

John Habel | habel@email.wcu.edu
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, North Carolina, USA

Obtaining Approval for and Promoting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning via the Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) exists for the protection of human and animal subjects in research. While it is extremely unlikely that members of the faculty and staff would subject students to any risk of physical or emotional harm in their work in the scholarship of teaching and learning and (SoTL), their projects could raise issues of confidentiality of the quality or content of student work, liability, withholding learning opportunities, grade assignment, informed consent, and other psychological, legal, or social concerns. Since IRBs are not a regular aspect of the research process in many disciplines in the humanities, arts and natural sciences, some potential SoTL practitioners in these disciplines might view required IRB procedures as impediments to engagement in SoTL.

An objective of this presentation is to address the concerns of those who lack experience with the IRB process by providing:

- a brief description of the IRB review process, and
- an overview of potential ethical issues that can arise in SoTL projects.

An additional objective of this presentation is to make the case that IRB approval can be a powerful means of:

- promoting SoTL as a legitimate form of scholarship,
- rebutting the position of those who believe SoTL to be inferior to traditional, discipline-based research, and
- demonstrating both the ethical integrity and the methodological rigor of a SoTL project.

This presentation is interactive and engages participants in discussion about recommended procedures for obtaining informed consent. Discussion also addresses ethical issues in applied research about how and/or what our students learn in our courses. In addition, the presenter provides models of informed consent statements that could be adapted to SoTL projects in a variety of disciplines.