

Western Carolina University
Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: DegreePlus Impact Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. Carmen Huffman, Associate Professor in the Dept. of Chemistry and Physics

Other Researchers: Ms. Theresa Cruz Paul, Director of the Center for Career and Professional Development; Dr. Arthur Salido, Executive Director, Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation, Dr. April Tallant, Associate Dean of the Honors College; Ms. Shawna Young, Director of Assessment for Student Affairs

Description and Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to determine (1) what motivates student participation in DegreePlus and (2) the impact participation has on student learning.

What you will be asked to do: In this study, you will participate in a small group discussion with 2-3 researchers. You will be asked questions related to how much you participated in DegreePlus, what motivated you to or prevented you from participating, and what impact the program has had on your educational experience. The interview session should take 30-45 minutes. The session will be audio recorded so that researchers can review your comments as needed. Researchers will also take notes during the discussion.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no anticipated risks from participating in this research. However, should a question make you feel uncomfortable, you may decline to respond, and you may leave the discussion at any time. Your DegreePlus record will be unaffected.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help WCU better understand how to improve DegreePlus in terms of accessibility to students and impact on student education. As the data is presented outside WCU, other institutions of higher education may be inspired to develop their own engaged learning programs.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security: We are unable to guarantee absolute confidentiality for this focus group because the other participants will hear the responses. However, we will remind all participants prior to the session that what is said in the focus group should not be shared. Any comments shared by you with our research team will be kept confidential. Audio recordings will be stored on a secure server that is accessible only to the research team and DegreePlus staff for five years. Some comments made by participants may be tied to the participants' academic or demographic data, but when any data is reported, it will be stripped of any identifying information and aggregated. (For example, "20% of participants claimed...;") If direct quotes are shared, pseudonyms will be used. Insights gained by the research team will also be shared with other institutions and the higher education community via conference presentations and journal articles, and with funding agencies to secure support for future aspects of this research.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you choose not to participate or decide to withdraw, there will be no impact on your DegreePlus achievements. If participants do not want to be recorded but still would like to participate, the option of a private, non-recorded interview is available.

Compensation for Participation: There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Contact Information: For questions about this study, please contact Carmen Huffman at chuffman@wcu.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you may contact the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through the Office of Research Administration by calling 828-227-7212 or emailing irb@wcu.edu.

Check one:

I do or do not give my permission to the investigators to quote me directly using a pseudonym in their research.

Check one:

The investigators may or may not audio record this interview.

I understand what is expected of me if I participate in this research study. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and understand that participation is voluntary. My signature shows that I agree to participate and am at least 18 years old.

Participant Name (printed): _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____