

Western Carolina University's University Participant Program Policies

David L. Westling, Ed.D., Project Co-Founder
Kelly R. Kelley, Ph.D., Project Co-Director

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Purpose of the Program

The WCU University Participant (UP) program is designed to provide a two-year, on-campus living and learning experience for college-age persons with intellectual disabilities. The program is limited to four new UP students per year, with a maximum enrollment of 8 UP students. During the two year period, UP students are intended to complete requirements for receiving a UP Certificate of Accomplishment based on the successful completion of an Individual Plan for College Participation (IPCP, see below).

UP Student Status

UP students must apply for admission in the same timeframe as other persons seeking admission to the university. Consideration of applicants will be based on the admission criteria presented below no later than December 1 for the upcoming fall semester. Admitted applicants will be referred to as "University Participant Students" or "UP Students" and will be allowed to participate in the two-year UP Certificate of Accomplishment Program (see below).

Upon admission, UP students will be issued a WCU student identification card and will be eligible to live on the WCU campus, participate in the WCU on-campus meal plan, and participate in all other non-academic university events.

UP students will not be eligible for an undergraduate or graduate degree from the university and will not be eligible to earn college credit. They will be permitted to audit individual courses as part of their UP program and will be required to pay appropriate fees for these courses as well as other university and support fees, i.e. housing, meal plan, student activities, etc.

Admission Criteria

Potential UP applicants must apply for admission to the UP Program through the university undergraduate admissions office with artifacts listed below and mailed to the UP Program office. Consideration for admission to the UP Program will be given to individuals who meet the following criteria:

- Are within the typical age (18-25) range of college students.
- Have been enrolled in a high school special education program that does not lead to completion of a regular high school diploma and that does not allow students to complete requirements necessary for regular admission to WCU.

- Demonstrate adequate communication skills to interact with others on the WCU campus.
- Demonstrate socially acceptable behavior that will allow a favorable experience on the WCU campus.
- Be adequately motivated to learn and benefit from their participation in the UP Program.
- Have an expressed interest in living and working as independently as possible in their community after completing the UP program and supported by parents and families to do so.

Application packages should include a résumé, a video expressing interest following specific requirements, and letters of recommendation from teachers, other professionals and community members who are knowledgeable about the individual and who can evaluate the potential of the individual to successfully participate in the program. Other material that supports the individual's application, such as completed products, honors, or commendations may also be submitted.

All applicants to the UP Program will be reviewed by the UP Program Steering Committee. This Committee will be comprised of the following individuals:

- A WCU undergraduate or graduate student
- Former parents of UP Program graduates
- WCU Director of Financial Aid
- UP Program Director
- UP Program Career Development Coordinator/Administrator
- Administration Rep from the College of Education and Allied Professions
- Representatives of Undergraduate Admission
- Representatives of Educational Outreach
- Representatives of Residential Living
- Director of Accessibility Resources
- WCU Faculty that have taught UP students
- WCU Employers who have worked with UP students
- Representatives from Tutoring and Student Success Centers
- Community Service Provider Representatives

UP Certificate of Accomplishment Program

UP students will participate in a UP Certificate of Accomplishment Program that will be offered through the WCU Office of Educational Outreach. The certificate program is designed to help UP students be successful, contributing citizens after completion of the UP Program.

The UP Certificate of Accomplishment will be awarded after a two-year period based on satisfactory completion of five program components. These components will include the following:

- Personal Development Skills (e.g. communication skills, personal care skills, self-determination, etc.)
- Community Participation Skills (e.g. using public transportation, budgeting, grocery shopping, etc.)
- Vocational Preparation Skills (e.g. learning specific job skills on or off-campus)
- Social Participation and Learning (e.g. participating in university functions such as athletic events, belonging to university clubs or organizations)
- Course Auditing (e.g. auditing 3 to 4 courses per semester)

UP students must pay current university fees for auditing courses. Out of state tuition and fees also apply.

During each semester, two to three individual objectives will be written for each UP student in each of the above areas on an Individual Plan for College Participation (IPCP). The UP Director will be responsible for writing the IPCP each semester and will do so after conferring with UP students and their parents and/or other caregivers, and with the advice and approval of the UP Program Steering Committee. Learning activities required to achieve the objectives will be written and weekly monitoring systems will be established to monitor progress for all objectives for each UP student. Within each area, approximately 6 hours of learning activities per week will be required for a total of 30 hours per week.

At the completion of the two year period, UP students will be eligible for a UP Certificate of Accomplishment based on the following criteria:

- Completion of 1800 hours of learning activities over a four semester period (450 hrs per semester);
- Achievement of at least 80% of the objectives per semester within each component of the IPCP; and
- Recommendation for a UP Certificate of Accomplishment by the UP staff and the UP Program Steering Committee.

Residential Living

UP students will be eligible to live in on-campus housing under the same university guidelines and policies as affect other students and will pay normal residential fees to do so. The university will offer “reasonable accommodations” within residential facilities based on the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Special accommodations will be addressed on an as needed basis and offered within university guidelines.

Interagency/Community Supports

It is expected that other agencies within the community will provide special supports to UP students who qualify for their services. Such agencies may include qualified staff to assist with Medicaid Waiver/State Funding (e.g., Turning Point Services), Public Schools

(i.e. special education directors, teachers and related services providers), Vocational Rehabilitation, and Assistive Technology Centers as appropriate. Community agencies providing services will do so in collaboration with the UP Program staff.

Program Termination

The UP program will be terminated after a two year period with the satisfactory completion of the requirements for the UP Certificate of Accomplishment.

An individual's program may also be terminated if the UP Steering Committee determines that the UP student has not progressed satisfactorily on a semester-by-semester basis or if the UP student violates university disciplinary policies. UP students who are requested to terminate their participation in the UP program for these reasons will have the same rights of appeal as are allowed for WCU students.

Fees

UP students will be charged fees comparable to those charged to undergraduate students. These will include application fees, tuition for courses audited, housing and meal plan fees, other program related support or base fees, and university activity fees. A program support fee will be added each semester based on the support needs for each UP student.

Accommodations

WCU will provide accommodations in its physical plant environment as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Any additional accommodations required by individual UP students (such as personal assistance) will be the responsibility of the UP students, their families, and community agencies.

UP Program Administration

The UP program will be overseen by the UP Program Director who will be responsible for managing all activities of the program and for interacting with key personnel within and outside of the university to ensure the smooth operation of the program.

For additional information contact:

Dr. Kelly R. Kelley
UP Program Project Director
Western Carolina University
1 University Way, Killian 205
Cullowhee, NC 28723
Ph: 828-227-3298
Email: kkelley@email.wcu.edu