# Student Journey – Contextual Inquiry and Participatory Design – Plan and Methodology

# Research Objectives

* To identify and understand the emotional changes that occur for students during the college journey
* To identify and understand the pragmatic activities that are used by students, throughout the college journey, to plan and manage college and get a job

# Focus and Topics

The focus of this research is on the student journey – the path a student goes through as they complete college. We’ll explore topics related to admissions, enrollment, education, classroom management, internships, and jobs.

# Activities and Method

This design research program will utilize Contextual Inquiry as a primary research method. Design researchers will observe students in their natural habitat, as they go about various parts of the college experience. The research team will conduct research in students’ dorm rooms or apartments. The team will conduct an artifact walkthrough to understand the various physical and digital tools used, and will focus extensively on the following activities:

1. The waypoints (social, educational, etc..) that students use to create and track their location / progress in achieving a degree.
2. How students select their major, create their course schedule, identify professors, and enroll in courses
3. How students organize their time, per day
4. How students organize their time, over the course of a semester
5. How students manage their course work and academic standing
6. How students collaborate on course work
7. How students research, apply for, interview for, and attain internships, co-ops, and jobs

# Participants and Context

1. **Participant Profiles:** This research will include the following users (all users are not current myedu users):

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Participant #** | **Age** | **Academic Standing** | **School**  | **Other Note** |
| 1 | 17-19 | Freshman | State School |  |
| 2 | 17-19 | Freshman | Private School |  |
| 3 | 18-20 | Sophomore | State School |  |
| 4 | 18-20 | Sophomore | Private School |  |
| 5 | 19-21 | Junior | State School |  |
| 6 | 19-21 | Junior | Private School |  |
| 7 | 20-22 | Senior | State School |  |
| 8 | 20-22 | Senior | Private School |  |
| 9 | 30-55 | N/A | 4-Year Program |  |
| 10 | 17-24 | N/A | 2-Year Program | Nursing student |
| 11 | 30-55 | N/A | 2-Year Program | Nursing student |
| 12 | 17-24 | N/A | Any | Degree-seeking, part time student with full-time job |
| 13 | 30-55 | N/A | Any | Degree-seeking, part time student with full-time job |

1. **Session Details:** Each participant session is 180 minutes, conducted in the individual’s place of residence

# Schedule

This research will be conducted starting on August 5th, with a goal of completing four participant inquiries each week (for 3 weeks).

# Discussion Guide / Script

**Introduction**. Hi, my name is[]. We are conducting research with college students to understand the way you manage college. What I’m hoping we can do today is ask you some questions, and then have you show us some of the things that help you in your studies. We may ask you to show us some things, or to show us around your house. If at any time you don’t feel comfortable with what we’re asking, just let us know.

*Explain and distribute informed consent*

**Foundational Interview**: (30 min) During this section of the interview we will seek to build rapport and gather context about their motivations, processes, and artifacts to inform the rest of the interview. We will seek to gain an understanding about the college onboarding experience, how they ascertain their progress towards achieving a degree, their current perception of how they are tracking against this goal and the associated milestones, process, and artifacts used to inform this perception. (Past / Present / Future).

**Foundational Interview Questions:**

How far along are you in your college career? Would you define yourself as a (Freshman, Junior, etc…)?

How would you describe your personal capabilities with technology?

How are you paying for school?

Are you trying to achieve a degree?

Which one?

 When did you decide this major? What helped inform this decision for you?

Was this major / degree always something you wanted to do? How did you find out about it? What type of opportunities do you expect this degree to afford you?

Tell me about the process of “Declaring” your degree.. (Who was involved, did you always know about “declaring” – when did you first find out about this point in the college career?

If you could go back right now and tell your high-school-senior self anything about college, what would you say? (about classes, college process/requirements, classmates, professors, etc..)

If your future self were to come back in time, to this very moment and tell you anything, what do you think he/she would say?

**Reflection Diagram: (20 min)** In front of you is a long piece of paper with a bunch of squares in a line. I’d like you to use this piece of paper to illustrate to illustrate the “timeline of your degree”.

**Establish current position:** If this entire sheet is the timeline, how far along are you? Mark where you are on the page (almost done, halfway done, etc).

How do you know this is where you are?

**Outline steps to this point in time:** I’d now like you to walk backwards from this point in time – writing down the big steps you took, or major milestones, to get here – they can be in any order. PROMPT the participant to speak out loud and add any color / detail to each mark they place.

**AFTER COMPLETING THIS PART OF THE DIAGRAM:**

* Ask the participant if they think this is the “traditional” route to achieving their degree?
* What do they think is different from other people who are getting the same degree?
* What were they using to guide themselves through each point? Was there a particular person(s), product, artifact, etc..?

**Outline steps to completing degree:** I’d now like you to walk forwards from this point in time – writing down the steps you think you’ll need to take, or major milestones, to complete your degree – they can be in any order. PROMPT the participant to speak out loud and add any color / detail to each mark they place.

**AFTER COMPLETING THIS PART OF THE DIAGRAM:**

* Ask the participant if they think this is the “traditional” route to achieving their degree?
* What do they think is different from other people who are getting the same degree?
* How did they find out about each future step.. If there weren’t a lot of future steps, what would they do to find out what needs to be done?
* Is there anything you are using to keep yourself on track? Is there a particular (or set of) person(s), product(s), artifact, etc..?

**Provocation Exercise:** In front of you, there are a lot of cards with images on them. There is no pattern, or reason we selected these images, other than they can sometimes be useful in provoking thoughts. I’m going to ask you some questions about your college experience, and I’d like you to look through at these images as you consider your answer to see if any of the things on them stick out.

 Thinking back to when you started college – what was that experience like?

 Thinking about your current place in your educational career – what is this experience like?

Thinking about the future – completing your degree & post college – what do you expect this experience to be like?

**Home Tour Focus Areas**.

* **What’s in your bag?** Show us the materials you bring to school. Describe them. Walk through them. Explain them.
* **What’s in your laptop/computer?** Show us your computer. What programs do you use the most? What sites are bookmarked? What launching page do you have? What browser do you use?
* **What’s in your phone?** Show us your phone.What apps do you have installed? Show us.
* **Long-Term Scheduling and Planning**. Show us how you plan the courses you are going to take. How did you select professors? Do you research? How? How do you sign up? Show us.
* **Short-Term Scheduling and Planning**. Show us how you remember your assignments, projects, and the other things that have to get done.
* **Homework and Collaboration**. Show us your homework. Describe it. How do you do it? Where? When? With whom? **Jobs and Internships**. Have you had any jobs? Where? How did you get them? How were the experiences? Do you have a resume? Can we see it? Do you have work samples? Can we see them? Do you search for jobs? Show us.