%
3.51-3.75	12%
3.76-4.0	50%
Total	**100%**

ASSESSMENT PURPOSE and KEY QUESTIONS

Purpose

To explore the opportunities and challenges facing student parents at SFSU. The assessment informs current and future programs and policies that support student parents at SFSU.

Key Questions

What is the student-parent experience at SFSU?
- What are the challenges SFSU student parents face?
- What are the strengths SFSU student parents bring to SFSU?
- What are the benefits/positive impact of being a student parent?

What strategies is SFSU undertaking, and what is needed to fully support student parents?
- What is required of SFSU?
- What is being done now? – policies and programs
- What are the experiences of student parents with these programs and policies?
- What programs and policies are needed to better support SFSU student parents?
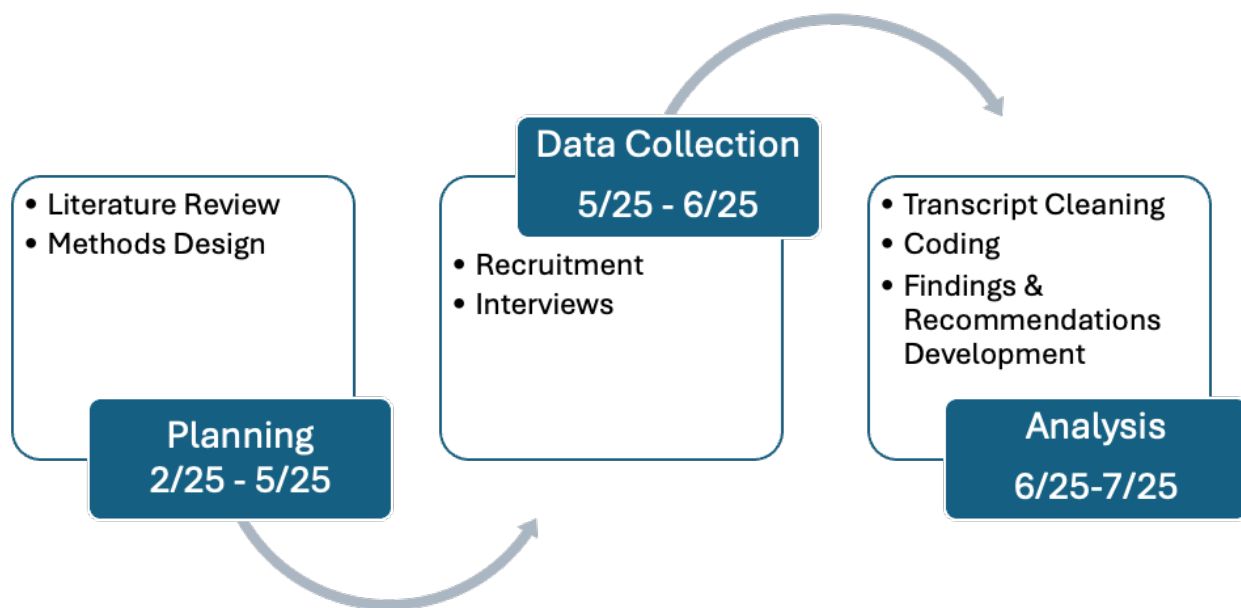
What are the perspectives of key campus stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities to support student parents?
- What challenges do faculty face in supporting student parents?
- What opportunities/strengths do faculty experience in engaging student parents?
- How do ASI programs and other student groups/programs support student parents now, and what could they do?
- What system structures, policies, and programs do staff and faculty need to support student parents more effectively?

ASSESSMENT METHODS

This assessment was conducted as part of the SFSU Master of Public Health's Community Assessment for Change and Professional Practice courses. Over 6 months, 16 students and an instructor collaborated with staff of SFSU Health Promotion and Wellness to design and implement a community assessment about student parents at SFSU. This project exemplifies the Research Justice and participatory action research approaches, as it is about students and by students.

Timeline

- Literature Review
- Methods Design

Planning
2/25 - 5/25

Data Collection
5/25 - 6/25

- Recruitment
- Interviews

- Transcript Cleaning
- Coding
- Findings & Recommendations Development

Analysis
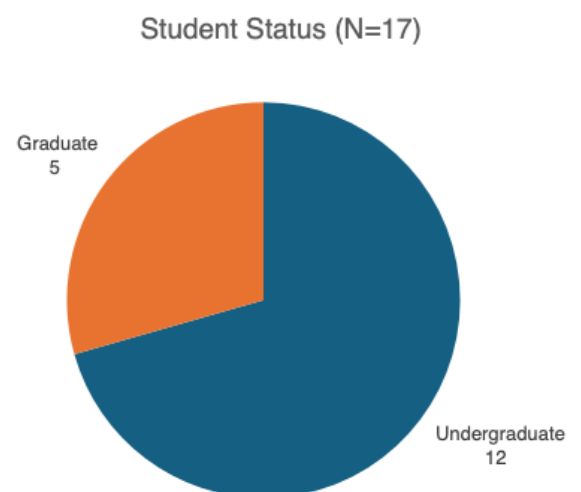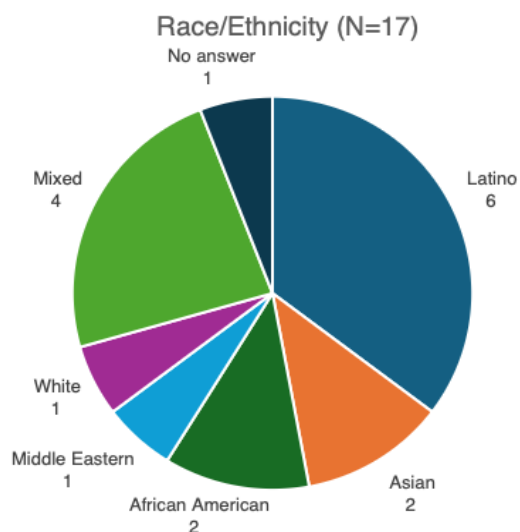**6/25-7/25**

Interviews

The assessment used semi-structured interviews to gather the perspectives of both current student parents and key campus stakeholders. Interviews took place over Zoom, were recorded, and transcribed. Pairs of students conducted each interview, with one serving as interviewer and the other as notetaker. Student parents received a $15 gift card for participation in an interview. Dedoose was used to code all transcripts, create themes with relevant excerpts, and develop findings and recommendations. See Appendix A and B for the interview protocols.

Key Campus Stakeholders Sample

Interviewed	#
Leaders of Student Affairs and Associated Students units	15
Leaders of academic departments and Academic Affairs units	8
Total	**23**

Student Parent Sample

17 student parents were interviewed. Following are the sample demographics.

Number of Dependents (N=17)

3 Dependents
2

1 Depe
8

2 Dependents
7

Age (N=17)

No answer
1

40-59 yrs.
5

20-39 yrs.
11

Race/Ethnicity (N=17)

No answer
1

Mixed
4

Latino
6

White
1

Middle Eastern
1

African American
2

Asian
2

Student Status (N=17)

Graduate
5

Undergraduate
12
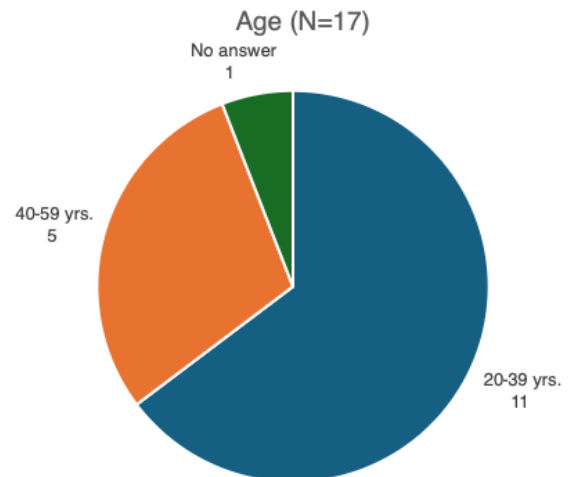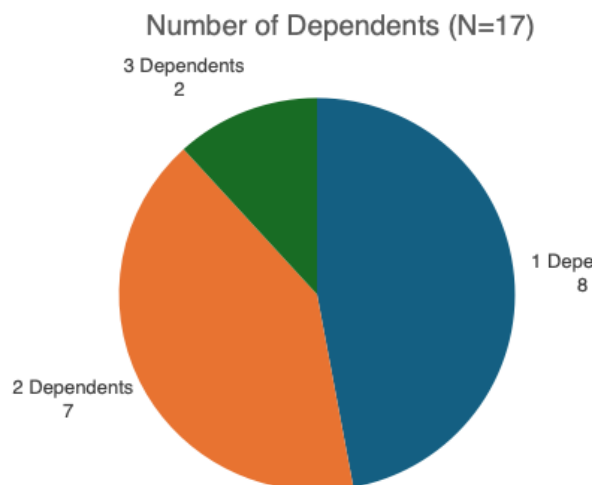
ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Challenges and Strengths
1. Time
2. Childcare
3. Financial Need
4. Wellbeing and Mental Health
5. Intergenerational Education

Academics
6. Academic & Professional Success
7. Priority Registration
8. Classes
9. Faculty Support

Campus Culture & Resources
10. Student Parent Impact on Campus
11. Inclusion and Resources
12. Data Availability

Challenges and Strengths

Finding 1: Student parents experience a chronic time deficit.

Student parents can find it challenging to have enough time to comfortably manage their caregiving, workplace, and academic responsibilities. Commuting time to and from campus contributes to student parents' time deficit. Student parents often find it difficult to attend in-person classes and make many sacrifices, such as reduced time with their children, less sleep, and working late on assignments. As a result of needing to meet so many demands, student parents have extensive time management skills and the ability to handle many competing responsibilities.

"the challenging part is timing. I try my best to prioritize things within my personal life and academic life, but still, time management is very hard… And there's a lot of stuff that is challenging for a mom to go to school and work and take care of the kids." **[Student Parent]**

"It could be very stressful... there are times where I really didn't get much sleep the night before, but I still made it to class, still showed up. You don't really have the freedom to kind of just do what you want to do and hang out all the time." **[Student Parent]**

"I have to commute back to Richmond, which is an hour and 30 minutes, so I have to give myself some flexibility to see when it is [class], and so now I'm having to rearrange my childcare to get to at least 6 o'clock, just to give myself a little bit of time." **[Student Parent]**

"Just straddling both… those worlds, trying to take care of their own academic needs, while also attending to their children's needs and... some of the time commitments, right? What I often hear about is just the [time] that is required to [do] both." **[Campus Leader]**

"Another challenge would be just managing schedules or time, and balancing responsibilities at home. So, I think the home piece with studying and trying to put kids to sleep and feed them and all these other responsibilities, trying to balance that... is extra challenging." **[Campus Leader]**

Finding 2: Reliable and accessible childcare is essential for student parents to succeed academically.

There is not enough support in accessing affordable childcare available to help student parents manage their parental and academic responsibilities. The Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) at SFSU serves as a key childcare resource for student parents. However, existing childcare is limited in capacity and may not always meet student parents' childcare needs. Many student parents are unaware of campus childcare services due to inadequate outreach and communication from the university.

"For the daycare [ECEC]*, it helps because if I need a place for my daughter to go while I'm in class, at least I know I can take her there. That's better for me because it's close and it's walking distance on campus... so I wouldn't be worried like 'Oh my god, what's going on?', you know? So yeah, that definitely helps."* **[Student Parent]**

"Childcare, I feel like, is one of the biggest challenges for parents as a whole, and that doesn't exclude parents that are at SF State. The childcare capacities for the campuses that we have are minimal. And it's hard to get into those programs when eligibility is already hard to meet. So, for parents with younger children that need that childcare, it's another hurdle in the race, another challenge for SF State students." [**Campus Leader**]

"I definitely had to find a more full time childcare, because the services at [San Francisco] City College allowed me to like, essentially go to class, and then I could do a childcare drop in on campus, and SF State did not have something like that, so I was able to do school and spend more time with my kid at City College, but then at SF State I had to sign up for like a like a more full time... childcare to be able to go to school." **[Student Parent]**

"I think childcare on campus is number one...we have to open up and have space for student parents to be able to be near their kids on campus and still be able to go to class.... I think we need to do better with childcare, period." **[Campus Leader]**

"I think one of the things that we saw during COVID is just how important childcare is and how much it costs, and what it meant for a lot of families. During COVID, where they just basically said, well, I can't... put my child in childcare, and so… this is especially evident when people started to lose... going back to the cost and expense of that [remote learning]." **[Campus Leader]**

Finding 3: Considerable financial concerns about childcare, housing, tuition, and transportation are significant challenges for student parents.

Many student parents and campus leaders described finances as one of the main concerns for student parents, especially single parents. Many student parents struggle with childcare as there is a lack of affordable and feasible childcare options on and off campus. These students also face challenges regarding increased tuition as they continue their academic journey. Student parents may have further trouble with a lack of affordable housing and transportation. Student parents expressed their need for more financial aid, specifically to cover the high cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Many student parents reported that they are unable to meet scholarship requirements, or are unaware of basic need programs, and other forms of financial support at SFSU.

"It's way more expensive to attend college here than the cost of attendance. There were years where there was aid that was available, but I couldn't get it because of my cost of attendance, but I couldn't afford rent, and I was eating from the student pantry on campus. It was like, how does this make any sense?" **[Student Parent]**

"I think, being in San Francisco, we all know that there's a high cost of living with rent and so forth, and groceries. And I'm trying to figure out if it basic needs support that could be at the forefront while going back to school and not trying to take out loans but working multiple jobs as well. That could be a perspective to be considered." **[Campus Leader]**

"I'm at a terrible disadvantage when traditional students have some support, and so because they only feed themselves, essentially, they don't have children, then they have more time to focus on their studies and succeed academically. But I face the hurdles of trying to succeed academically while I'm with housing insecurities, while caring for my child, while not meeting my budget at all. It makes a tremendous impact on my success." **[Student Parent]**

Finding 4: Student parents take on multiple roles and responsibilities, often at the expense of their mental health, personal well-being, solitude, and personal pursuits.

For student parents, balancing school, work, and parenting often leads to physical and emotional exhaustion. Sacrificing sleep, neglecting self-care, and declining mental health and well-being are commonly experienced by student parents. Student parents tend to sacrifice quality time with their family to make sure their priorities and tasks as students are being met. At the same time, student parents may want to network, build relationships with other students or experience student-based activities but parental responsibilities often take priority resulting in a feeling of isolation.

"I guess, sometimes, mental health-wise, it is hard. There are days that maybe you're going to cry because you're frustrated, or you're just angry, and you don't know how to react. I've had those moments before." **[Student Parent]**

"My children have had to be a lot more understanding of my school schedule. A lot of times, if I'm trying to do homework and my daughter wants to go to the park, I have to tell her I can't. Things we would normally do, like weekend trips, have had to take the back burner. Sometimes they're understanding, other times they're frustrated. My 11-year-old says, "You always have homework." **[Student Parent]**

"It's definitely not easy. It could be very stressful, like, there are times where I really didn't get much sleep the night before, but I still made it to class, still showed up. You don't really have the freedom to kind of just do what you want to do and hang out all the time. I think it's because we have that added responsibility." **[Student Parent]**

"During school, I'm not a great parent, if I'm being perfectly honest, because I'm trying to pass all these classes, I'm very concerned in that a lot, so unfortunately, I'm not mentally there for my kids a lot, which sucks." **[Student Parent]**

"Most of my classes are at dinner time, and while that makes it so you can do it while you're working it, I have to get the kids dinner ready before class. And then I'm not eating dinner with them and at times that is ...the only time I get with them. So twice a week my classes are in the evenings. I'm not able to have dinner with them." **[Student Parent]**

"I think some challenges that I may encounter are not being able to participate in a lot of student activities. I think making friends has also been kind of difficult." **[Student Parent]**

Finding 5: Student parents are motivated to pursue a degree and succeed academically to positively influence their children, create opportunities, and foster intergenerational gains. The SFSU community includes students and staff who were the children of SFSU student parents.

Many student parents identify as first-generation college students and are motivated by their ability to demonstrate to their family [direct and extended] that higher education is achievable. Student parents see that they are able to role model to family members that they "belong" in academic spaces, which may be particularly beneficial to historically marginalized groups and identities. Some student parents reported being enrolled simultaneously in college as their child.

Student parents' educational commitment, persistence, and sacrifice are often driven by their desire to provide a better life for their children [family]. Student parents hope to influence future generations to attend college to enhance their life prospects (career, quality of life, etc.). While SFSU does not have a legacy admission program, several campus leaders reported familial generational enrollment and degree attainment as a result of being a child or family member of a student parent at SFSU. They noted having family members who received childcare on campus went on to receive graduate degrees as well from SFSU. Some children of student parents "grow up" on campus. They may have accompanied their parents to class on campus, via Zoom, or received childcare on campus while a parent attained their degree.

> *"I just wanted to show my daughter that no matter what, you persevere through the trials, and you just keep going. I wanted to show her and wanted to show my family too."* **[Student Parent]**
>
> *"they're resilient… they're very committed to their education, wanting to plan their degrees in ways that work for their family and their lives."* **[Campus Leader]**
>
> *"My kids see that I'm stressed but still enjoy school. They see that being a parent doesn't stop you from studying or pursuing goals. I want to be that example for them."* **[Student Parent]**
>
> *"My kids see me persist through challenges. It opens their eyes "If mom can do it, I can too." It sets an example."* **[Student Parent]**
>
> *"I think being a parent changes your whole perspective on the world. I think our program is really focused on social change, and these are the students that really wanted to see social change happen, because they saw the generation ahead of them."* **[Campus Leader]**

Academic and Professional Success

Finding 6: Student parents who transfer from community colleges find SFSU lacking in needed supports. Despite facing significant challenges balancing academics and caregiving responsibilities, student parents continue to stay determined and persevere when it comes to their academic and professional success.

Student parents demonstrate resilience, maturity, and an empowering sense of purpose. Undergraduate transfer students comprise 85.6% of the student-parent population at San Francisco State University (SFSU Health Promotion and Wellness, 2024). Many expect similar support to their previous institutions but often face limited guidance, adding strain that detracts from their academic and personal success. Student parents rely on their own advocacy and internal strength to navigate challenges and achieve remarkable commitment.

"What stands out to me is just their resilience and just the strength. I think every single time I've ever been involved in those conversations, when we've talked about student parents. It's just how much they are holding; how much they are juggling in terms of their roles. So, almost in every single case around that, it is that they are juggling an academic load, whether that's part-time or full-time, most of the time, they also have jobs." **[Campus Leader]**

"So, I came from City College, and there were a lot more services available for student parents at City College at CCSF that weren't available at SF State. So, it was a bit of pivoting for childcare, and the absence of services that I was used to at City College. I think that's the biggest challenge at SF State for me." **[Student Parent]**

*"This institution is not helpful… they're not guaranteed any support to succeed in graduating…there is no liaison to help the student entering guarantee that the administration and its…departments will follow through..***[Student Parent]**

"Definitely advocate for yourself, and if you need help, ask for it. Don't ever feel like you're alone in this process. There's a lot of support, so don't feel like you're going through this alone, and there's going to be rough days, rough nights, where maybe you can't get to completing an assignment or going to a class in person because your child may have gotten sick, but never let that get to you, like, always communicate." **[Student Parent]**

"As a campus, we know that they've [student parents] got limited time, therefore we need to also do more intentional planning with them around what they need outside and beyond the classroom." **[Campus Leader]**

Finding 7: Priority registration is a valuable tool that helps student parents balance academic responsibilities with caregiving and employment; however, limitations exist.

Student parents emphasized that early access to class registration helps them manage class and parenting schedules, reduces stress, and supports degree progress. However, despite its benefits, many student parents are unaware of their eligibility or miss key deadlines. Access to priority registration depends on self-identifying as a parenting student, a step that student parents may overlook or not complete in time for registration. Furthermore, many faculty and staff may know about priority registration but often don't know which students are parents and therefore eligible. Even with early access, some student parents faced challenges enrolling in high-demanded classes, especially when enrollment appointment times conflicted with their caregiving responsibilities.

"*The early registration, that's great. It gives me an advantage. That's a big plus. That's a huge burden right there. So, I'm able to register early, and I'm able to pick out the classes without having that pressure that I've got to get in at a certain specific time. I could venture through all the classes that pertain to me, and I'm able to get in right away.*" **[Student Parent]**

"So, a lot of student parents don't know that they have that, although I've seen the emails, but it doesn't mean that the student has seen them, right? And if you log into your student portal, there's not one great big red button that says, "hey, you're a student parent, you have priority registration?" **[Campus Leader]**

"Supposedly, if you're a parent, you're supposed to have priority registration. But that was never given to me. And it's not anything that anyone told me about, so I never got that." **[Student Parent]**

"I've heard other students talk about their experiences and they're like, "oh my gosh, it's really hard for me to get into classes and I need these classes", especially as an [impacted] major. Like I said previously, each class is very semester specific. If you don't get in it now, you're going to have to wait a whole year before you can take the class again." **[Student Parent]**

Finding 8: There are not enough flexible course schedules, modalities, and policies in place to accommodate the parental and employment responsibilities of student parents.

In-person, weekday classes during work hours are difficult for student parents to accommodate in their schedules. Student parents identified the need for flexible courses like asynchronous, remote, evening, and weekend classes. However, there is a limited number of classes available that meet the needs of many student parents which can result in delays in their degree completion. Furthermore, there are no campus wide classroom policies in place to accommodate the parental and employment responsibilities of student parents. Student parents have to rely on the flexibility of faculty on a case-by-case basis rather than using on built-in accommodations regarding assignment extensions, absences related to their children, and bringing their children to class.

"Students need evening classes, because they may have a partner or a grandparent that can watch the child at night, but we have especially after the pandemic, all the evening classes have gone away, more or less." **[Campus Leader]**

"Barriers that uniquely impact student parents the one that comes to mind right away is just scheduling, course scheduling. Are we attending to the needs of those students?... But are we doing that strategically and ongoing with the needs of student parents in particular in mind, as one of many groups that need scheduling accommodations." **[Campus Leader]**

"Oh, well, I mean, obviously, if you're feeling really stressed because you can't get your classes, they don't work around the schedule that you need, or you're stressed for resources, it's going to be harder to persist, and to work towards your degree. You might feel more like there's barriers in your way, and as a parent, you're always going to prioritize your family and your children above yourself, because you have to, so…." **[Campus Leader]**

"Honestly, the thing that I find challenging is, like, the timing of the classes that you have, because there are budget cuts. Some of the classes, you have to rearrange your schedule to fit my needs, and in particular this semester, on Wednesday, at almost 4 o'clock, I have to attend it [class in person]." **[Student Parent]**

"Classrooms or class sizes are being reduced, class options are being reduced, there's too many hurdles in the way for parenting students to complete their degree, and completing a degree is sometimes the last thing on a parent's plate. We're going to prioritize working, we're going to prioritize taking care of our kids." **[Campus Leader]**

Finding 9: Faculty, staff, and student parents all emphasized the importance of meaningful, supportive relationships. However, inconsistent support from individual faculty and staff remains a challenge, creating added stress and academic obstacles for student parents.

Positive interactions with understanding faculty and flexible academic policies were described as reducing feelings of isolation and fostering a stronger sense of belonging. Faculty described meaningful and positive experiences supporting student parents through pregnancy, navigating resource systems, school field trips with student parents' children, and celebrating graduation milestones. In particular, faculty who are parents themselves or have close relationships with friends and family who are parents showed empathy and flexibility in their approach with student parents. Faculty engagement, such as regular check-ins, advising support, and advocating for resources, helped student parents stay connected and succeed academically.

On the other hand, student parents reported varied experiences with faculty support, while some professors demonstrated empathy and flexibility, others enforced rigid policies that did not account for caregiving responsibilities. Students experience that some faculty apply a "treat everyone the same" approach and feel that their unique needs are not considered. Faculty may experience internal tension between offering accommodations and ensuring fairness, which can result in inconsistent support for student parents. These inconsistencies increase unpredictability for student parents, forcing them to navigate policies on a class-by-class basis. In some classes, strict attendance and participation policies combined with a lack of faculty flexibility, create barriers for student parents, especially during childcare emergencies, leading to missed classes, falling behind in coursework and a negative impact on their grades.

> *"Professors are flexible. If one of my kids is sick, I can attend class through Zoom. We have the tech for that. Also, I have great support at work — they let me take time off or make up hours. That support system really helps."*
> **[Student Parent]**
>
> *"I think, from my experience, the faculty is really supportive. I've seen… faculty being able to give, extensions on projects. To understand where the students are coming from and just show a lot of support, so… and that's anecdotally."*
> **[Campus Leader]**

"*A student parent used to bring the child into our space, and the child just got really used to the space that was assigned by interior design students. He would just love hanging out in the space, and the space has been a consistent theme among students that come into it to say it's comfortable, it's bright, it feels safe, it's whimsical.*" **[Campus Leader]**

"*Some faculty are not as understanding. It's hard to show up fully as a student and as a parent. SF State is a commuter school. Just getting to campus is a struggle. We don't need leniency, just understanding.*" **[Student Parent]**

"*She came in pretty regularly for advice, and I remember when she graduated. She was very, very thankful that, we had had the experience in supporting her but also was very grateful in sharing, … I feel like the person also, the people in the space also make a difference.*" **[Campus Leader]**

"*So, if they don't give us flexibility, it's hard for us to catch up on everything. I know that I mentioned earlier that the professors are kind, and they always give us extra time to submit the assignments late. But the thing is, when we submit the assignment late, we fall behind on the new assignment. So again, it repeats the same story again and again and again, then again, as a result. One of our assignments even gets missed, because we don't have enough time to catch up on everything.*" **[Student Parent]**

Campus Culture and Resources

Finding 10: Student parents lead with lived experience and selfless support, displaying resilience and community. They advocate for a more family-friendly campus yet continue to face barriers to visibility and access to resources.

Student parents bring leadership and enriching perspectives with an empowering presence that inspires inclusive learning environments on campus. They bring maturity and wisdom that guide non-parenting students and enrich campus culture through shared life lessons. Student parents seek active roles in student organizations and advocate for better family-friendly resources by building peer networks, initiating conversations, and promoting a more inclusive campus environment.

> *"I think another positive attribute, more specifically to me with my department, as I said before, is studying Child and Adolescent Development (CAD). I can use the knowledge that I'm doing and gaining right now and being enrolled at (SSD) while raising my baby. I used my knowledge, knowing that, and then I brought it home, so that's something that I can appreciate that I'm learning in my career and using it at home"* **[Student Parent]**

> *"Last year, I got to work with a really great fellow board member on the AS board of directors, who was a student parent, and she did a great job advocating for student parent needs. She talked a lot about the ECEC, which she had very strong opinions on, the children's campus."* **[Campus Leader]**

> *"I don't have children myself, but I definitely have friends and families who are working professionals, who are parents, and they provide this set of wisdom, but also these learning moments, ... I think there's healing justice around that in coming as a community, understanding that this is a fabric of who we are, as San Francisco State, but also in society, right?"* **[Campus Leader]**

> *"I'm trying to start a student organization, essentially doing some other things on campus…It's going to be those things that would possibly impact students on campus before."* **[Student Parent]**

> *"I thought about starting a parent group because there aren't any. But I was in the Real Estate Fellows Program through the business school, and another student brought their child to a session. That made me feel seen. I also worked briefly in the Child Study Center and connected with other parents."* **[Student Parent]**

Finding 11: Many student parents feel invisible and excluded from campus culture. A lack of family-friendly environments and minimal awareness of student-parent focused programs and resources create barriers to full participation in campus life. Navigating campus resources can be a challenge for student parents, which can deter them from accessing available assistance.

Student parents reported feeling invisible and excluded within campus culture, noting that their needs are rarely reflected in available resources or campus initiatives. Some student parents described feeling dismissed or unsupported by faculty and staff and rarely see themselves intentionally reflected in campus culture or leadership. Many student parents are unable to build community, utilize available resources on campus, or participate in campus activities/programs due to their parenting responsibilities. The absence of family friendly environments, such as child-inclusive spaces and family friendly events, contributes to the exclusion of student parents on campus. Furthermore, campus leaders described a common mindset that equates parenting with a certain age range, overlooking the diversity of ages among student parents

While student parents reported using resources like Basic Needs, Health Promotion and Wellness (HPW), Gator Groceries, care packages, and free diapers, these resources are often underutilized due to limited awareness. Student parents find it difficult to navigate campus resources if the resources are inconvenient to access in terms of their location and operating hours. Student parents may not always feel comfortable accessing campus resources, due to a previous negative experience or undocumented status. The absence of a dedicated San Francisco State University student parent point of contact and centralized services creates a barrier to resource navigation and communication.

> *"There's no dedicated office or service that's tailored for our student- parent population. …I'm wondering if there's an opportunity for embedded support within those branches (existing resources for non-student parent populations) where it could connect to student parents in a way."* **[Campus Leader]**
>
> *"There's a lack of visibility around support. I know that [a] student helped to push for the family study space in the library. But I think when she kind of expressed even getting to that point, it was pretty challenging...It doesn't always seem like there's a welcoming environment for families on our campus (SFSU)."* **[Campus Leader]**
>
> *"It's not that we have a lot of stuff on campus where children are not allowed, but if it doesn't say specifically that it's for kids or parenting students, parenting folks may not bring their kids, they're not sure if it's going to be family-friendly, so*

something that's more explicitly maybe, like, a parenting students day, like a picnic…" **[Campus Leader]**

"How do we bring students together? So that they have some...connection among each other. So that they can build a community. I'm not suggesting that it's an exclusive community…but how do we help students identify others in similar situations to them, support that, and let that flourish and help us shape how we become better institutionally ready for student parents. **[Campus Leader]**

"There've been students that didn't want to connect with the (resources) at first because of the fear of two things. It was going to affect how they or other people saw them. Let's just make up (an example). They are Latinx, but once you come out as undocumented...just being afraid of being identified as undocumented, and just the fear of things that they're receiving are coming from federally funded programs." **[Campus Leader]**

"If I knew I could have gotten laundry soap for free at the HPW [Health Promotion and Wellness center] on campus, I would have used that. If I knew I could go get some fresh vegetables once a month, or once a week, or whatever Gator Groceries is, I would have done that, [it] would have helped me so much, right? Because I was a student who was working full-time, living with roommates, and I didn't come from money, I'll put it that way. I just didn't know that any of that existed, right? And so, I don't know that students always know what's available. I think that's probably the biggest thing that prevents them from engaging."
[Student Parent]

Finding 12: Insufficient data on student parents, including who they are, what they need, which resources they access and the extent to which services are effective, makes it difficult for the University to offer informed and effective support.

Student parent identities are not systematically tracked by San Francisco State University, so faculty and staff often only learn a student is a parent if the student voluntarily discloses it. Faculty and staff lack access to centralized data about student parents, which limits opportunities for outreach and tailored classroom support. Furthermore, there is no consistent data on student parent needs or challenges, making it difficult to address issues such as caregiving conflicts or the need for academic flexibility. Without disaggregated data, institutional planning remains limited, leaving faculty and staff without insight into student parent needs or guidance on how to support them. In addition, the effectiveness of programs and services remains unclear, and no feedback systems exist to assess what is working or why student parents may disengage. Limited data collection prevents student parents from being fully included in equity planning and campus-wide decision-making processes. The university's lack of formal tracking of student parents contributes to missed opportunities for support.

> *"All of our student-parent data right now is very self-reported. Unless the student shares that, it doesn't always come up in conversation or is disclosed."* **[Campus Leader]**
>
> *"I think that SF State can do a better job when it comes to the disaggregation of data of those who are student parents…I think it's definitely an underserved and marginalized population that we don't tend to focus on."*
> *[Campus Leader]*
>
> *"It's not like when they apply, they say, 'hi, I have a child', or 'I have children', so it's not like the university knows who these students are either until they self-identify. So maybe getting them to self-identify earlier that might be helpful."*
> **[Campus Leader]**
>
> *"I think what would be interesting is doing an assessment for those who identify as being student parents. I think that's needed in terms of the accessibility of these services, and if not, if there is a barrier, moving into not a deficit mindset, but a growth mindset of how the college can address this"* **[Campus Leader]**
>
> *"So not having clear and consistent data on who our student parents are, the issues that they face, and the number of student parents that we have...That's going to create barriers in creating change and in really showcasing on campus*
>
> *"Reporting out the data is very helpful for me and my work. But my understanding is, it doesn't get to faculty..."* **[Campus Leader]**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to Strengthen Institutional Processes and Campus Culture to Enroll and Retain Student Parents

- Student Parent Data Collection and Dissemination
- Communication to Student Parents
- Family Friendly Campus Culture

Recommendations to Ensure Campus Services Meet the Needs of Student Parents

- Student Parent Centralized Resources and Point of Contact
- Housing and Finances
- Childcare Availability
- Mental Health Support

Recommendations to Improve Academic Experience to Promote Success of Student Parents

- Faculty Training and Support
- Courses and Class Policies

Recommendations to Strengthen Institutional Processes and Campus Culture to Enroll and Retain Student Parents

Student Parent Data Collection and Dissemination

San Francisco State University should enhance data collection on student-parents and their experiences to improve program effectiveness, guide resource allocation, and ensure transparency for all stakeholders.

- Data collection can increase visibility of student parents and bring more attention to the barriers they face in their academic careers

- Identifying students who are parents would give faculty and staff clarity on individuals who may need student-parent-focused resources

- Tracking the usage of on-campus resources that are aimed at supporting student parents can reveal the effectiveness of implemented programs and policies

- Effectively disseminating this data to faculty and staff would ensure that they have accurate knowledge of student parents and their needs

- Increasing inclusion of student-parent voices to ensure that communication of need is as accurate as possible

Communication to Student Parents

Campus communication with student parents must effectively meet them where they are, using accessible, multi-channel platforms like social media, newsletters, and email.

- Academic Senate Resolution #RS25-480, urges effective communication with student parents to increase priority registration and resources.
- The University, through leadership, should communicate priorities around student parents and make them visible in campus-wide messaging beyond self-reported parents.
- Building trust means extending communication to families, offering training for those who support student parents, and ensuring messages are clear, consistent, and culturally responsive.
- When student parents do not have to search for information, they can focus on thriving.

Family Friendly Campus Culture

San Francisco State University should recognize and support the student parent population by fostering a more family friendly environment, increasing collaboration between departments, and prioritizing transparency around resources regarding student parents.

- Marketing and reality need to align when it comes to finances and expectations for the student parent experience at SFSU.

- Increase visibility of the student parent population through specified training for faculty and staff, along with material that promotes their experience. (ex: Flyers, videos, and advertisements)

- Integrate multiple departments and groups at SFSU to support student parents.

- Community building recommendations

- Family-inclusive activities (ex: Student parent orientation, "bring your child to campus day", and campus playground)

Recommendations to Ensure Campus Services Meet the Needs of Student Parents

Student Parent Centralized Resources and Point of Contact
A centralized San Francisco State University Student Parent Center and dedicated, easily accessible web pages should be created to support student parents in navigating and using resources and make them more accessible on and off campus.

- Having a Student Parent advisor and/or liaison to assist in navigating campus resources, act as an intermediary between programs, and facilitate communication amongst programs, students, and faculty. A dedicated point person can provide student parents and faculty with clarity on who to contact for resources for the student parent population.

- Empowers faculty to be accurate and consistent by enabling a hub that navigates student parents to centralized resources.

- Create an easily accessible webpage that includes information and resources available for student parents on campus.

    - Resources and their locations on campus should be easily accessible on a digital map.

    - Develop an easy to navigate webpage and resource map that acts as a one stop hub for student parent support. This platform should offer clear information on academic support, mental health services, childcare options, financial aid, family housing, and other essential campus resources.

- Offer Peer to Peer mentorship program for student parents to help navigate the school system and create a community of support.

Housing and Finances
Dedicate equitable financial support and ensure effective outreach and transparency about financial aid opportunities for student parents including adjusted cost of attendance.

- Provide free or better subsidized family housing to reduce housing insecurity and financial stressors for student parents.

- Provide transparency and accessible information regarding cost of attendance, adjustments, family housing, and financial resources.

- Offer free or specialized parking for student parents in order to reduce transportation-related stress and finances.

- Provide equitable funding for programs like basic needs or emergency funds as a resource for student parents.

- Offer student parent-based scholarships to lessen the financial burden student parents face.

- Provide transparency on health insurance for student parents and their dependents.

Childcare Availability

San Francisco State University should expand childcare options, increase accessibility, and improve outreach to ensure student parents can fully engage in their academic experience.

- Capacity can be expanded by being able to care for more dependents at ECEC, increase business hours, and expand the age of eligibility.

- Provide assistance with off campus childcare through a list of available childcare facilities and childcare vouchers.

- Expand the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) to increase capacity and availability for student parents.

- Improve outreach and communication efforts to raise awareness of childcare resources.

- Implement more flexible childcare scheduling to better align with students' class times and academic demands.

- Provide access to reliable and consistent childcare services to reduce barriers to class attendance and academic performance.

Mental Health Support

SFSU should provide psychological support and tailored mental health workshops focused on topics such as time management, stress relief, and self-care to help student parents navigate academic and caregiving responsibilities.

- Offer mental health workshops centered on student parents, focusing on topics such as managing stress, balancing parenting and academic demands, time management, self-care, physical well-being, building self-compassion, and so on.

- Training mental health counselors to better understand the experiences of non-traditional students to help ensure they apply appropriate, responsive practices that effectively address the unique needs of parenting students.

- Provide flexible support to accommodate the diverse schedules and needs of student parents (in-person, virtual counseling, drop-in hours, peer-led group sessions).

- Destigmatize asking for help by creating a campus culture where seeking help or mental health support is seen as a normal and courageous step, not a sign of weakness or failure.

- Coordinate with family resource centers, basic needs programs, and financial aid staff to enable counselors to effectively connect student parents with the appropriate resources.

Recommendations to Improve Academic Experience to Promote Success of Student Parents

Faculty Training and Support
San Francisco State University should provide faculty training and support and to ensure they can provide equitable, consistent support of student parents in and outside the classroom.

- Training/workshops aimed to promote and aid student parents to improve knowledge among student parents on policies in the classroom.

- Training and keeping faculty updated on current/existing resources and policies through Center for Equity and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CEETL) to assist faculty in guiding student parents when asked for assistance.

- Training on programs and policies on how to support pregnant parents.

- Improving communication between student parents and faculty in accordance with Academic Senate Policies RS25-48.

- Improve on interdepartmental and programmatic communications.

Courses and Class Policies
To improve student parent success in the classroom, San Francisco State University should conduct more outreach about priority registration and create class policies to ensure consistent and equitable support of student parents. More online and evening courses should be available with priority for student parents.

- Implement standardized guidelines and policies to include and accommodate student parents' needs and schedules.

- Increase class availability including times, days, modalities to accommodate the schedules of student parents.
    - Times: Add more evening classes and weekend classes.
    - Offer more modalities including online and asynchronous formats.

- Align academic calendar with SFUSD academic calendar so student parent schedules align with their children in school.

- In accordance with [RS25-480](), promote priority registration for student parents to assist in creating a class schedule aligning with their parenting and job responsibilities.

APPENDIX A: Interview Instrument

Campus Leaders Interview Instrument

Thank you for meeting with me today.

My name is _____ and I am a graduate student at SFSU in the Public Health Department. I am working with a team of Master of Public Health students who are partnering with SF State Health Promotion and Wellness to conduct an assessment on the opportunities and challenges facing student parents at San Francisco State University. We hope to inform SF State's efforts to recruit and retain students who are parents. We are interviewing key campus leaders like you to learn more about efforts at SF State to support student parents and what could be done to strengthen this work.

This interview will take approximately 45 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary, and you may answer only those questions you want to answer. You may stop at any time during the course of the interview. Your answers will be kept confidential. We will only be reporting de-identified data, and in no way will what you say be linked to you.

Do you agree to participate in the interview?

Are you ok with me recording this conversation?

1. Please tell me a little bit about your current role at SF State.
    a. Probe: How long have you been in that position?

[Transition] To begin, we would like you to talk broadly about the student-parent experience.

2. What has been your experience working with student parents at SF State?
    a. How often do you work with student parents?
    b. Can you tell me about what stands out to you about engaging with student parents?
    c. Tell me about a memorable time you remember supporting a student parent. How did that experience go?

3. In what ways do you see that SF State supports student parents in their academic success?
    a. What about the campus community creates a welcoming environment for student parents?
    b. What is your sense of how student parents engage with campus resources that are aimed to support them?

4. What do you see as challenges experienced by SF State students who are also parents?
    a. How does this impact student success?
    b. How do you measure student success?

5. What do you see as the positive impact of having student parents enrolled at SF State?
    a. What do student parents contribute to our campus community?

[Transition] Now let's talk a bit about faculty support of student parents.

6. How would you describe faculty engagement with student parents?
    a. How can faculty help student parents succeed academically?
    b. What challenges do you think faculty experience in supporting student parents?

7. In what ways could SF State faculty better support student parents in class?
    a. What could faculty do in their classes to support student parents?
    b. What could SF State do to ensure faculty effectively support student parents?

[Transition] Now we would like to ask you about policies and programs implemented to support student parents at SF State.

8. To what extent do student parents use campus resources that support student parents?
    a. Why would students not engage with these campus resources?
    b. Are there any campus policies or practices you believe unintentionally create barriers for student parents?
    c. Can you share a time that you have ever felt any hesitancy in directing student parents to on-campus resources?
    d. In what ways can student parents provide feedback about campus resources?
    e. How does your department or program support student parents?'

9. In what ways could SF State create a family friendly campus?
    a. What additional strategies should be put in place to ensure retention for student parents?
    b. Who do you see as the people who should lead this issue on campus?

     c. If you were to develop a university policy for student parent success at SF State, what would it look like?

     d. How can different departments (e.g., academic affairs, counseling, childcare services) collaborate to support student parents?

10. What examples from other institutions do you think SFSU could use as a model for student parent support?

     a. Probe: What are success stories you have seen from other institutions?

[Closing Transition] As we are wrapping up, we have three final questions we'd like to ask.

11. What else would you like to know about the experience of student parents at SF State?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share?

13. Is there anyone else you recommend we talk to about this issue?

Thank you for your time and insights! We will be conducting more interviews through the middle of June. We will then bring together everything we heard, do data analysis, and create a final report for campus stakeholders. We look forward to sharing it with you towards the end of the summer.

Student Parent Interview Instrument

Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is _____ and I am a graduate student at SFSU in the Public Health Department. I am working with a team of Master of Public Health students who are partnering with SF State Health Promotion and Wellness to conduct an assessment on the opportunities and challenges facing student parents at San Francisco State University. We hope to inform SF State's efforts to recruit and retain students who are parents.

This interview will take approximately 45 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary, and you may answer questions you are comfortable with. You may stop at any time during the interview. Your answers will be kept confidential. We will only be reporting de-identified data; in no way will what you say be linked to you. If you choose to participate in this interview, you will receive a $15 gift card.

Do you agree to participate in the interview?

Are you ok with me recording this conversation?

> ***(*If yes, hit record and transcript*)***

1. What is your current year of study?
2. What is your student ID # (for gift card purposes)?
3. What is your race/ethnicity?
4. How old are you?
5. Please identify your parenting role
   a. (Examples: Mother, Father, Guardian, Caregiver)
6. How many dependents do you have?
   a. Would you like to share their ages?
7. What motivated you to go to school while you are parenting?

First, I would like to ask you what being a student parent at SF State is like.

8. Can you describe any challenges you face as a student parent at SF State?
   a. How have these challenges impacted your children or family?
   b. How do you balance school responsibilities and parenting?
   c. Can you describe an experience where you felt isolated or did not belong at SF State because of your parenting role?

9. What has been positive about being a parent enrolled at SF State?
   a. Can you share a positive experience you have had as a student parent at this university?

b. Can you describe an experience where you felt included or supported by any of your peers, faculty, or administration because of your parenting role?

10. What qualities or strengths has being a student parent helped you develop?
    a. In what ways has being a student parent helped you grow?
    b. What positive impact has going to school had on your family?

11. What do you wish others on campus understood about your experience as a student parent?
    a. What specific groups – like staff, professors, or peers – do you wish understood this better?

Next, I'm going to shift to asking you about resources and programs on campus.

Resources/Programs

12. In the chat, we will include a list of existing programs and policies for student parents at SF State. Which programs or policies at SF State specifically for parenting students have you used?

***Note Taker, help copy and paste this list onto the Zoom Chat
Priority Registration
Lactation Rooms
Breastfeeding Support
Title IX Support
Early Childhood Education Center
Discount at Kinder Care Learning (community childcare)
Family Study Room (Library)
Kid Kits (Library)
Parenting Resources Webpage on SFSU Website
Parenting Students newsletter
Financial Aid -- Cost of Attendance adjustment for child expenses
Health Promotion and Wellness Point Person (Karen Boyce)

      a. How did you find out about them?
      b. What was your experience using these resources? (get specifics about any used)
      c. How have these resources had an impact on your engagement in your academics?

d. Why did you not use these resources?
e. Do you have any recommendations about how these resources could be improved?

13. How would you like SF State to communicate with you and notify you about issues related to student parents, including policies and programs? (**Examples, if asked**: Website, email, text, phone)
    a. Do you want SF State to know that you are a student parent?
    b. How do you recommend SF State collect data about student parents?

14. What is one program or policy that SFSU could implement to support you in achieving your academic goals?
    a. **[If needed]** Feel free to list anything that comes to mind, regardless of feasibility, budget, or likelihood of implementation.
    b. How would this action make a difference for you and others like you?

I am going to move into closing with a couple of final questions.

<u>Closing</u>
15. If you were to meet a student parent who is starting at SFSU next year, what advice would you give them about navigating the transition to college as a student parent?
    a. What resources, strategies, or key support people would you recommend to them?

16. Do you happen to know other student-parents that we can reach out to for insight?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add about the student-parent experience that we did not ask?

Thank you for your time and insights! We will be conducting more interviews through the middle of June. We will then bring together everything we heard, do data analysis, and create a final report for campus stakeholders, including students. We look forward to sharing it with you towards the end of the summer.

APPENDIX B: SFSU and CSU Student Parent Resources

CA Student Parent Alliance
Student Parent Joy
CSU Pregnant and Parenting Students Initiative

Policies
AB2881

Services
Student Parent Resources at SFSU
Pregnant Student Rights
Wellness Map including
      Lactation Rooms & Diaper Changing Stations
Early Childhood Education Center
Library resources for families and children