

ANNUAL REPORT

Institutional Review Board

**University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama**

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Committee Chair

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Date submitted

Submitted to: Dr. Becky Smith
Chair, Shared Governance Executive Committee

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

I. Executive Summary

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed a total of 71 new research proposals, 9 project renewals, and 17 addendums. Of the new proposals, 4 required full board review due to the inclusion of participants from protected populations (i.e., children and prisoners).

Although the full board review for Protocol #2024-034 was initiated during the previous academic year, the Principal Investigator (PI) submitted revisions during the 2024–2025 review period, and the committee evaluated the updated materials accordingly.

As of the end of the academic year, three new proposals remain in pending status, all awaiting revisions from the respective PIs.

II. The Committee’s Charge (from the Shared Governance Document)

1. To review compliance with and administer the University of North Alabama policy on the Use of Human Research Participants
2. To examine the University of North Alabama policy on the Use of Human Research Participants annually and assess university practices in light of the information obtained
3. To propose changes in university practices relating to the use of human research participants
4. To handle any proposals the committee may make affecting university policy according to section C.2 “Shared Governance Procedure for Policy Change Recommendations”
5. To submit a final written report electronically by the first day of the fall semester to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost with a copy sent to the Chair of the SGEC.

III. The Committee met on the following dates:

October 11, 2024

- Full board review for IRB Protocol # 2024-043

November 5, 2024

- Full board review for IRB Protocol # 2024-062

January 15, 2025

- Completion of committee self-evaluation SGEN survey

February 14, 2025

- Full board review for IRB Protocol #2025-005

IV. What were the Committee's actions and accomplishments this year relative to each of the items of the charge?

- a. During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) received 71 new research proposals, 9 project renewals, and 17 addendums. Of the new proposals, 4 required full board review due to the inclusion of participants from protected populations (i.e., children and prisoners). Three proposals remain pending, awaiting revisions from the respective Principal Investigators (PIs).
- b. All IRB members successfully completed the IRB Member Basic Course through CITI Training.
- c. Committee member roles and permissions were configured within the Canvas system to ensure secure document storage. Canvas was also used as the primary communication platform to notify researchers of required revisions and to provide updates on the status of submissions, modifications, and renewals.
- d. A prisoner representative with the appropriate background and experience was appointed to serve on the IRB, in compliance with federal guidelines.
- e. Protocols were reviewed promptly and within the designated timeframes.

V. What were the Committee's formal recommendations?

- a. When there is a change in the IRB chair position, it is essential that the incoming chair possesses a strong understanding of the ethical standards and procedures necessary for reviewing research protocols.
 - i. The current chair successfully completed all required training and actively engaged in ongoing self-directed learning to support continued growth and competency in the role.

- b. The annual rotation of the IRB chair position presents ongoing challenges, including the loss of institutional knowledge, inconsistencies in protocol submission procedures, and difficulty maintaining continuity in documentation practices. When a proposal was submitted by a faculty member within the chair's own department, it was appropriately delegated to another committee member to avoid any potential conflict of interest.
- c. The committee recommends establishing a standing monthly meeting rather than scheduling meetings only when proposals requiring full board review are submitted. This approach would promote consistency, reduce delays, and alleviate the administrative burden of coordinating ad hoc meetings through scheduling tools such as Doodle polls.

VI. What does the Committee plan to accomplish?

A. In the coming year?

The new chair, vice chair, and current committee plan to continue meeting the charge of this committee.

B. In future years?

No basis for judgement on this question.

VII. What are the Committee's weaknesses?

- a. One challenge identified during the 2024–2025 term was inconsistent attendance by committee members during full board reviews.
 - i. To accommodate varying schedules, Doodle Polls were used to identify meeting times that aligned with the availability of the majority of members. Although 100% attendance was not achieved, a quorum was reached for all meetings except one. In that instance, the committee completed the review and voted via e-business following email correspondence and distribution of meeting materials.
 - ii. Meetings were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams to promote accessibility and encourage broader participation.
 - iii. For members unable to attend, meeting minutes were shared via email with an invitation to provide additional comments or concerns. Any feedback received was incorporated into the final response shared with the Principal Investigator (PI) for required revisions.
- b. A second challenge involved tracking expired protocols. While the chair maintained a spreadsheet of active proposals, the annual transition of the chair role made it difficult to ensure continuity in tracking and following up on expired studies.

A. What can the Shared Governance Committee help you do to address the weaknesses?

It is my understanding that the University is exploring software solutions that could help streamline IRB processes, improve protocol tracking, and reduce the administrative burden on the IRB Chair.

VIII. Comments

N/A