



# Cornell University

David J. Skorton  
*President*

To: Professor William Fry, Dean of Faculty  
Professor Charles Walcott, Chair, University Assembly

From: David Skorton *David*

Date: November 8, 2010

Re: Cornell Child Care Center

I write in response to the resolutions passed by the Faculty Senate and the University Assembly regarding the future management and oversight of the Cornell Child Care Center. I appreciate the enormous effort that the Senate and Assembly put into deliberations concerning this important campus service.

Before making my decisions, I reviewed carefully:

1. the original discussion in the Faculty Senate that led to the formation of the ad hoc committee;
2. the report of the ad hoc faculty committee;
3. the Faculty Senate resolution;
4. a comprehensive report from our Division of Human Resources that responds to and builds upon the faculty report and resolution;
5. correspondence to me from Bright Horizons senior management;
6. many unsolicited emails and letters from faculty, staff, student and postdoctoral colleagues who are parents with children at the center;
7. a petition signed by over 100 parents of children at the CCCC;
8. a petition signed by over 30 teachers and staff from the CCCC; and
9. the University Assembly resolution.

In addition to these written documents, I received numerous verbal comments and met at their request with several faculty whose children are currently at the center.

Based on this information and on my own relevant experience, I have come to the following conclusions:

1. The Center was started with carefully considered plans and goals but opened needing to care for a larger number of children than originally anticipated.
2. The CCCC had significant problems early in its operation.
3. These problems were recognized by Bright Horizons, by the teaching staff and by our professional colleagues in HR.
4. Steady and substantial improvements have been achieved in the operation of the CCCC, particularly since January of 2010.
5. At this point, the great preponderance of parental opinion is on the side of continuity of the Bright Horizons relationship and continuation of the trajectory of improvements that has been achieved.

I must share candidly one other, overarching conclusion about the tenor of the discussion that has ensued across the campus. I understand that people of goodwill differ, at times profoundly, about what to do and that this specific issue elicits strong emotions. I ask that, following my decisions, we go forward in a spirit of collegiality and civility, with the conviction that all of us are committed to the best possible care for the children in the CCCC. The parents in the CCCC are committed to the well being of their children and have been responsible in their decisions to have their children in our Center. I am persuaded that ours is a good center and is getting even better. My personal goal is that the CCCC will be widely recognized as an excellent program, serving with distinction and professionalism the needs of our campus community. I believe we are on our way to achieving that aspiration. As in all of the other decisions we have shared in the last two years, the campus now needs to come together.

With that context, I have decided the following:

1. We will continue the current contract with Bright Horizons; the current contract is a five-year agreement, going through August of 2013.
2. I will establish a high-level advisory group, comprising faculty, staff, students and postdoctoral associates. The group will meet with me twice a year and will advise on such issues as child care, elder care and other family-related, work-life matters. This new group will not displace nor be linked to any other extant committees but will be advisory to the president of the university. It will not be charged with advising the CCCC and will not have a formal role related to the Center. Its input, however, will be taken very seriously by me and by those senior staff responsible for all functions related to work-life issues.
3. The provost and I will sequester up to 10 slots to be used for specific faculty or staff recruitment or retention purposes. If a particular recruitment or retention situation requires that places be held vacant at the Center, then the university general budget will support those slots so that the Center revenue does not suffer.

You may feel free to share this letter with the Senate, Assembly or anyone else you think appropriate.

Thank you again for your partnership in this important discussion.

cc: Provost Kent Fuchs