

## **Social Science Division Institutional Review Board** *Purpose, Composition, and Activities*

### **Statement of Purpose**

The Social Science Division Institutional Review Board (SSIRB) exists to serve departments and individuals within the Social Sciences Division at Macalester College as part of college-wide Institutional Review procedures. Specifically, the SSIRB serves:

- to encourage ethical practices in research and human subjects engagement throughout the social sciences;
- to provide information and other resources to students and faculty about ethical conduct; and
- to ensure that proposed projects adequately address potential risks by reviewing proposed research projects and course protocols.

The SSIRB encourages departments to develop policies and guidelines for faculty and students that integrate disciplinary-specific considerations with the institutional concerns represented by the SSIRB.

### **Composition**

The SSIRB will consist of at least three faculty members from affiliated departments in the Social Sciences Division. These affiliated departments include: Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, Geography, Environmental Studies, International Studies, Economics, and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. Other departments with social science faculty not covered by a different specialized institutional review board are welcome to affiliate. (These departments include: American Studies, Humanities Media & Cultural Studies, and Linguistics.) Affiliated departments are expected to contribute a representative to the SSIRB on a rotating basis, with terms of service staggered to ensure continuity in SSIRB operations. The SSIRB may also include the chair or another member of Macalester's Institutional Review Board on an advisory, ex-officio basis.

### **Activities**

The SSIRB will meet three times per semester (and may meet on an *ad hoc* basis) to review research proposals and course protocols. In reviewing proposals and protocols, the SSIRB may delegate decision-making to individual members if such a proposal or protocol qualifies for expedited review.

As part of college-wide Institutional Review, the SSIRB serves as an important means through which the Macalester community is educated about research subjects' protection and research ethics. To this end, the SSIRB has prepared a series of documents for use by member departments and may make presentations concerning research subjects' protection to the Social Science Colloquium and other such interested bodies.

The SSIRB provides documentation of its activities as part of college-wide Institutional Review procedures. To this end, the SSIRB will maintain a record of submitted research proposals, submitted course protocols, and SSIRB responses and documents. In addition, the SSIRB prepares an annual report of activities for Macalester's Institutional Review Board.

### **Review of Research Proposals**

The SSIRB reviews student research proposals. In reviewing such proposals, the SSIRB will assess: the extent to which the risks that the research poses to potential participants are identified; the sufficiency of the means that are used to minimize these potential risks; the adequacy of measures to ensure research subjects' confidentiality and/or anonymity; and the extent to which satisfactory measures to ensure informed consent exist. After the assessment, the SSIRB will either:

- Approve / conditionally approve the student research proposal – The SSIRB typically offers suggestions about issues that the student should address in greater detail in consultation with the faculty advisor before starting the research. In most all cases, these issues do not involve manner of serious risk, but involve important concerns about the research process. In such instances, the SSIRB does not require the student to re-submit the proposal for further review, but gives the supervising faculty authority to determine when the conditions are satisfied. This approach to student research proposals preserves the educational value of ethical deliberation between the student and advisor, leaving a few questions for the student to resolve before beginning the data collection;
- Request the student submit a revised proposal - If the SSIRB does not have sufficient ground to evaluate the adequacy of protection or the risks of the proposal conclusively, it may ask the student to submit a revised proposal for further review;
- Forward the proposal to the campus-wide IRB – If the SSIRB determines that proposed research involves an elevated level of risk, it will request the student to submit the proposal to the campus-wide IRB for review; or
- Reject the proposal – If the SSIRB determines that the risks of the proposed research outweigh the potential benefits or that the proposed research violates disciplinary research ethics, it will reject the proposal.

### **Review of Course Protocols**

The SSIRB acts in an advisory capacity to review faculty-prepared course protocols with the aim of insuring that community-based learning activities and student research pursued within a course of study (other than student research in a senior seminar) conform to the guidelines of ethical research practices. In reviewing course protocols, the SSIRB will assess: the adequacy of instruction and guidance to students on ethical conduct and the sufficiency of risk assessment and informed consent procedures. After the assessment, the SSIRB will communicate any suggestions or concerns to the faculty member.

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