

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IRB chair has signed an agreement with the databrary, which “is a restricted access data library specialized for storing, streaming, and sharing video and audio recording collected as research data or documentation.” The program also supports sharing many types of empirical data and documentation beyond video and audio. An IRB account was created with clinical trials.gov to comply with the requirements of a human subject’s study being conducted in the Kinesiology Department. Changes have been made to the website and the canvas site to streamline the IRB submission process and create a central location for important documents.

Finally, changes to the IRB chair compensation are currently being written up and will be submitted to Dr. Alexander Ross, the Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

II. THE COMMITTEE’S CHARGE

1. To review compliance with and administer the University of North Alabama policy on the Use of Human Research Participants
2. To examine the University of North Alabama policy on the Use of Human Research Participants annually and assess university practices in light of the information obtained
3. To propose changes in university practices relating to the use of human research participants
4. To handle any proposals the committee may make affecting university policy according to section C.2 “Shared Governance Procedure for Policy Change Recommendations”
5. To submit a final written report electronically by the first day of the fall semester to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost with a copy sent to the Chair of the SGEC.

III. THE COMMITTEE MET ON THE FOLLOWING DATE

- December 14, 2022

IV. WHAT WERE THE COMMITTEE’S ACTIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS THIS YEAR RELATIVE TO EACH OF THE ITEM’S CHARGE?

As of July 21, 2022, 110 proposals and modifications of existing projects have been submitted to the IRB committee. Of all the proposals, only one IRB proposal met the criteria for a full review, and a meeting was held to discuss the ethical considerations of the study. Following the meeting, the project was subsequently approved to begin data collection. Changes have been made to the website and the canvas site to streamline the IRB submission process and create a central location for important documents.

Finally, changes to the IRB chair compensation are currently being written up and will be submitted to Dr. Alexander Ross, the Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

V. WHAT ARE THE COMMITTEE'S WEAKNESSES?

1. Whenever the chair position changes hand, the IRB chair must be highly versed in ethical procedures and standards necessary to review IRB proposals.
2. The IRB chair position changes annually, which results in loss of experience, knowledge, consistency in procedures for submitting a protocol, and retaining IRB documentation and protocols.
3. The workload associated with the IRB chair makes it challenging to find tenured faculty members to volunteer to act as committee chair; as a result, this workload falls on junior/untured faculty members. This can place junior faculty in precarious positions with individuals across campus, considering that junior faculty acting as chair must take positions to ensure subjects are appropriately protected against senior faculty across the campus and within their department.
4. Lack of central location for important documents and files to be retained.
5. The current IRB protocol submission process is unnecessarily tedious, requiring multiple documents to be sent via email and managed solely by the IRB chair.

VI. What were the Committee's formal recommendations?

1. Improve communication of IRB policies and procedures to researchers and across campus to increase clarity about the process.
2. Improve incentives for the IRB chair position to make the position more attractive to senior faculty.
3. Create protections for junior faculty serving as the IRB chair and develop protocols to protect junior faculty from serving in this position.
4. Increase the time to serve as IRB chair for 2-3 years.

5. Make the IRB chair an administrative position and provide a three-hour reduction during the summer term. Provide IRB chair administrative supplement during the summer for one course to make the IRB chair position more attractive to senior faculty. Section 4.2.1 of the faculty handbook allows for this administrative supplementation.
6. Utilize the canvas portal to streamline and create a central location for all IRB documents to be stored for review.
7. Review the website and make necessary changes to improve clarity for researchers to submit and contact the IRB.
8. Publish policies and procedures for members on the IRB website for ease of access and review.