**
PREGNANCY & PARENTING
IN COLLEGE**

***Quick Facts***

*Getting information sooner can help avoid or alleviate distress later*

**Rates**

* 2000 adolescents become pregnant each day in the US (CDC).
* Unintended pregnancies account for approximately 45% of all pregnancies (Finer and Zolna; Wade, Herrman, McBeth-Snyder).
* In 2010, there were 58.9 pregnancies per 1000 females ages 15-19, resulting in an average of 34.2 live births (CDC).
	+ For a college the size of WFU, this is equivalent to experiencing 77 pregnancies per year among just the freshman and sophomore females.
* Pregnant and parenting students have always been present at WFU. In the 1960s, dozens of children lived on campus alongside their student-parents. In 2018, at least 5 parenting undergraduate students attended WFU. Between the decades there have been many more pregnant and parenting students.

**Realities - Physical**

* Increased knowledge of human reproductive health, including the basics of men and women’s fertility, can help students make more informed choices—whether that means delaying sexual activity, acting responsibility in light of known realities and risks, or taking better care of their bodies in case they do become pregnant (Delgado). For example:
* As ovulation nears each month, women’s reproductive body parts physiologically change, becoming more hospitable to conception.
* Women’s rates of ovulation have been reported to increase among undergraduate students who spend two or more nights with men during a 40-day period (Veith et al.).
* All women’s hormones and reproductive organs begin to change soon after conception has occurred (Murkoff and Mazel).
* Although students generally acknowledge the risks associated with sexual activity, the majority of sexually active students do not regularly use birth control or condoms; consistency often also decreases the longer a relationship lasts (Wade, Herrman, McBeth-Snyder; Fairfortune, et al.; Manlove, Ryan, and Franzetta).
* Regardless of race, socioeconomic status, religion, and many other factors, young people tend to hold an optimistic bias and assume an unplanned pregnancy “won’t happen to me.” But, unplanned pregnancies occur across all demographics (Whaley; Chapin; Smith, Gerrard, and Gibbons; Fisher and Misovich).

**Realities - Mental**

* Any time students think they may be pregnant, they endure mental stress. Knowledge of legal protections and local resources can help prevent and alleviate some of that stress (Gray).
* Whether college-aged women remain pregnant or not, they faced an exorbitant number and variety of stressors: “Relationship difficulties, physical symptoms, anxiety about childcare, and hormonal changes, as well as worries about health of oneself and one’s infant,” transitions to new roles, changing self-perceptions, postpartum depression, psychosocial stress, financial hardship, and the fear of future unplanned pregnancies (Gray).
* These stressors can be mitigated with proper support so students can continue to thrive in their education and personal growth (Gray; Weed, Nicholson and Farris).

**Rights**

* Since 2013, pregnant and parenting students have explicitly been extended protection under Title IX, the federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on sex.
* The “Supreme Court [recognizes] students’ private right to sue institutions for large sums of money in cases of Title IX violations” (Busch and Thro 17). In 2015, *Conley v. Northwest Florida State College* upheld Title IX’s prohibition of discrimination on the basis of pregnancy status.
* The Office for Civil Rights within the United States Department of Education firmly states that “it is illegal under Title IX for schools to exclude pregnant students.” Rights of pregnant and parenting students include:
1. The pregnant mother may take medical leave from attending school during the pregnancy/complications if medically necessary.
2. The pregnant mother must be allowed to return to the same academic and extracurricular status as before the medical leave, including the opportunity to make up any missed work.
3. The pregnant mother must be allowed to continue participating in classes and extracurricular activities if they desire to continue to attend school.
4. The pregnant mother must be provided reasonable adjustments, such as seating arrangements or access to restrooms.
5. Any absences due to pregnancy or childbirth must be excused, so long as [the] doctor says it is necessary.
6. The school must take reasonable steps to protect the pregnant [mother] from harassment based on [her] sex, including harassment related to pregnancy.
7. The school must provide [the student] with the same special services provided to other students with temporary medical conditions, such as homebound instruction, independent study, or tutoring. (E.D.; Talbott and Larsen; Galanter.)