

Anna Bing Arnold Children's Center
Proposal for Associated Students, Inc.
Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Project Abstract

The Anna Bing Arnold Children's Center is a direct service child care and development program located on the campus of Cal State L.A. The Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and is operated by the University Auxiliary Services. The Children's Center provides child care services which enable student parents to attend the University.

Established in 1968 the Anna Bing Arnold Children's Center is operated primarily for use by the students of Cal State LA. The Center is licensed to provide education and care for 92 children daily and has enrolled 101 families this semester (spring 2023), some of whom share a full-time slot. Flexible scheduling reduced rates for students, and tuition assistance for low-income families provide support for student parents as they work to complete their education. Student parents on our waiting list are given first priority for enrollment.

The purpose of this proposal is to request \$140,779 to continue to provide enhanced child care services for Cal State L.A. students and to support the availability of child care spaces for low-income student families. ASI support is critical for the Center to continue to provide the quality of services that students expect and deserve. These services help provide the means for student parents to complete their education and secure jobs that will allow them to provide adequately for their families. At Cal State L.A. the Children's Center represents not only a survival tool for student-parents, but also a critical component of access to higher education.

Project Description

Cal State L.A. students founded the Anna Bing Arnold Children's Center in 1968 for the express purpose of providing child care for student parents. For the past 54 years the Associated Students, Inc. has provided support for the operation of the Children's Center. During this time the Center has increased capacity and funding for low-income parents, began a state funded food program and become accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. These are just a few of our achievements that demonstrate successful operation. Our largest measure of success is in the lives of the parents who have graduated from college because they found supportive, affordable child care, and in the healthy development of the children we have taught and cared for.

The Anna Bing Arnold Children's Center respectfully requests \$140,779 to continue to offer the level of services currently provided by the Center. The requested funding will be used to support the ongoing operation of the Center with an emphasis on the areas of program availability, program quality and program support for low-income student families. The target population for this project is Cal State L.A. student parents.

Objective I: *Provide child care services for Cal State L.A. student parents.*

The availability of affordable, quality child care while they are attending classes is essential for Cal State L.A. student parents. Child care availability lets student-parents make steady educational progress. For a family that is seeking financial self-sufficiency, affordable child care means not having to choose between the education they need to succeed and quality care for the children they love.

In an effort to assist parents in balancing their education, work and family life, the Center offers flexible and convenient child care services and gives Cal State L.A. student-parents first priority for enrollment. Student parents have used child care while attending school, work and study and represent approximately 52% of enrollment. The Center also serves Cal State L.A. alumni and the neighboring community, which comprise approximately 18% of enrollment, as well as faculty and staff, which account for 30% of enrollment.

The Center enrolls children from six months through preschool. We currently have a waiting list with 140 student families, 70% of which are low-income.

Objective II: *Maintain or enhance program quality.*

The quality of the child care program is critical to the success of the project outcome. Providing a safe, nurturing and enriched child care program reduces parental anxiety and stress, allowing for improved performance while attending college. A good program is also essential to the healthy development of the children we serve. Research shows that children who receive quality early care and education are more motivated and committed to school, and literature from brain research is confirming the strong influence of early care on intelligence, motivation, social skills and the overall success of the individual.

Factors that influence quality are good teacher/child ratios, the education and training of staff, and rate of staff turnover. The Children's Center sustains well-educated, consistent staff and excellent teacher/child ratios. Staff education levels are well above average, with all full time professional level

staff holding a minimum of a Bachelor's degree and Teacher Permits from the State of California. Teacher/child ratios meet all Title V requirements and teacher training is on-going. The quality of the program is further evidenced by the Center's accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Objective III: *Provide support for low-income student parents.*

Child care is a major expense for many families and additional help is needed to make it affordable for low-income families. Through a variety of state, federal and local sources, the Center is able to provide subsidized services to children of income-eligible students at little or no cost. By augmenting these resources with ASI funding we have maximized the impact of ASI's support. This year 90% of student families at the Center received free or low-cost child care. The remaining 10% of student families received child care at a 10% reduction in cost.

To provide further support for low-income families hot meals are provided for all children at the Center, free of charge. This objective is made possible with a continuing grant from the California Department of Education (CDE) and the support of the ASI. Again, by pairing resources we are able to stretch the impact of ASI funding. This year the CDE grant provided for 60% of the cost of the food program and ASI funding provided 2.5%. These combined sources make it possible to provide hot meals without an additional charge to parents. The meals we provide are exceptionally nutritious and, for some families, represent the only balanced meals their children may receive.

Objective IV: *Employment, education and training for Cal State L.A. students.*

The Children's Center not only directly benefits families and children through enhanced program services, it also indirectly benefits Cal State L.A. students by providing a model early care and education program where Child Development and Education majors have the opportunity to work, observe and study. ASI funding has improved the quality of the program that Cal State L.A. student's use for their training experiences. This widens the impact of ASI funding as future teachers graduate from our campus and use their experiences at the Children's Center as a model for their own teaching programs.

The Children's Center program provides both employment and educational opportunities for Cal State L.A. students. The Center employs an average of 40-50 part-time Child Development major's each semester as classroom teacher assistants. Many students work at the Center throughout their college years and describe their work as an important addition to their education and campus life. Eighteen of our current fulltime professional staff are graduates of Cal State L.A.

Additionally, the Children's Center is an excellent training facility for future teachers.

Approximately 60 students annually complete their training as practicum and/or interns at the Children's Center. The Center also serves as an observation and research site for up to 50 additional students from a variety of departments and hosts many additional visitors from the campus and community. ASI funds contribute to the quality of the program overall, and thus indirectly impact all students who work, or train at the Center, by supporting ratios which allow ABACC faculty to work directly with students completing fieldwork at the Center. Students from the following Cal State LA departments/disciplines utilize Anna Bing Arnold Children's Center as a field/lab site:

- Child and Family Studies
- Communication Disorders
- Physical Education (Kinesiology)
- Charter School of Education

The Children's Center has a long history of serving Cal State L.A. students and of using every available resource to maximize that service. We have actively sought out and attained funding from a variety of sources in order to provide the best quality service at the lowest possible price. Regardless of funding source, Cal State L.A. students are always given first priority for enrollment. ASI funding has been, and will continue to be, a cornerstone of the Center's program – while grants from other agencies help to further enhance our services. These additional sources of funding are:

- \$500,000-California Department Social Services – General Child Care Grant (targets low-income families)
- \$400,000-California Department of Education – CA State Preschool Grant (targets low-income families)
- \$60,000-California Department of Education – Child Care Food Program Grant
- \$80,000- Cal State LA IRA
- \$40,000- Cal State LA Lottery Funds

ASI funding constitutes about 7% of the Children's Center Operational Budget. Grants for low-income students make-up 60% of funding, parent fees 28% and the General Fund and IRA/Lottery Funds through constitute the remaining 5%.

The Children's Center program clearly fits with the ASI mission of, *“supporting child day care centers for children of students of the campus”*. The Center is open to all students and gives student parents first priority for use. As a long-standing program, founded and supported by students, the Children's Center

has demonstrated a commitment to serving student parents, expanding and changing as the needs of student parents have grown and providing the best possible program within available means.

Marketing and Outreach

The Children's Center recognizes the enormous positive impact that ASI funding has on the quality and cost of the program. As a result of this the ASI is credited in the Center's brochure and web site and in every public affairs piece about the Center, and in all campus orientation programs as well as all parent orientation programs conducted at the Center. We are proud of the history of student involvement with the Center and believe that students have every right to be informed of, and take pride in, their support of our excellent program.

We always welcome ASI participation. ASI may become involved in activities that support the families at our center. Some possible events to participate in are: Saturday work days, Spring Festival or a book drive for children's books.

Financial Plan

ASI funding is used to support all aspects of the Children's Center operation. ASI funding is critical to each area of the Center's operation. There is no area of low priority. We offer a program of substantive quality without excess.

We are requesting \$140,779 for this proposal. The requested amount is consistent with funding amounts which were approved by student referendum. Our preferred timeline for funding would be to receive the funds over two semesters in relatively equal distributions. This timeline is consistent with past years funding plans.

Any reduction in funding from ASI would further burden the Center and would be extremely detrimental to the program. Any reductions would require that we lay off staff, reduce program offerings and significantly raise rates. As is evident from the attached budget, ASI funding supports all areas of the Children's Center operation. Without this support the program would be forced to cut services program wide, could not support fieldwork students to the level needed for effective mentoring, and increase child care tuition rates drastically.

Program Evaluation and Quality Control

The Children's Center assures program quality in a number of ways, the first of which is by maintaining our status as an accredited program. Accreditation is not a requirement of our license but rather an honor that is conferred upon programs that meet the high standards accreditation requires. Only 8-10% of all Centers in the U.S. have NAEYC accreditation. We have been accredited by the

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 1992. By using the NAEYC accreditation self-study guidelines as an evaluative tool to assess the effectiveness of the program the Center measures qualitative gains. These guidelines provide a method for looking closely at the child development program, environment, health and safety, staff development, parent needs, and administration. The program has maintained accreditation status until 2027 and accreditation is active for a five-year period. The Center will continue to maintain accreditation status by submitting an annual internal review and external review every fifth year. The annual internal review consists of a self-study using the Academy guidelines followed up with a written report to the Academy Accreditation Board. The results of the self-study will be used to modify the program where need is indicated.

Additionally, every four to six years the program is subject to a “Contract Monitoring Review” by the California Department of Education. This review requires a team comprised of staff, parents and an outside evaluator to review documents, talk with parents, and observe and interview staff. The assessment provides information regarding the effectiveness of our program as well as a means for discovering areas needing change. The results of this evaluation are shared with staff and parents and the information is used to implement changes and set future goals. The Center completed a Contract Monitoring Review in January 2023 and was commended on program administration and quality.

The Center further maintains annual records to account for Center usage by Cal State L.A. students and student parents. These statistics verify the amount of student use as well as indicate future student need. The statistics that are maintained by the Center are used in compiling reports to the ASI. The Center has consistently met ASI reporting requirements in a timely and thorough manner.

The Center also tracks student need by our waiting list. Most semesters there are over 300 families waiting to receive child care services demonstrating the profound need for child care services at Cal State L.A.

The contact person for this proposal is James Goodrich, Children’s Center Director at ext. 3-2470.