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Creating a Culture of Compliance with Integrity: It Takes More Than Solid Procedures and a Snazzy Submission System

Hila Berger
Montclair State University, bergerh@montclair.edu

Susan Pereny
Montclair State University

Amy Krenzer
Montclair State University

Mylka Biascochea
Montclair State University

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It Takes More Than Solid Policies and a Snazzy Submission System

Hila Feldman Berger, MPH, CIP, Research Integrity and Compliance, Montclair State University
Susan Pereny, Graduate Student, Montclair State University
Amy Krenzer, CIP, Institutional Review Board, Montclair State University
Mylka Biascochea, CIM, Institutional Review Board, Montclair State University

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Problem Statement

IRB Offices can often have contentious relationships with researchers, and building a culture of compliance with integrity, as well as a level of mutual trust and respect, can often be a very overwhelming task.

Solid policies and procedures and a user-friendly electronic submission system are now best practices for streamlining IRB operations. However, our ongoing goal is to find novel approaches to outreach and education, subsequently allowing us to build that mutual understanding of purpose and collaboration.

Student researchers make up over 40% of our initial IRB submissions. With a high turn-around of researchers, it is important to make a fast and positive first impression. An evidence-based approach has been to create infographics to communicate IRB guidance. We also realized that many of our new researchers require additional face-to-face training, and subsequently we have developed targeted training offered in the classroom and throughout the academic semester.

Figure 1. Infographics
Before

After!

Figure 2. IRB or Compliance SWAG

Future Uses and Utility for Other Organizations

These program activities can be brought into effect at any IRB or Human Research Protection Program. There are multiple reasonably priced vendors with easy-to-use infographic tools (e.g., Piktochart, InfoActive, Easel.ly). There is no doubt that resources may be limited here and elsewhere; however, we know these approaches have built rapport and reputation over the last few years. With the ability to do mass communications in a delivery format that is appealing to our users, we have seen an increasing impact on the positive responses the IRB receives.

Furthermore, the ongoing in-class support has really been advantageous not only for the IRB reputation but for the student experience. Students are regularly thanking IRB staff for their customer service and assistance during the process. This improvement in reputation has been a driving force in the culture of compliance.

Utilizing Multiple Modalities for Outreach and Education

We have implemented multiple modalities. Some of the outreach examples below are novel while others are modified best practices.

• Creating unique infographics to visually communicate our policies. Our office uses an infographic software to elevate lackluster emails with copious text into visually pleasing, eye-catching educational material. See Figure 1.
• Offering your community IRB swag in a cost effective way. Our office creates magnets in-house that have become ubiquitous on filing cabinets. For example, one magnet states "I Support Research at Montclair State University," and magnets include important URLs. They are extremely popular, and several hundred have been distributed at events. See Figure 2.
• Attending students' research events and making the faculty advisors feel appreciated. We set up a table and create a large poster congratulating students and their faculty mentors for obtaining IRB approval. Many of our student researchers are new researchers, and that extra appreciation is well received. We also host an annual Student Research Panel with students invited to speak about their experience in being new researchers on campus. See Figure 3.
• Attending all New Faculty Orientations with a smile. This is where you capture the new faculty at a time when they are most willing to learn about how to best go about their research. Many new faculty contact us immediately after the event. See Figure 3.
• Offering workshops (N=19 for FY16) and guest lecturing as often as possible. See Figure 3. When we guest lecture (N=20 for FY16) not only do our students learn about compliance, but our faculty can be reminded of existing and new policies. Recent post workshop surveys show 95% of participants felt better prepared to submit on our electronic system after our "Cayuse IRB for Beginners" workshop.
  • Total number of Cayuse IRB Workshop attendees: 41
  • % of survey respondents that feel they will use what they learned: 91%
  • % of survey respondents that feel more prepared to submit on Cayuse IRB: 95%
• Offering a welcoming space where students with poor application submissions are regularly invited to meet with the staff and go over submissions before they are sent out to reviewers.
• Offering online learning modules that can be integrated into a faculty member's course. Nearly every discipline at our University offers a Research Methods course. We built recorded lectures, materials, and a quiz that can be imported into our Learning Management System. See Figure 4.
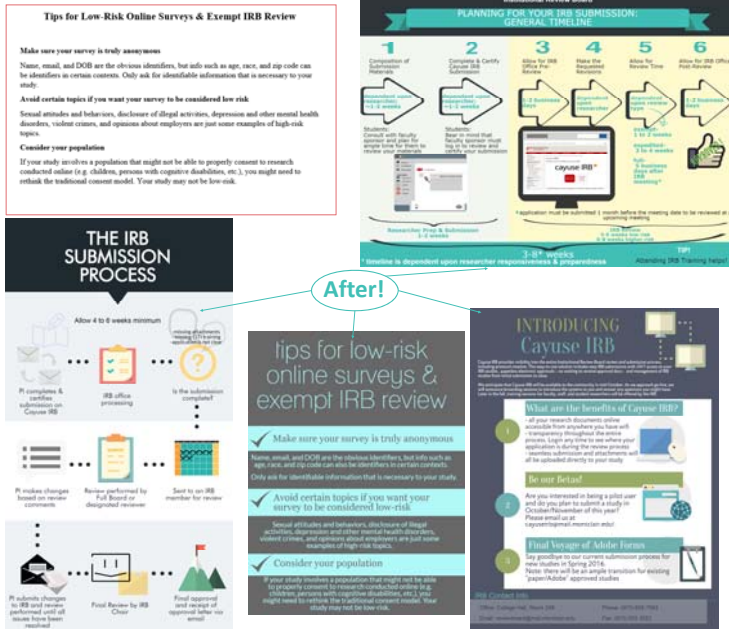
Figure 3. Outreach and Engagement with Faculty, Students and Staff

Workshops & Events Offered in FY16	Frequency	Attendees
Cayuse IRB for Beginners	14	41
IRB 101	3	25
Student Research Panel	1	20
Up Close & Personal with the IRB	1	13
In-Person consultations	48	48+
In-class lectures	20	-
Total	**87**	**147+**

Prezi Presentation to New Faculty

IRB Staff at the Student Research Symposium

Figure 4. CANVAS learning modules