December 2, 2022

**Lactation Space Working Group**

**Kaamilyah Abdullah-Span, *Co-Chair*** Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

**Kasey Umland, *Co-Chair*** Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

**Elle Alrabiah** College of Engineering

**Amira Al-Mutairi** College of Education

**Brian Bundren** Office of the Provost

**Courtney Evans** Illinois International

**Katie Harmon** Office of the Dean of Students

**Lauren Karplus** College of ACES

**Allison Kushner** Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

**Kathryn Mosiman** College of ACES

**Subhashini Srinivasan** Institute for Genomic Biology

**Danielle Fleenor, *ex officio*** Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Dear Colleagues:

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends nursing mothers breastfeed for a minimum of one year when possible.[[1]](#footnote-1) Lactation spaces support families and working mothers, and by extension, the organizations where they work and study by reducing employee and student departures and absenteeism and by increasing morale and productivity. The availability of employer and school-provided lactation spaces minimize the need for a nursing parent to have to decide between leaving the workforce or school in favor of continuing to breastfeed child(ren) or potentially prematurely terminating breastfeeding.[[2]](#footnote-2) For many nursing parents who return to work or school after a leave and desire to continue breastfeeding, finding a private, secure, and adequately equipped space to express milk at work or between classes is difficult. Additionally, identifying a suitable lactation space must be done well in advance of returning from leave and requires undergoing a process to find space. For working mothers, it also means establishing a semi-formal to formal agreement between the employee and supervisor to allow the employee the time and space to pump.

At Illinois, we are required to reasonably accommodate nursing mothers who wish to express milk; however, employees must invoke the [Nursing Mothers in the Workplace Policy](https://cam.illinois.edu/policies/hr-49/) and undergo a [process](https://oae.illinois.edu/our-services/accessibility-and-accommodations/) to receive such accommodations, and students who need to pump between classes must try to find a lactation room in close proximity to their classes. In an effort to proactively create a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable campus for lactating faculty, staff, and students, there is a need to establish more publicly available lactation spaces on campus. Doing so reduces some of the burden on parents who are breastfeeding amidst returning to work or pursuing a degree program.

This working group will review the work and recommendations of the informal working group, dubbed LacNation, that convened in 2019-20 with the intent of calling attention to the lack of publicly available lactation spaces on campus. This working group will resume and expand on the laudable efforts of those faculty and staff to achieve the following:

* Identify and confirm existing lactation spaces
* Assess feasibility of increasing lactation spaces, identify potential locations, and the process for establishing new lactation spaces.
* Develop a lactation space policy.
* Develop protocol to regularly review known spaces and assess for compliance with the Nursing Mothers in the Workplace Policy and the lactation space policy (to be developed).
* Determine required and desired equipment and who assumes responsibility for purchasing and maintaining equipment.
* Identify web space/app to maintain list of lactation spaces and other relevant information (public or departmental use only, online reservation system, lactation space policy, applicable federal and state laws and other guidance).
* Develop lactation space use guidelines (reservation, personal use expectations, reporting issues, etc.)

Kaamilyah Abdullah-Span and Kasey Umland will co-chair chair the working group. The group will meet monthly beginning in December and for the duration of the spring semester. The working group shall submit a status report reflecting its progress, noting any challenges or barriers to its work, and its recommendations for future action and implementation by May 1, 2023.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to doing this important work for the campus. Joan Wingo will contact you shortly to schedule meetings for the academic year.

Sincerely,

Text

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Gioconda Guerra Pérez, PhD

Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity

Cc: Jim Hintz, PhD

Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success, Inclusion and Belonging

1. Arthur I. Eidelman,A., Schanler, R. Johnston, M., Landers, S., Noble, L., Szucs, K. Viehmann, L. (2012) *Pediatrics*. 129(3). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-3552>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau. (2008). *The Business Case for Breastfeeding: Steps for Creating a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite.* [Pamphlet] Retrieved <https://owh-wh-d9-dev.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/documents/bcfb_business-case-for-breastfeeding-for-business-managers.pdf>; see also, U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2013). *Supporting the Academic Success of*

   *Pregnant and Parenting Students*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)