

“It is not a high-dollar expense. It is a room with a chair and a plug, but it is a way of showing that you care about your employees,” stated Lisa Wolf-Wendel, professor of educational leadership at the University of Kansas and co-author of *Academic Motherhood*, in order to express the significance of a university’s decision to include lactation suites on its campus.¹ Since the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act by Congress in 2010, employers nationwide have been required to provide places (other than bathrooms) in the workspace that are shielded from view and free from public intrusion where employees can express milk.² Many universities such as the University of California at Davis and the University of Arizona have fully embraced this law and have provided readily-available, sanitary, and private rooms for mothers; however, other schools are still slow to join the movement.³

Until this past year, many Illinois universities still had not taken steps to create a comfortable environment for mothers on campus. Mother’s rooms often consisted of chairs and side tables shoved into small, unused closets in a few of the major buildings on university grounds (University librarian, personal communication, February 10, 2016). This situation was challenged by the members of the Non-Traditional Student Services department of a mid-major public university this past year, and from their efforts to raise grant money and connect with other interested parties, they successfully recruited a team of architecture, interior design, and construction management faculty and students to design and build a devoted mother’s room for the campus library.

This on-going project has become a way for the university to improve the environmental experience of mothers on campus, and it has also developed into a beneficial learning opportunity for the students participating in the design|build. Simulating the professional design process, a school of architecture team has worked through schematic designs, design development, client meetings, and consultant interactions over the course of the Spring 2016 semester. With one schematic design selected to be explored in construction documentation, the goal of this group is to continue to work with construction documents and physical construction of the Mother’s Room in the upcoming semester. Through this process, a significant step has been taken toward improving the quality of student life on campus.

1| Kaustuv Basu. “Got Milk?”. *Inside Higher Ed*. 2012.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/09/26/many-universities-still-have-ad-hoc-policies-about-lactation-resources>

2| “Wage and Hour Division (WHD)” *United States Department of Labor*. 2013.

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs73.htm>

3| Kaustuv Basu. “Got Milk?”. 2012.