

Grand Valley State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)	
Title: <i>Researcher Conflicts of Interest When Enrolling GVSU Students and Employees</i>	
Section: 321.	This policy and procedure supersedes those previously drafted
Approved by HRRC: 04/12/2011 Revised: 08/01/2012 Reviewed: 10/28/2014 Revised by IRBPPC: 04/23/2019 Revised by IRBPPC: 11/04/2024	Approved by RIO/HRPA: 05/12/2011 Revision Approved: 08/01/2012 Revision approved by RIO/AIO: 5/23/2019 Revision approved by AIO/RIO: 3/13/2020 Approved by AIO: 12/13/2024
Effective Date: 12/13/2024	
Related documents: <i>310: Researcher Responsibilities, Qualifications, and Training</i> <i>320: Researcher Conflict of Interest</i> <i>720: Assessing Risk to Vulnerable Participants</i> <i>750: Recruitment, Selection and Payments to Research Participants</i> <i>810: Informed Consent: General</i> <i>812: Research Involving Children</i> <i>820: Waivers, Alterations and Exceptions to Informed Consent Process and Documentation</i>	

## **Policy**

### 1. Research Participation Unrelated to Academic Work.

When GVSU students or employees participate in research activities as study subjects, voluntariness is always required. Students or employees may not be required to participate as research subjects as part of any academic course or employment duties.

### 2. Research Participation Related to Academic Work.

- a. A real or perceived conflict of interest may exist when a GVSU student participates in an independent research study being conducted by the student's course instructor. Students may be subject to undue influence by the course instructor to participate, or to participate in a particular way, in hopes that it may enhance their academic achievement. The course researcher-instructor may be susceptible to—and possibly unaware of—personal bias entering into their assessment of the academic performance of students who are also enrolled in the study, or who declined to enroll in it.
- b. The IRB is generally disinclined to allow investigators to enroll in their research studies any students who also are currently enrolled in their academic courses. However, sometimes this is neither practical nor an appropriately reasonable restriction, and the IRB, at its discretion, may allow the enrollment of these students, provided the conflicts of interest are mitigated.

## **Procedures**

### 1. Research Involving Students Engaged in Academic Course Activities or Involving GVSU Employees

If a researcher desires to collect and/or analyze information about GVSU student academic performance or behavior as a student, or behavior of a GVSU employee, explicit consent for the research component must be obtained from each student or employee unless waiver or alteration of the consent is approved by the IRB. Faculty may require students to participate in course activities for academic credit, but students must be free to refuse to allow information about those activities to be used for research purposes. Similarly, employees must be free to refuse to allow information about their work-related performance or experience to be used for research purposes. Consent to participate requires positive affirmation and the absence of overt coercion or undue influence.

## 2. Academic Courses that Require Research Experience

When students are required to gain research experience as part of academic course requirements, serving as a research study participant may be offered as an option, but cannot be required. An alternative activity must be offered that involves comparable time, effort, and credit.

## 3. Instructor-led Research Involving Currently Enrolled Students

- a. If recruitment into the research study is done by someone other than the researcher-instructor, **and** the researcher-instructor does not know which students enrolled and which students declined to enroll until after current course grades are finalized and submitted, then the researcher-instructor can recruit and use students currently enrolled in their courses.
- b. If the researcher-instructor knows the identity of study participants and non-participants, but does not believe that knowledge will have any chance of influencing course grading decisions, **and** it is reasonable to presume that the affected students also share that opinion, then the IRB will consider that explanation in the approval decision and may allow the researcher-instructor to recruit and enroll volunteer students from their courses.
- c. The IRB does not restrict enrollment into research studies for students who **may** enroll in a course to be taught in the future by the researcher-instructor because too many variables may affect that planned enrollment. However, if the IRB believes there is a reasonable chance that one or more students currently participating in a study who subsequently enroll in a researcher-instructor taught course may be affected academically—either positively or negatively—by that dual enrollment, the IRB may work with the researcher-instructor to mitigate the conflict of interest.

## 4. Research Involving GVSU Varsity Student-Athletes

Researchers seeking to specifically recruit GVSU intercollegiate student-athletes for a study must obtain approval from the GVSU Athletics Department. Written approval from the

Athletics Department is required prior to submission of the IRB application, as the Athletics Department may request alterations to the study methodology. Note that if the researcher is seeking to recruit GVSU students in general, but that population might happen to include GVSU varsity student-athletes, approval from the GVSU Athletics Department is not required.