The deadline to submit paper copies for the next IRB Full Board meeting is August 12, 2011.
The meeting will take place on August 29, 2011.

When Do You Need to Submit for Review?
All research activity that involves human subjects should be submitted for review. Sometimes the question of whether an activity meets the strict definition of “research involving human subjects” can be complex.

Is the Activity Research?
The first question to ask is whether the activity is research. Research in this context is defined as “a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.”
If a student project produces data that will only be shared within the classroom as part of a course assignment, the student is not conducting research under this definition; the activity is designed for an educational purpose rather than to develop generalizable knowledge.
Similarly, university departments that conduct a survey in order to assess the needs of their faculty, staff or students are not conducting research under this definition; the activity is designed for internal quality improvement, rather than to create knowledge that is generalizable outside of the local context.

If the department or student undertakes the same activity with the intent of creating knowledge to share with a broader audience, that is a strong indicator that the activity is research. Sharing that knowledge often implies that the information being developed is intended to be generalizable beyond the classroom or department.

Is the Information About Living Individuals?
If an activity is research and involves interaction with human subjects, the next question to ask is whether the information collected is about living individuals.
A survey that asks newspaper editors about their circulation volume is not asking for information about living individuals. A survey asking editors for their opinions on the best way to increase circulation is human subjects research because it is collecting information about the opinions of the editors.

Data: Is the Information Private and Individually Identifiable?
If gathering the information does not involve the researcher interacting with the individuals, the activity may still be human subjects research.

If the information is individually identifiable and private, the activity is considered human subjects research. “Individually identifiable” means that the investigator can readily ascertain the subjects’ identities. “Private” refers to the behavior occurring in a context where an individual can reasonably expect no observation or recording is taking place, or that the information was provided for a specific purpose and the subject could reasonably expect the information would not be made public.

How Can ORS Help?
The IRB program coordinator can help you determine whether your activity requires IRB review before you complete the IRB submission process. Contact the IRB program coordinator assigned to your department via email with a brief description of your project for assistance.

Educational Workshops
Multi-discipline educational sessions and workshops are available to assist you with IRB submissions. The first hour of each session is a presentation; the second hour is a workshop along with a Q&A session. For more information and registration, visit http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/news/
Class & Topic: RC202 Institutional Review Board (IRB) Special Topics: Surveys & Interviews
Date & Time: August 17th, 2011 from 2pm–4pm; Place: ACE 2.402

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