



February 1, 2004

Charles Spiridon  
Dean of Human Resources  
WCSU

Dear Charles:

We are joining together to respond to your e-mail dated January 20, 2004 entitled "Children and Pets at Work."

In our view there are two central problems with the "no dogs or children allowed memo," outside of its unenforceability and insensitivity to parents (particularly single ones) and others (unless, of course, your office wishes to become the Pied Piper and go office to office chasing down rats and small children). First of all, while bringing children (or pets) to school is generally not prudent (although a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* article suggests that it does humanize the environment a bit), there are those situations where it is inevitable (e.g., snow days, emergencies, etc). The only other option for some parents is to use sick days and simply not come in at all. This seems to defeat one of the intents of the policy—to keep children or pets from diminishing a person's ability to carry out work assignments. The other issue speaks to the nature of academic work that this "employees memo" seems not to grasp, particularly with regard to professors. If a professor is in his or her office making phone calls and answering emails (part of our job assignment) and his or her child is coloring in a chair in the corner, is that professor in violation of university policy? Or, if a child accompanies a professor to a meeting or to pick up mail, is this a violation? Such an all-encompassing memo doesn't seem to address the distinct nature of academic work or the unique relationship of the faculty and the university. Using "liability" as justification is untenable since the daily activities of all large organizations entail some degree of liability (WestConn seems not to be as concerned about the liability incurred from icy sidewalks, serving alcohol at functions and asbestos-saturated buildings). Also, there go those ever so dangerous university family picnics. In addition, and as a related issue, most of us have allowed students to bring their children to class in an emergency. Would this too be a violation of university policy?

Instead of issuing a terse edit that further alienates members of the WestConn community, perhaps it is better to find ways to support people who are placed in a difficult position because of snow days and other unforeseen events. We highly doubt that people are bringing their children (or pets) to work because they want to but rather because they are forced to by unforeseen events. Many universities have a long and celebrated history of being leaders in developing humanistic policies that support their employees and the families. We hope that WestConn can join them.

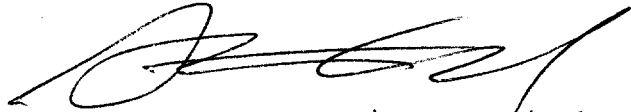
We will ask that the University Senate explore the policy further.

Sincerely;

Concerned Members of the University Community

Cc: V.J. Nair, President of the University Senate

President Jim Roach



Steven Ward, Social Sciences

Martha May (Martha May) History

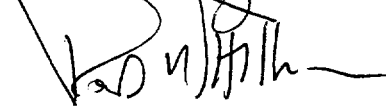
BURTON PERETTI, HISTORY

Steve P. Sklar  
Steve P. Sklar, Social Sciences

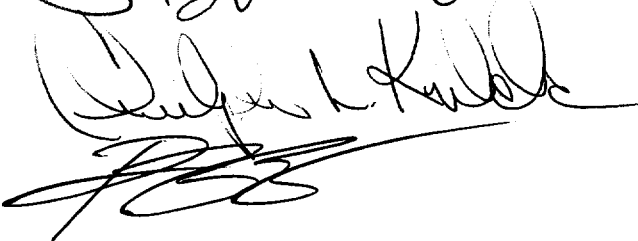
Lauren Weinstein, Anthropology

R. All Mares, Political Science

Quynh O'Connell, Soc Science



J Bannister



**Peggy Boyle**  
Sent by: polonius  
01/20/2004 03:06 PM

To: Steven Ward/SS/WCSU@WCSU  
cc:  
bcc:  
Subject: [ users-aca ] Children & Pets at Work

To All University Employees:

There have been several reports of employees caring for children and pets while at work. Having children and pets at work creates potential health, safety, and liability concerns for the University. This memorandum is to remind you that while at work, employees are expected to make the necessary arrangements so that children, pets, or other individuals are not required to accompany you to work and be cared for while you are performing your assignments.

Please share this memorandum with any employees who might not have access to the University's electronic mail system.

Questions concerning this matter, can be directed to the Human Resources Department

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Dean of Human Resources  
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