

January 26, 2023

To: Chloe Poston, COWLI Co-chair
Devin Balkcom, COWLI Co-chair

From: David Kotz, Provost
Rick Mills, Executive Vice President

Re: COWLI Annual Report

Thank you for your thorough report and recommendations addressing the twin challenges of child care and housing access and affordability for Dartmouth employees. These two vexing national issues manifest themselves in uniquely challenging ways in the Upper Valley. We share your concerns and write to update you on our understanding of the problems and to identify the actions that we are taking to address these issues. In addition, we plan to display this reply and the COWLI report on the Provost's website under COWLI's designated section tomorrow and send out a VOX announcement on Monday so our community can see your recommendations and our response.

Child Care: Dartmouth Actions

Considering the scale and complexity of the problem, on both [the national](#) and [local level](#), it is reasonable to ask what Dartmouth is doing to understand and address it. Last November, staff participated in two online gatherings hosted by Vital Communities to discuss Upper Valley child care issues. Emerging from those sessions, it was clear that simply adding licensed facilities [or increasing pay for providers](#) is not sufficient to solve access issues. It is equally clear that such steps may instead exacerbate affordability challenges. As an alternative, Dartmouth is pursuing a holistic approach—one that prioritizes sustainable and intentional development of capacity in the long term and is bolstered by cooperation among providers, families, and employers across the Upper Valley.

To begin this process, we convened the Ad Hoc Council on Work-Life Issues with broad membership across Dartmouth. The council met last winter and spring and provided a mechanism for faculty, staff, and students to consider the problems, specifically including housing and child care, that affect the well-being and productivity of our community. We appreciate the work you've done, and your recommendations are informing our plan moving forward.

We are convinced that the scale and complexity of the child care issue in the Upper Valley demands a unified approach. While Dartmouth is unlikely to make meaningful progress on a problem so vast by acting alone, we can be a leader in bringing people together. By convening other employers with care providers and working with state and local governments in the Upper Valley, we hope to drive change on a scale necessary to benefit

our employees and students. To that end, in early 2022, Dartmouth solicited a funding proposal from Vital Communities to develop and support a collaborative consortium directed at all elements necessary to improve affordable child care access. Vital Communities is now leading a three-year child care affordability and access effort with more than \$600,000 of support—half of which is supplied by Dartmouth.

Housing: Dartmouth Actions

The issues of housing access and affordability you raise are longstanding and [were exacerbated during COVID](#) by [an influx of part- and full-time residents leaving cities for the Upper Valley](#). These housing shortages exist across the spectrum of residential categories. Every sector of housing is experiencing severe shortages in availability and consequent increases in cost. In those communities perceived to offer higher-quality educational opportunities, the shortages are even more acute. As with child care, there are several complex factors that do not readily lend themselves to a single or simple fix, [including a strong desire among current residents to maintain a low-density environment](#), limited infrastructure to support high-density development, and scarcity of human and material resources for construction.

As many of you know, Dartmouth, in partnership with Michaels Student Living, recently constructed and opened a graduate student housing complex on Mt. Support Road in Lebanon. This development adds more than 600 beds to the housing supply in the Upper Valley. While the project is primarily intended for graduate and professional students, its addition to the marketplace increases the housing supply for all.

Similarly, Dartmouth is in the early stages of another housing project with Michaels to develop two apartment-style residential buildings on the north end of the old golf course that will initially house approximately 400 undergraduates before eventually converting to graduate student housing. Like the complex on Mt. Support Road, the impact of new housing stock will increase supply for all. As you know, this project underscores many of the challenges Dartmouth will continue to face when trying to build new housing in Hanover, from how to win over community members to the need for local board approvals.

Additionally, Dartmouth has retained a real estate development consultant to review our land holdings and identify viable residential development projects. This work is currently underway and has begun to focus on two specific opportunities. One is a possible apartment development within walking distance of our campus, which could add units for new staff and junior faculty. The other is a close-by townhouse development that could be a fit for families. We will continue to work on these projects and provide updates.

Dartmouth is also exploring the possibilities created through the [recent Hanover changes in zoning along West Wheelock Street](#). We are already supporting other landowners in their development effort. Simultaneously, we are evaluating the possibilities for housing changes on property Dartmouth owns along that street. Any new development with greater capacity will require a temporary reduction in supply when the existing housing is taken offline. We are carefully considering the impact and optimal timing of any expansion.

Further, we are active in [another effort organized by Vital Communities](#) to support efforts to build new housing across the Upper Valley. This effort recently got underway, and we hope to have more to report as the work proceeds.

Conclusion

We do not pretend that our actions to date will successfully address the shortage of child care options or the need for more affordable housing. However, we can progress with creativity, collaboration, and prudent investment and development strategies. In the coming months, we look forward to working with the Dartmouth and Upper Valley communities, the Ad Hoc Council on Work-Life Issues (COWLI), and the College Benefits Council to continue our collective action on these important issues. As we move forward, we welcome your continued input and thank you for the time you have spent on these important issues.

Best,

Dave and Rick