

## What to Expect When You're Expecting @ Cal: a guide for new student parents!

As a new or expecting parent at Cal, you can feel reassured that previous generations of student parents have successfully navigated this experience, and have left a supportive legacy of resources, policies, services and strategies for academic achievement that you can make use of, contribute to and pass along to future student parents.

- 1) Expect to find a supportive community at the Student Parent Program
- 2) Expect to revamp your thinking about study strategies and course workload
- 3) Expect to “learn to ask” for what you need, like accommodations from graduate student instructors (GSIs) and faculty... and expect to go to their office hours
- 4) Expect to know more about financial aid than you ever imagined possible
- 5) Expect to revise your time management strategies to include practically every academic and financial aid deadline Cal has to offer
- 6) Expect to take stress reduction techniques to a whole new level
- 7) Expect to graduate with “Parenting” as your double or triple major!

**Here's the beginning reading list for Pregnancy and New Parenthood 101:**  
(a crash course in the essential information and tips you need to know)

### Square one:

University of California non-discrimination policies list **pregnancy/childbirth and medical conditions related thereto**, as protected from discrimination in access to and participation in all University programs and activities. Federal law, Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972), is the source of the prohibition of discrimination based on sex/gender in schools, colleges and universities receiving federal funding. Recent publications from the National Women's Law Center (also available at the Student Parent Program), provide guidance on issues such as excused absences and academic accommodations:

<http://www.nwlc.org/resource/pregnant-and-parenting-students-rights-faqs-college-and-graduate-students>

## Square Two:

These are the key questions you will want to have clear answers to, as you decide how to plan for completing your degree taking into account the birth of a new baby.

### **1) Can I enroll in classes if I'm expecting or have a due date during the academic term? Can I stay in school with academic accommodations to allow me to complete my classes?**

Yes, you definitely can continue in school, however for your own sanity/well-being you may want to plan to take a minimum course load of 6-8 units. You can consult Student Parent Program advisors about requesting approval for a reduced course load from your specific college. The College of Letters and Sciences and the College of Natural Resources each have specific forms to request a reduced course load due to parenting. Other colleges (Business, Chemistry, Engineering and Environmental Design) consider requests on a case-by-case basis.

You will need to directly request that an individual professor, instructor and/or GSI make the same forms of accommodation available to you, as for any student with a temporary disability, for example due to injury, surgery or prolonged illness (such as make up assignments and alternate dates for test-taking or deadline extensions).

Title IX **explicitly requires that absences due to pregnancy and any related conditions be excused**, which may not be information that most faculty or GSIs are aware of. Your instructors may also expect you to provide them with an accommodation letter from the Disabled Student's Program (DSP), however, this is the current stated DSP policy from the Disabled Students' Program Handbook-v.12/07.

“Academic Adjustments for Pregnancy: The campus Disabled Students Program (DSP) does not issue a Letter of Accommodation for a pregnant student unless there are special medical complications (since a “normal” pregnancy is not considered a disability). In most cases symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, indigestion, dizziness, swollen legs and ankles, and frequent urination are considered routine symptoms and not a disability.”

“It should be noted that even pregnant students who do not have a disability may nevertheless need academic adjustments to be made by a course instructor to ensure that the University treats all students equally, regardless of gender. Students with routine pregnancy symptoms should first discuss their academic modification needs with their instructors. If this approach presents difficulties or leads to an unsatisfactory response, the student has the option to bring concerns to the Campus Climate and Compliance Office that handles Title IX matters.”

The Title IX Officer is located in Berkeley's Campus Climate and Compliance Office. The current website is silent as to issues of pregnancy/childbirth, and there is no written guidance for students or faculty concerning academic modifications that

would meet non-discrimination requirements for students who are pregnant or who give birth while fulfilling their course requirements. You may need to seek information or guidance by meeting with the Title IX compliance officer:

Denise W. Oldham, Title IX/Title VI Compliance Officer

contact information: [dwoldham@berkeley.edu](mailto:dwoldham@berkeley.edu); (510) 643-7985

**2) Can I drop a class, request an incomplete grade, withdraw from all classes during the semester if needed, or stop-out for a semester or more, and still return to Berkeley in good standing in a future semester or academic year?**

**Yes, but like everything in a large bureaucracy, it's really complicated!** You will need to study the administrative terminology, rules and deadlines to decide what works best for your situation. And be sure to talk with an academic advisor in your college to be sure that the steps to take, deadline dates and forms required are all correct! The information below applies to the College of Letters and Sciences, but may be applicable to all colleges (check with your College advisor for alternate policies).

You will want to read about all these policies, and obtain any needed forms at the L&S Advising web site: <http://ls-advise.berkeley.edu/registration/schedule.html>

**Dropping a class before the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> week of classes** only requires a transaction on Tele-bears (exception is for impacted/Early Drop Deadline classes which must be dropped by the Friday of the second week of classes). So you have time to assess your ability to meet each course's requirements and to discuss your need for any academic accommodations with the instructor. As long as you request approval for a reduced course load by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> week, and retain at least 6 units for the semester, you will be fine with college and financial aid requirements. Realistic planning at this stage prevents any of the other scenarios below from needing to be implemented... with no worries that this appears on your transcript!

**Dropping a class after the 5<sup>th</sup> week deadline** requires a detailed petition with documentation of extenuating circumstances beyond your control, which have directly impacted your performance in a specific course. This is a good thing to avoid needing to do if at all possible! But there can be unanticipated events associated with pregnancy and childbirth, so this process may be a needed option. <http://ls-advise.berkeley.edu/fp/73ExceptionalScheduleChange.pdf>

**Requesting an incomplete grade in one or more classes:** This is an agreement developed between you and a course instructor, when you are unable to complete some of the requirements for a grade, prior to the end of the semester. It allows you to complete agreed upon assignments by the end of the following academic semester. Not all instructors grant incompletes, and the requirements to complete the class will depend on your individual circumstances and the instructor's expectations. Be sure to read closely the information at this link about the specific forms and deadlines that apply:

<http://ls-advise.berkeley.edu/registration/incomplete.html>

**Withdrawal from all classes during the semester:** You would be well advised to meet with an advisor in your college to consider all the options and ramifications of withdrawing from the semester. A withdrawal during the academic semester is processed electronically by the college, once you have notified an advisor.

Review the information at this link if you are considering this option:

<http://ls-advise.berkeley.edu/registration/withdrawal.html>

If you are withdrawing for medical reasons, you can contact [University Health Services](#) at the Tang Center, 2222 Bancroft Way, after notifying your adviser.

If you have a student loan, you are required to have an exit interview at the [Billing and Payment Services](#), 192 University Hall. **Depending on the timing, i.e. if you withdraw before the 60% point in the semester, you will be required to pay back a portion of your financial aid.** After this point in time, you won't be subject to repayment. However, any semester you begin and then withdraw from, counts toward the time limit on number of years of eligibility to receive aid.

**Semester out rule for withdrawal late in the semester:** If you withdraw from all classes after the 8<sup>th</sup> week of the semester, you will be subject to this rule (to allow time for the situation that caused you to withdraw to be resolved). The need to take a semester out may or may not be relevant to your situation, and **this requirement can be reviewed and potentially waived by an L&S Advisor.**

**Choosing not to register for a semester or more,** i.e. stopping out or taking a break from being a student. If you do not wish to attend the University for a semester and instruction has not yet begun, you can formally request a cancellation of your registration for the upcoming semester. (If instruction has already begun and you find it necessary to stop attending classes, the withdrawal process and rules apply). You can cancel your registration by [Tele-BEARS](#) or by notifying the Office of the Registrar in writing **before the first day of instruction for the semester.** You can also go to your college or school dean's office or the [Office of the Registrar](#), Student Services, 120 Sproul Hall, to have your cancellation processed electronically. Any financial aid paid out must be repaid but registration fees will be refunded, if you cancel your registration prior to the start of instruction/classes. If you don't register for a semester, it isn't included in the time limits for financial aid eligibility.

**Once you are a Berkeley student, if you leave in good academic standing you can expect to be readmitted (see the deadlines on the admissions web site for filing a readmission application for each semester). It won't matter if you apply for re-admission after a semester out or after 32 years (the current returning student parent record)**

**Readmission: Who needs to apply?** Undergraduate students who:

- Formally withdrew from the University
- Were not registered for one or more semesters

[Readmit application submission deadlines:](#) To resume your studies after withdrawing from a semester, or after being not registered for one or more semesters, you'll need to file an "[Application for Readmission](#)" at the Office of Undergraduate Advising or the Office of Undergraduate Admissions by **June 1 for the fall semester and November 1 for the spring semester**. The college treats these as very "firm deadlines" so you should begin the process of readmission as early as possible. Students returning to the College of **Letters and Science** will find a detailed checklist and set of requirements: [click on this link](#)

**Retro-active withdrawal from a prior semester:** if you toughed it out through impossible circumstances, or walked away in the middle of a prior semester because you didn't realize that you might have implemented one of the above options, (and therefore may find yourself on academic probation or even subject to academic dismissal), you can make an appointment to see an L&S Dean, to discuss your situation. You may be able to provide documentation of extenuating circumstances to be considered for a retro-active drop of one or more courses if there is a connection between your grades and pregnancy, childbirth, or other serious personal challenges that occurred during this time (for example divorce, separation, custody dispute, domestic violence, need to relocate, need to work extensive hours).

### **3) What if I am pregnant or have just given birth at the point of my admission to Berkeley, and I want to wait to begin my first semester at Cal?**

This happens more than you would expect! You should accept your offer of admissions (submit the on-line statement of intent to register), and pay at least the first installment of your tuition and register for at least one class, even though you do not plan to attend. Then on the first day that classes begin, but not before, come into your college office (L&S or one of the X other colleges) to withdraw from the University for that semester. You should receive a refund of most if not all of your first payment of tuition/fees. To be able to start school in a subsequent semester, you would then need to follow the guidelines for re-admission after an absence. If you do not accept your admission offer and don't register and then cancel your registration before the first day of instruction (check that calendar carefully) you would have to re-apply to the University of California again the following year as a new Transfer or Freshman applicant (with no guarantee of being selected).

### **4) How will academic decisions related to pregnancy and childbirth affect my financial aid eligibility and access to grant awards.**

As long as you are aware of the relevant policies, required forms and the timing of deadlines (study for these like a final exam) you will be able to continue to receive full financial aid. These are key things you'll need to take into account:

- **Reduced course load:** as long as you enroll in a minimum of 6 units, you will be offered the same total amount of grant and loan funding. Your financial aid funding from several sources may need to be pro-rated (reduced) if you are enrolled in under 12 units. However Berkeley's financial aid policy is to replace that reduced amount (at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> week enrollment period)

with equalizing grants from other grant sources. So the bottom line is that you will have access to the same total amount of grants and loans during any semester in which you take an approved reduced course load.

- **Withdrawal from the University during the semester:** you will need to repay a portion of the financial aid you have received if you withdraw prior to the 60% point of the semester. If you are **enrolled in and attending** classes after this pivotal date, and withdraw at a later point, you will be allowed to keep the aid you have received up until that point. The financial aid office publishes these specific dates and provides excellent guidance at: <http://students.berkeley.edu/finaid/undergraduates/withdrawal.htm>

**Bottom line, don't withdraw owing back financial aid!** It will need to be repaid before you can be considered for re-admission in a future semester.

**Satisfactory Academic Progress:** students who meet the requirements for need based financial aid are eligible to receive aid for up to a total of 5 years as an undergraduate: 3 years as a Junior Transfer, or 5 years as a Freshman admit. There is a different required rate of progress for students who have received a disabled student designation, so see a Disabled Students Program counselor and a financial aid advisor to map out the required rate of unit completion that applies to you.

In addition to a GPA requirement (at least a 2.0) you must accumulate a certain number of units by the end of each year to remain eligible for financial aid. The chart below shows the number of units you must have completed by the end of each academic year to maintain your eligibility in subsequent years. If you are below these totals at the end of the academic year (after summer session units are added), or if you will not have sufficient units to graduate before the end of the 3 or 5 year time limit, you would need to file a Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal (SAP). SAP appeals have generally been approved in situations where pregnancy, childbirth and new parenting have slowed progress in meeting the unit threshold, or created the need to extend eligibility beyond the time limits. Semesters that you stop out/don't enroll don't count toward the total years of financial aid eligibility. However any semester that you enroll and then withdraw from school, is included.

Year	1	2	3	4	5
Number of units	24	48	72	96	120

As a rule, you'll want to complete at least 24 units a year, including the Fall and Spring semesters, plus summer session enrollment (a minimum of six units) if needed to reach 24.

### Square Three:

#### **Financial Aid information relevant to new Student Parents:**

This is an introduction to the steps you may need to take to revise your financial aid eligibility if you, or your spouse/partner, are expecting a baby during the current, or upcoming, academic year (based on a Fall semester beginning date in August, and a Spring semester ending date in June).

##### 1) Revise your FAFSA:

- Go to <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov> and add a dependent to your application for the current academic year, if you are a student mom-to-be or add a dependent for academic year the baby will be born, if you are a student dad-to-be. Moms can provide a doctor's note/letter confirming your current pregnancy. Dads will need to provide a birth certificate after the baby is born.
- Revisions to your FAFSA can be done at anytime during the academic year

##### 2) Complete the UC Berkeley Financial Aid Form for Independent Students:

- This form will change your student status from dependent (receiving financial aid based on your parent's income) to independent (based on having your own dependent child, and based on your own income)
- If you are over 25 years old, you are married, or you have other children you do not have to fill out this form, as your status is already Independent.
- A link to this form may be available thorough you're my Fin Aid, or copies are available at the Student Parent Program

3) If you are already receiving need-based financial aid (Pell and/or Cal grant), you may be eligible for an additional student parent grant of up to \$8,000

- \$4000 each semester, funded in ten \$800 monthly payments

4) To receive a parent grant, you may also need to adjust your current student budget by filing a student budget appeal, for additional allowable educational expenses. You may also be able to include allowable family related expenses by completing a more detailed "student parent addendum", available at the Student Parent Program, along with peer interns to guide you through the process.

Once you've received any additional grant aid, the items approved in your budget appeal will be covered by an offer of direct student loans (which can also be converted to work study earnings). If you have costs over the budget amount provided in your initial aid package, you can add on those costs in these areas:

- Rent and utilities
- Transportation to and from school
- A computer purchase
- Visits/travel to visit your family twice during the school year
- Medical/Dental Expenses
- Childcare Expenses
- Special Books/Supplies
- Relocating expenses, to move during your first year to come to school

Depending on your income, you may also be eligible to include additional family related expenses in the “Student Parent Budget Addendum” which can include:

- Cost of food for family members
- Additional transportation costs (car insurance, repairs, gas)
- Cost for children to make two visits to immediate family
- Medical/dental expenses for children
- Clothing and personal expenses for children

5) If there has been, or will be, a reduction in your family income (your own income or a spouse if married) since you completed your FAFSA for the current academic year, you may consider filing a that would lower your expected student/family contribution (EFC), you may Your Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) is based on last years tax information. This can be lowered or you may not have an EFC based on this years income change. Even if your EFC is \$0 it is still a good idea to file the appeal because it may qualify you for the Student Parent Budget Addendum.

**It’s okay to ask for information and assistance!** There is a **student parent peer advisor** who assists with understanding, developing and faxing budget appeals to meet all applicable deadlines. There is also a specific **financial aid counselor who serves as a liaison** to the Student Parent Program. She can provide feedback on situations that may not fit conventional financial aid eligibility guidelines.

#### Square Four:

**There is still so much more to learn, and we haven’t even gotten to the part about being a parent!** To get there, you may need to enroll in the on-going Student Parent courses, which you can even take more than once, with or without academic credit, until you figure this all out, or graduate, whichever comes first!

Once Upon a University (for newbies, offered in Fall only)

It Takes a Village (offered Fall and Spring) and

Beyond the Village (offered Fall and Spring)

Student Parent Program staff and peer advisors can provide information and applications for additional resources that you may need to understand and access in your time as a student parent at Cal, including:

Activities and Resources for Parents and Families

Targeted Scholarships and Undergraduate Research Opportunities

Applying for/moving to Family Housing/applying for housing subsidy

Finding/qualifying for subsidized or affordable childcare and school age programs

Health insurance options for yourself and your dependents

Eligibility and documentation for CalWorks/Food Stamps/Medi-cal

..... and more!