

# University-Provided Childcare Focus of Forum Held at SWOSU

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The SWOSU Student Government Association recently held an informational forum on the feasibility of university-provided childcare on the Weatherford campus.

Guest speakers started with SWOSU student Shelby Sparkman of Quanah TX. Sparkman focused on the challenges that students with children face while working towards a degree. Sparkman began her collegiate career at SWOSU but had to put her studies on hold after just one semester because there were no availabilities at childcare centers in Weatherford. She returned to SWOSU when a childcare facility had an opening – more than a year after putting her name on a waiting list. Sparkman said there have been multiple instances when she must take her daughter to class because of childcare issues.

The next presenter was Coordinator of Academic Counseling Wendy Henson. Henson emphasized the benefits for faculty members having their children on campus as well as the benefits for students. She focused on the peace-of-mind that faculty, staff and students would experience knowing their children were being cared for on campus as well as knowing their children would not have to accompany their parents to class because they had childcare provided.

Department of Education Adjunct Instructor Carolene Jackson is the former director of the SWOSU Child Development Lab that closed in 1998. She said SWOSU DOE students served as instructors and other students gained field experience working with the children.

Opportunities for internships and studies would be afforded to multiple departments on campus including nursing, pharmacy and parks & recreation. Jackson also spoke about the numerous rules and regulations the center must meet but are attainable with collaboration between entities.

SWOSU Vice President of Administration and Finance Tom Fagan concluded the presentations speaking on the financial aspects of childcare. His analysis suggested a partnership with another entity or a student fee would be necessary to operate a facility. Building and play space on campus would also be issues.

During the question and answer period, audience members heard added insight from Weatherford YMCA Director Rex Outhier, Director of Weatherford Head Start Misty Carman, and SWOSU Department of Education Chair Dr. Ruth Boyd.