

# PANEL:

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS: WHY, WHAT AND HOW?

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### Abstract

*Most universities in the United States have a group that is charged with protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects. These groups, often called Institutional Review Board, are mandated by Federal government regulations. Social and behavioral scientists must comply with these boards. This panel will discuss the history behind Institutional Review Boards, the various levels of reviews, and offer advice for dealing with the review process.*

**Keywords:** Research protection, human subjects, Institutional Review

### Overview

As the result of the infamous Tuskegee Experiments and other ethically-questionable research, institutions that receive United States federal funds must establish processes for the review of human-subjects research. These entities, often called Institutional Review Boards, are charged with the task of balancing the protection of human research subjects with the need to advance knowledge through scientific study.

A considerable portion of information systems research examines human beliefs, perceptions and behaviors. As a result, many information systems researchers must deal with their universities' Institutional Review Boards. The process of gaining IRB approval is often time consuming as well as frustrating.

Fortunately, securing IRB approval can be a smooth process. There are ways to help the IRB (or its designated reviewer) by structuring your submission correctly, including critical information, and so on. Taking a few, relatively simple steps, often allows the researcher and the IRB to work together to further a university's research mission.

The proposed panel will discuss a number of issues related to socio-behavioral IRBs, including the genesis and need for IRBs, what critical information that should be included in protocol submissions and informed consent documents, and how to smoothly navigate the process of gaining IRB approval.

### Structure of the Panel

The panel will consist of three to five experienced information systems researchers who have served on Institutional Review Boards. Such backgrounds enable the panelists to see both sides of the IRB picture.

The panel session will begin with a short presentation of the history of the IRB. Understanding this background is helpful in viewing the IRB as a necessary part of the research landscape rather than just another administrative headache. After this history lesson, panelists will discuss different levels of IRB, including full board review, expedited review and exempt. Understanding the criteria used to determine the level of review required may be helpful as researchers design their studies.

Next, the panel will discuss the information that IRB reviewers need in order to fully understand a research protocol. Much of the time spent in the IRB review process is consumed by the IRB reviewer requesting additional information or clarification from researchers. Including the critical information up-front, researchers can shave considerable time off the review process.

Finally, the panel will discuss how to structure protocol submissions and how to deal with IRB communications and, if necessary, present protocols to the full board. By understanding these matters, researchers will make the review process timelier and less frustrating.

The panel will be highly interactive. Questions and comments will be encouraged throughout the session, and time will be set aside at the end for general discussion. By making the panel interactive, panelists will be able to draw from the experiences of the audience members, and also will be able to adjust content to meet the needs of the audience.

The vast majority of IS research will, at some point in their careers, navigate the IRB approval process. We hope that our panel will make this road less rocky.