

## **Q&A regarding the Human Experimentation Review Board (HERB)**

### **What is HERB?**

HERB is an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that was created by the Psychology Department in 2003 to review projects using human subjects. It is the duty of IRBs to protect research subjects from unethical treatment in research.

### **What projects does HERB review?**

HERB acts as one of three IRBs at Wagner College and reviews proposals from departments beyond Psychology and administrative offices. Community-based research should be reviewed by the Community Engagement Review Board (CERB). Research within the Education Department should be reviewed by the Education Department IRB. Medical research is not reviewed by any IRB at Wagner College (please see below).

### **Does Wagner College have Federalwide Assurance (FWA)?**

Wagner College has been approved for Federalwide Assurance (FWA) from the Federal Office of Human Research Protections (*FWA00022819*).

### **Is HERB registered/accredited?**

HERB is registered with the Federal Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP registration *IRB00004718 Wagner College IRB #1 – HERB*) and meets their standards. HERB is not accredited. Accreditation is usually something sought by those IRBs that review medical studies and often involves the hiring of full time personnel to administer the IRB.

### **How can one seek review of a medical study?**

Faculty/staff conducting medical research would have to seek IRB approval from an affiliated institution in the area that has that expertise. For example, some faculty members at Wagner have utilized the IRB at Staten Island University Hospital. Furthermore, since HERB does not meet NIH standards for IRB administration (again, we would have to hire full time staff to meet their standards), anyone applying for an NIH grant would have to seek approval from an IRB that meets NIH standards. For definitions of the research HERB will not review, see the attached decision tree that we have created to assist you.

### **Who serves on HERB?**

HERB has at least 6 members: two from the psychology department (chair and vice chair), one from biology (scientist with little experience with human research), one faculty member with no expertise in science, one community member (unaffiliated with Wagner), and one student. There is an alternate member from psychology should a psychology member need to recuse him/herself. This array satisfies expertise and gender balance requirements of OHRP. The members are appointed by the chair of the Psychology Department.

**How do I know whether I need IRB review? How do I know whether I submit to HERB or CERB?**

See the attached decision tree for assistance.

**Will HERB review my proposal for methodological/experimental design soundness?**

No. HERB will only address methodological issues that pertain to the ethical collection of data from humans.

**How can I avoid pitfalls in HERB review?**

Here are some suggestions:

Provide subjects with informed consent form. A sample form can be obtained from the HERB website.

Use deception of subjects only when absolutely necessary.

If you are doing research with other institutions (e.g. schools, clinics), have letters of intent and/or agreement from those involved and include copies with your application.

Complete all sections of the application and include copies of all materials (e.g. questionnaires, images, text) that will be used.

**Does HERB have an expedited review procedure?**

Yes, this is a universal feature of IRBs. Many projects (e.g. those using only questionnaires/surveys) do not require review by the full committee and are approved by “chair’s action.” All committee members are informed of decisions made by the chair. See HERB procedures available on website for more details.

**Is this just another roadblock to conducting research?**

No. HERB is here to help you use ethical methods in the use of human subjects in research. This will aid you in conducting your study and publishing your results.

## Determining whether you need IRB review for your research involving human subjects

It is possible that the journal you would like to submit an article to or a granting agency requires review by a research ethics committee or IRB. It is also likely that the professional organization you are a member of requires it. These considerations aside...

