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A survey analysis of the relationship between interdisciplinary experiences and well-rounded individuals

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Introduction
As an interdisciplinary student myself, the interest in discovering the benefits of receiving this kind of education became stronger throughout my time. Working as a Spanish facilitator and as a Chemistry research assistant provided me with an extremely diverse set of skills, which will make me more competitive as a future professional. My ethnic background gave me an immense curiosity for other cultures, for things and people that were different to what I was used. I wanted to know what made people who they are, why some people perform better at certain activities, and what inspired them to study in a university like Western.

After talking to my supervisors of the Western’s Employee Language Program (WELPS) about it, my curiosity became a research opportunity. Initially we’d thought about creating a survey, in some online program, to create a solid poster for Scholars Week; but soon realized the project was greater and more complex. For that reason we decided to write a paper about the relationship between well-rounded individuals and interdisciplinary experiences, as well as the measurable personal and/or professional benefits that come from this relationship. At that point, we began working on the Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) approval for the project.

This poster will present the initial steps that will be taken in order to start collecting data from human subjects for investigation purposes.

Main Focus:
- Employing the data collected through a series of surveys and interviews, an analysis of the relationship between well-rounded individuals and interdisciplinary experiences, as well as the measurable personal and/or professional benefits that come from this relationship; will be performed.

Definitions:
- Well-rounded individuals: someone who can encounter many challenges, not specifically related to their field of specialization, and solve them efficiently using a diverse set of skills.
- Interdisciplinary experience: interaction of two or more formal academic disciplines, informal areas of interest, or personal experiences that differ in the way they interpret the world.

Potential Benefits:
- Give credence to the academic programs and groups, clubs, and workshops that currently support Western students, faculty, and staff acquire interdisciplinary experience.
- Improvements in student advising, professional development planning, program design and development, and supporting individual self-awareness.

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Methodology
The Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects or the "Common Rule"
The fundamental principle of human subjects protection is that people should not (in most cases) be involved in research without their informed consent, and that subjects should not incur increased risk of harm from their research involvement, beyond the normal risks inherent in everyday life.†

Steps required by the IRB‡:
- Human Subject Research Exemption Form
- Human Subjects Activity Review Form
- NIH ethics training†
- Office of Survey Research‡
  - Previously obtained data from a wide range of populations
  - Create additional surveys
- Other Data Collection Methods:
  - Interviews
- Literature search to support the proposal and/or the data collected

Project

Experimental Pathway

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Scheme 1: Experimental pathway showing the steps that will be taken in order to complete the requirements prior and post data collection for the study of well-rounded individuals and interdisciplinary experiences.

Outcomes

Personal:
- Professional development benefits
- Student initiated research
- Being part of the creative process

Project:
- Complications
- Human Rights
- Professional development benefits

References

Figure 1. a) WELPS Students, Joshua Johnson and Diane Perez, during the Scholar’s Week 2014 WELPS Interviews b) Diane Perez performing routine capillary electrodiode analysis on a bisulfate coated. c) Dr. David Rider and Diane Perez examining a gold catalyst.