

Institutional Review Board
Minutes
March 22, 2012

Present: Lisa Ferrari, Andrew Gardner, Anne James, Mary Rose Lamb, Garrett Milam, Yvonne Swinth

Chair Milam called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. He reported having received 5 – 6 protocols for student research overseas that needed his approval in addition to the designate's. Otherwise, he experienced fewer student research grant applicants coming in for last-minute approval. Ferrari noted that she had been contacted by many students seeking last-minute guidance on and approval for their projects. Gardner suggested that a revised, more user-friendly webpage was the best way to mitigate this problem.

Lamb observed that many Biology students take a course devoted to writing research proposals. The first few weeks are given over to preparing Summer research grant applications. Perhaps students outside the sciences need an institutional way to get started early on project design. Gardner observed that, in his department, such a seminar had been only of limited help in improving students' research proposals. In addition, the creation of such seminars is a matter for departments, rather than for the IRB.

James commented that students often prepare better grant proposals after having had to prepare IRB protocols. Lamb agreed, commenting that sometimes the students who need the most help are the ones who come out with the best research proposals.

Milam reported on his meeting with Associate Dean Sarah Moore regarding an IRB informational meeting for students in the arts/humanities/social sciences who were applying for Summer research grants. Lamb suggested that such applicants be allowed to receive UEC funding contingent on subsequent IRB approval. Milam pointed out that the UEC funding process is competitive. Each student selected takes the place of another who might have been selected. If a student is selected contingent on IRB approval, and then fails to receive that approval, another deserving student has lost the opportunity to make good use of the funds.

Ferrari commented that the application process for student research grants has turned up some deeper IRB issues. Designates often do not know the process well or do not apply IRB guidelines appropriately. Some faculty advisors are completely unfamiliar with the IRB process. As a result, students get caught between inaccurate or inappropriate advice at the department level and the expectations of the IRB.

Milam suggested that the IRB has few ways to address the larger questions, other than to work on making the designate system more effective. Gardner reiterated that an improved website would make a big difference in this regard. Swinth proposed a “Designates’ FAQ” on the new IRB homepage. James was concerned that the designates, as members of the IRB, might not be following federal regulations. This would be especially harmful if the university’s research is ever subject to federal audit. Ferrari wasn’t sure that designates understood themselves as part of the IRB. James emphasized that designates carry out IRB functions. Gardner suggested that IRB outreach to individual designates would be the most effective way of addressing concerns.

Gardner reminded the Board of its intention to add student members. Ferrari reported that she had contacted outgoing ASUPS President Marcus Luther. Luther welcomed the opportunity for students and was open to having the Board nominate likely student members. Luther will pass that information on to Brian Ernst, incoming ASUPS President.

James will contact students in the graduate programs to find a suitable graduate student member. Gardner has spoken with a current undergraduate who is interested in serving. The Board agreed that the students could begin working with the IRB without any formal vote approving them individually by name.

Milam asked for approval of the minutes from March 1 and 8, 2012. Both sets of minutes were approved with minor modifications.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Ferrari
Secretary of the day