

Childcare Challenges at Purdue: A Faculty Perspective

Purdue University Senate

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Overview

Impending closure of Purdue University Early Care and Education Center (PUECEC)

- **Demand remains robust. Wait lists remain long.**
- **High-quality childcare is critical to achieving Purdue's strategic goals**
 - **Recruit and retain top talent**
 - **Remain competitive with top-5 public universities and Big10 peers**
- **Our ask: ensure the PUECEC remains open after May 2026**
 - **Increase subsidies to replace cuts in state/federal funding**
 - **Engage with Day Early Learning and/or proactively seek out vendors**

PUECEC History

- **Opened in 2016 under Mitch Daniels**

“The facility will represent a 63 percent increase in the campus' full-time child care capacity slots, bringing Purdue to the midpoint of child care capacity available at other Big Ten and peer institutions. The additional capacity is expected to improve the University's reputation as a family-friendly work environment.”

- **2016 – 2021: operated by KinderCare Learning Centers, LLC**
- **2021: Purdue's Procurement process (five proposals, three finalists) selects Early Learning Indiana as operator for PUECEC and new Patty Jischke ECEC**
- **2021 – 2025: ELI operates both PUECEC and PJECEC**

Childcare at Purdue Today

Three Purdue-affiliated childcare centers currently operating:

- Miller Center (100 spots, on campus at Fowler House)
- Patty Jischke ECEC (162 spots, off campus near Purdue Research Park)
- Purdue University ECEC (120 spots, on campus next to Horticulture Park)

Closing PUECEC: loss of around **one-third** of Purdue's childcare capacity.

PUECEC Closure

Closure announced Jan 2026, effective April/May 2026

- **PUECEC will merge with PJECEC**
- **Reconfigure PJECEC to accommodate influx**

Stated Reasons: Declining demand and cuts in state/federal funding

- **Wait list has shrunk**
- **PUECEC operating at ~75% capacity**

Faculty Caregivers' Perspective

Demand still exceeds supply

- **Wait list remains substantial, especially at younger ages**
- **Reduced operating capacity partially due to teacher shortage**

Achieving Purdue's strategic goals *requires* keeping PUECEC open

- **Essential to recruiting/retaining top talent, including moveable dream hires**
- **Closure would severely reduce our standing in the Big 10**
- **Child care is essential to faculty, staff, and student success**

Continued Demand: Wait Lists

Purdue childcare centers continue to have long wait lists

- **Infant, toddler ages: Wait list > 60 children**
- **Wait list for younger children (birth – 24 months) has been consistently “healthy”**

Causes of reduced operating capacity

- **Temporary drop after December 2024 turnover at PUECEC**
- **Exacerbated by teacher shortages and cuts to state funding/vouchers**

Continued Demand: Market Studies

Multiple recent studies confirm continued demand:

Purdue University, June 2024

- Resulted in addition of 40 new slots

West Lafayette, July 2024

- “shortage of between 75 and 125 ECE slots”

Continued Demand: Testimonials

Current Tenure-Track Assistant Professor:

“My [spouse] and I had registered for the daycare wait list in March 2025, and have been waiting for a spot for nearly 11 months. I called them after [child] was born...and their response was: `If you've registered, don't call us, we'll call you.' This morning, I checked the current status of [child]'s registration and the estimated wait time is 6 - 12 months. How on earth are they closing one of the centers for lack of enrollment, when we haven't heard from them and urgently would like a spot?”

Continued Demand: Testimonials

Current Tenure-Track Assistant Professor:

“We’ve been on the waitlists for both centers run by Day Early Learning since early 2025, and we haven't heard anything from either site since then.”

Childcare and Purdue's Strategic Goals

President Chiang: “[C]hild care for children under the age of six, as well as after-school care for elementary and intermediate school children, are essential for the productivity, retention and recruiting of talents with young families at our university.”

Provost Wolfe: “The availability of high-quality childcare is crucial to our goal of attracting and retaining the best and brightest here in our campus and community.”

Child Care in the Big10

Big10 University	On-Campus Childcare Slots
UCLA	548
Michigan (Ann Arbor)	540
USC	469
Ohio State (Columbus)	435
Purdue (West Lafayette) - with PUECEC	378
Washington (Seattle)	334
Northwestern (Evanston)	308
Penn State (University Park)	300
Michigan State (East Lansing)	296
Nebraska (Lincoln)	286
Wisconsin-Madison	282
Purdue (West Lafayette) - without PUECEC	258
Maryland (College Park)	244
Oregon (Eugene)	237
Indiana (Bloomington)	210
Minnesota (Twin Cities)	163
Illinois (Urbana - Champaign)	149
Iowa (Iowa City)	130
Rutgers (New Brunswick)	120

After a decade-long effort, Purdue has become one of the **top-five** family-friendly institutions in the Big 10.

- Closing PUECEC would drop us into the **bottom half**.
*(Bottom of table for on-campus care.)

Only top-5 public universities in Big 10 (USNWR)

- UCLA (#2)
- Michigan (#3)

Our Asks

Ensure uninterrupted operation of PUECEC

- 1) Increase subsidies/support as needed to maintain operations**
- 2) Explore ways to increase revenue**
 - Fundraising**
 - Purdue for Life, Victories & Heroes, Renaming center**
 - Partnerships with other entities/units to reduce operating expenses**
- 3) If necessary, proactively seek out alternative providers (e.g. KinderCare, Bright Horizons etc)**