

Application Form for Funded Research

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO  
COMMITTEE ON THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Please type

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	Chris Hernandez	Title V	TA 43
	Name	Department (unit)	Mail Stop
	278-1621	278-1612	
	Telephone Number	Dept. Telephone Number	

Student's name or collaborator(s) Adrian Ramirez, Title V Director  
(if applicable) (if a graduate school thesis, so indicate) (affiliation if collaborative research)

278-1613	adrianr@csufresno.edu
Telephone Number	e-mail address

FUNDING SOURCE U.S. Department of Education

TITLE Title V Grant

The Principal Investigator is responsible for fully understanding the **Policy and Procedures** of the CPHS. Below indicate your judgment as Principal Investigator as to the RISK category of the present study. (See definitions on the reverse of this sheet.) (If exempt see 3.52)

Minimal Risk

**PROCEDURES**

1. Attach your protocol and submit to your department chair for review by your human subjects committee.
2. Your departmental committee concurs with the Principal Investigator that the study is "minimal risk" (see Appendix 5.3), then
3. The department chair should forward the packet of materials with this form and the departmental review forms to the University CPHS, Haak Administrative Center, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Henry Madden Library, M/S ML 54, for expeditious review and "certification to the funding source."

HOWEVER,

(If the departmental review changes the determination to "At Risk," follow the procedure to the right of this page.)

At Risk

**PROCEDURES**

1. Attach your protocol and submit to your department chair for review by your human subjects committee. (A sample informed consent must be included.)
2. Submit the department review form(s) with this form to the CPHS.
3. Transmit all reviews and two (2) copies of the protocol to the CPHS for review. Send one additional copy to the Dean.
4. Allow two weeks during the school year for CPHS review.

**Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to determine why students withdrew from California State University, Fresno. This research will inform the literature on factors contributing to student attrition in the Central Valley and, conversely, factors contributing to graduation and retention. While there is minimum risk to research participants, safeguards will be in place to protect the confidentiality of the data collected.

**Protocol****Purpose and Background**

Fresno State serves a diverse, socio-economic student population with 68 percent first-generation students and 63 percent Pell Grant eligible (Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2012). Many first-time freshmen are from family backgrounds with high rates of poverty and low levels of parental education attainment. The majority of students receives financial aid assistance and/or must work at least part-time in order to afford college. Therefore, it is apparent that a large number of students at Fresno State have priorities and commitments outside of their education and the university. Student retention is an on-going concern for most colleges and universities; but in recent years, there has been a significant decline in both first-year and second-year student retention at Fresno State. A multitude of factors such as low grade point average and personal finances were theorized as contributing to the decline, and as a result of this trend a number of campus initiatives were implemented. However, no follow-up inquisition was done with the withdrawn students to determine exactly why they left the university.

The purpose of this research is to examine any factors that contributed to student attrition at Fresno State. While other research exists that reports common factors for attrition or models paths to graduation (see the work of Tinto), such research has not been extensively conducted for students leaving Fresno State.

**Subjects**

A total of 3330 students from the Fall 2004, Fall 2005, and Fall 2006 entering cohorts who withdrew from the university will be examined. These cohorts were selected because the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Fresno State reports that graduation trends are moving toward six to eight-year graduation as opposed to the traditional four-year graduation.

**Method**

Student records, including demographic and contact information, will be obtained from Technology Services at Fresno State. Students will then be contacted via email to solicit participation in this study. Non-university email addresses will be used if available. The email will contain an explanation of the purpose of the research, as well as a link to the electronic survey in Qualtrics. Upon clicking the link, students will be asked to electronically consent to participation after reading the Informed Consent Letter (see Appendix A). The Student Withdrawal Survey (see Appendix B) will then be administered to consenting students electronically using Qualtrics. Only group level data will be used for analyses.

**Potential Benefits**

Theoretically, this research will help identify reasons for student attrition specifically at Fresno State. Consequently, university executives, faculty, and staff will be better able to address these issues and improve retention and graduation. Additionally, this research furthers the empirical literature on college attrition.

**Potential Risks**

There are few potential risks anticipated for participants in this research. It is possible that some participants would be uncomfortable responding to some of the items contained in the survey.

**Management of Risk**

The risks are greatly minimized by two things. First, only group-level data will be reported, therefore the survey responses and grades are confidential. Second, the survey information requested from participants is voluntary.

**Subject Compensation**

Participants may choose to be entered into a drawing for one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards as a reward for participation.

**Academic Qualifications**

The principal investigator has an M.A. in Psychology with an emphasis on research methods and psychometrics and is the Researcher for the Title V – CLASE program at California State University, Fresno.

**Consent Form**

The consent form that will be electronically provided to potential participants is in Appendix A.

**Instruments**

Sample items from the withdrawal survey to be given to participants are located in Appendix B.

Appendix A  
Informed Consent Letter

Thank you very much for considering participation in this research.

The purpose of this research is to gather information on factors contributing to student withdrawal at California State University, Fresno. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to fill out a survey regarding the reasons you left the university.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. All information you provide is confidential, and the final report of this study will contain only group-level data. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with California State University, Fresno in any way.

If you have any questions concerning the study or its results, please contact Chris Hernandez at 559-278-1621 or via email at [chhernandez@csufresno.edu](mailto:chhernandez@csufresno.edu). Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with California State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. The Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects at California State University, Fresno has reviewed and approved the present research. Questions regarding the rights of research subjects may be directed to Constance Jones, Chair, CSUF Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects, 559-278-4468. . You may keep a copy of this letter for your own records.

Once again, thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Chris Hernandez, M.A.  
Title V Researcher

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B Survey Items

### **Demographic Information**

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Major
- First Generation status
- Year of Entry
- Year of withdrawal
- Primary source(s) of funding your college education

For each of the following factors, please indicate whether or not it contributed to your withdrawal from Fresno State using the scale listed. (Major factor, minor factor, not a factor)

### **Personal Factors**

- Family emergency/sickness
- Family obligations/pressures
- Child -related problems
- Time away from family/friends
- Socializing with other students
- Unable to make friends
- Physical health reasons
- Mental health reasons
- Stress became overwhelming
- Financial difficulties (personal expenses)
- Financial difficulties (unable to afford university costs)
- Employment commitments / Conflict between job and studies
- You moved (home or work location)
- Transportation
- Your previous school experiences did not prepare you for the university
- Needed a temporary break from studies
- You found a sufficient job that met your needs without continuing at Fresno State

### **University Factors**

- Quality of education received did not meet expectations
- Lack of connection to the university (e.g. student life, clubs, organizations)
- You did not receive clear direction for navigating the university
- Classroom facilities were not adequate
- Tuition costs
- Other university costs (e.g., textbooks, lab fees)
- Class availability
- Class difficulty levels
- Access to advisors
- Quality of advising
- You did not receive a clear path to graduation in your major (academic roadmap)

- Your concerns were not listened to or followed up
- The education you were receiving was not worth the money you were paying
- You had to take too many classes that you did not think were useful

### **Faculty & Teaching**

- Teaching methods used were not motivating
- Teaching methods used were not engaging
- Classes were uninteresting
- The classes you took were not what you had expected
- Faculty were difficult to access
- Teaching methods did not cater to your learning style
- Faculty did not have up-to-date knowledge and skills
- Faculty did not give enough feedback or individual help
- Faculty did not have enthusiasm for their subject
- Faculty were poor teachers overall

### **Suggestions to University**

Please indicate which of the following university changes you would suggest for improving student retention (check all that apply)

- Offer more online courses/programs
- Lower tuition costs
- Additional financial aid
- More night classes
- More classes on weekends
- Improved counseling and guidance services
- Better faculty advising
- Better training for faculty
- Show students a closer connection between coursework and career
- Other (open-ended response)

### **Open-Ended Questions**

- Were there any other major factors not listed above that contributed to your withdrawal from Fresno State?
- Here are factors you listed as major reasons you left Fresno State. Of these factors, please select the number one reason you withdrew?
- Excluding any financial factors, was there anything that could have kept you enrolled at Fresno State?

Date: 3/18/13

To: Hernandez

From: Jones

**PROTOCOL 638: Title V Grant**

The Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects performed an expedited review of your project and you are approved to proceed.

Please be sure to provide our office with a copy of your Human Subjects Training certificate.

If, during the course of your study, an “unanticipated problem” occurs (an incident occurs that was unexpected *and* related to participation in the research *and* places the participants at greater risk than was previously known or recognized), please contact our office immediately.

Approval for your project expires 3/18/14. Should your study last longer than one year, submit an Annual Renewal Form (found on the webpage at [www.csufresno.edu/humansubjects/documents/annual\\_renewal.doc](http://www.csufresno.edu/humansubjects/documents/annual_renewal.doc)) before that date.

Because you are receiving external funding for your project, a copy of this memo will also be sent to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Best of luck with your research!