

Stonehill College
Institutional Review Board

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STONEHILL
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Institutional Review Board
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Dear Member of Stonehill College,

Three years ago, the Stonehill College Institutional Review Board sent a brochure to all members of the College to introduce the newly adopted policy regarding using human subjects in experimentation. Despite initial skepticism about the need for this Board, over seventy proposals have been submitted for consideration.

An IRB. “What’s that?” you wonder. Or, “Why do we need one?” Or, “Will it affect my work?” Here is some background on the role of an Institutional Review Board (IRB), why the College established one, and how it affects your work.

What is it? An IRB is an institution-wide committee certified by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Human Research Protections whose job is to protect the rights of human participants in any research conducted at that institution. It is not a scientific review board that determines whether a proposal has scientific merit; the IRB assumes that such a determination has been made before a proposal has been submitted to it. The IRB, however, may comment upon or require revision of the study’s design insofar as it has an impact on the study’s human participants.

Why does Stonehill College need one? The idea for an IRB at Stonehill arose from the faculty and also from the work of the Office of Academic Development. Federally sponsored grants require that any research involving human participants must be reviewed by an IRB. Also, other funding agencies require IRB approval for any of the research they support that involves human participants. Finally, some professional journals—those in psychology, for example—require IRB certification of research involving human participants before they will accept an article for publication. For these reasons, it became clear that Stonehill College researchers were at a disadvantage to those at other colleges that do have an IRB.

Where can I find these policies? All IRB materials are on the Board’s website:
<http://www.stonehill.edu/x11020.xml>

Where did these policies come from? They are federally mandated. When you read them, however, you might be tempted to say, “We’re never going to do that type of research here! Why is that policy in here?” The IRB decided to include up front all federal IRB policies and not try to determine which policies the College needs now. We chose this approach because the IRB doesn’t know about all of the research now being conducted here at the College, and also circumstances will change as the College achieves its strategic goals. Better, we thought, to have everything in place now.

Do these policies affect me? Stonehill College has decided that all research involving human participants conducted at the College must follow these policies. This policy is College-wide; it applies not only to the academic division but also to current research or planned research regardless of funding or publication status.

If, therefore, you are wondering if an IRB review applies to your work, the first question to ask is, “Is my work research?” (“Research” is defined in the policy.) If it isn’t, the policy does not apply. If you answered “yes,” then the next question is, “Does my research involve human participants?” If not, again the policy doesn’t apply. If yes, then “Is my research exempt from an IRB review?” The IRB determines this. If it is exempt, your research may go ahead; if it is not, it needs IRB approval before it can start.

Research involving students as part of their instruction normally does not need full IRB approval. The policy statement found on the website provides more information about this question.

The Institutional Review Board hopes you find this information useful. If you have questions, please consult our website or Ms. Troupe.