

## **Social Science Division Institutional Review Board** *Guidelines for Faculty Developing Course Protocols*

In the interest of providing a resource for faculty members in the social sciences who integrate research in their courses or who have students engaged in community-based learning opportunities, the Social Science Division Institutional Review Board (SSIRB) has developed an advisory, optional review procedure for course protocols. We intend for this review procedure to provide faculty an opportunity to consider the often difficult ethical issues involved in designing and supervising these activities for students.

As faculty members, we hold the first line of responsibility in insuring that our students are engaged in ethical conduct while completing course-based research and community-based learning projects. Careful consideration of the ethical issues involved in such activities is necessary to ensure that we uphold our responsibilities to both our disciplines and to Macalester. Furthermore, in reflecting on these ethical issues, we provide ourselves with the opportunity to help instruct our students in the ethical traditions of inquiry of social science.

To these ends, the SSIRB has instituted a voluntary advisory process through which faculty may submit course protocols concerning student research within classes and community-based learning opportunities. This process encourages faculty to reflect on the ethical issues involved and consider how they will instruct students about these issues. The SSIRB will assess proposed course protocols, offering feedback and suggestions to the faculty member submitting such a protocol. Projects involving highly sensitive research, however, are not suitable for this course protocol process and should be pursued through standard institutional review channels. If unsure about whether a proposed course protocol involves highly sensitive research, a faculty member could submit the protocol to the SSIRB for a preliminary review.

Finally, with the permission of faculty who submitted protocols, the SSIRB will compile completed protocols to serve as a resource library for social science faculty. These protocols can help faculty who are developing new courses or new assignments involving student research or community-based learning opportunities consider the ethical issues involved.

### **Student Research within Classes**

In some social science courses, we may wish to have students engage in research to learn about the connection between course materials and social science research. While such activities are common in research methods courses, faculty members may wish to design student research projects in a variety of substantive or topical courses. In both cases, developing a course protocol can help ensure that our students uphold high standards of research ethics.

A course protocol should include:

1. A brief description of the research assignment, including its objectives and its relation to the course goals
2. Identification of potential risks to research participants and students and means to decrease these risks
3. Procedures used to ensure informed consent

4. Provisions for educating students on responsible conduct of research

### **Community-based Learning Opportunities**

While no bright-line separates student research and community-based learning opportunities, there are some activities that may be included in courses for which the primary purpose is the experience of community engagement. These activities raise distinct ethical issues.

A course protocol should include:

1. A brief description of the learning opportunity, including its objectives, relations to course goals, and how students will use this opportunity in the course
2. Identification of potential conflicts of supervisory authority (i.e., conflicts between professor and site supervisor, internship coordinator, or community organization) and how these may impact both the student activities and the learning opportunity
3. Identification of the potential risks to participants and students and means to decrease these risks
4. Consideration of the students' general preparation for the activities
5. Provisions for educating students on the ethical issues involved in the activities

*Adopted: April 20, 2005  
Revision January 29, 2007*