**DOMESTIC PARTNERS BENEFITS POLICY**

Faculty Senate Resolution: 1-23-08

Staff Senate Resolution: 12-11-08

Executive Council Review: 1-31-11

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**I. POLICY STATEMENT**

Western Carolina University (“University”) and its staff recognize the innate human value of all persons regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, and the University and its staff recognize furthermore that life partnerships formed between individuals regardless of gender parallel those made in marriages between men and women. The University, its faculty, and its staff resolve to confer upon the domestic partners of employees affiliated with the University the same access to University facilities and services that spouses receive. Furthermore, domestic partners regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression may register as such with Human Resources and procure University identification cards that allow access to certain facilities and services.

**II. PROCEDURES**

Procedural information is provided below to clarify the term “domestic partner” and to inform University employees of the facilities and services available to their domestic partners.  While equitable access to education and employment for all students, faculty and staff is an institutional imperative, please note that certain benefits (e.g., North Carolina State Health Plan) are controlled by state or federal law.

**A. Definition**

“Domestic partner” is defined as a person who is in a committed relationship with a University employee, lives with the employee, and is the employee’s spousal equivalent.

“ Eligible dependent” is defined for purposes of this policy as (i) an employee’s domestic partner; and (ii) an employee’s or his/her domestic partner’s unmarried child(ren), including stepchild(ren), to the end of the month in which the child turns age 19 or age 26 if a full-time student.

**B**. **How to Access Services and Benefits**

A spouse, domestic partner, or other eligible dependent of an employee must have a University ID card – a CatCard – to access available services and facilities.  To obtain a CatCard, an employee must complete the “Spouse/Dependent Form” and have it on file in the University CatCard Office, Room 135 Killian Annex, (828) 227-7003.  The spouse, domestic partner or other eligible dependent (as specifically permitted) of the employee is then eligible to acquire a CatCard entitling them to use certain University facilities and services.

**C. Services and Benefits Available**

Listed below are examples of services, benefits and facilities available to domestic partners and spouses of employees of the university who have a CatCard. For more information about each service, click on their website URL. Services are subject to change without notice.

[Hunter Library](http://www.wcu.edu/404.asp) – Spouses and domestic partners may use the library and check out books.

[Residential Living](http://www.wcu.edu/97.asp) – Allows spouses and domestic partners of employees to reside in University faculty/staff apartments with an employee.  The employee must complete a Faculty Transitional Housing Agreement and provide documentation regarding marital status, domestic partnership, and other eligible dependents.   All live-in staff within Residential Living must provide documentation of marital status or domestic partnership as well as documentation regarding other eligible dependents. Live-in staff must complete a Residency Agreement for Residence Life Professionals.

[Campus Recreation Center](http://www.wcu.edu/7699.asp) – All current and retired employees and alumni who wish to use the Campus Recreation Center and Reid Pool are required to pay a fee.   Spouses, domestic partners and other dependents who are over the age of 17, living at home, and qualify as a dependent for federal income tax purposes may use the Campus Recreation Center with a CatCard.

**Miscellaneous benefits** – Domestic partners may be eligible to receive certain other University benefits with a CatCard, such as use of the Courtyard Dining Facility, promotional discounts to University athletic events and fine arts performances, and may participate in certain Base Camp Cullowhee programs and intramural events.

**Insurances/health care benefits** – domestic partners may be eligible for certain insurance benefits that are authorized from time to time by the University of North Carolina, the North Carolina Office of State Personnel, or by the North Carolina General Assembly. For more information about these and other domestic partner benefits, contact Human Resources at (828) 227-7218.