



IRB News

Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects

April 2020, Page 1

Welcome Campus IRB Student Representatives!

We are pleased to welcome Rachele Kromash and Samantha Castelblanco as the new ETSU IRB student representatives. During our Fall 2019 monthly meetings of the Campus IRB, the board members decided to invite two graduate student representatives to join the board. As ETSU has many student researchers, the IRB agreed that students could benefit from participation on the board and that students could bring a unique perspective to the committee.

Ms. Kromash is currently in the Clinical Psychology PhD program here at ETSU and serving as a graduate research assistant in the Crime, Addiction, and Re-Entry (CARE) Lab. She earned her Master's in Clinical Psychological Science and B.A. from University of Maryland, and she has gained valuable research experience working in labs at University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, and George Mason University. In addition to her research experience, she has experience in both the clinical setting and in teaching.

Ms. Castelblanco is currently in the Experimental Psychology PhD program and serving as a graduate research assistant in the Self and Relationships Lab at ETSU. She earned her M.A. in Psychology at East Carolina University and B.S. in Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. She also has valuable experience in research and teaching.

We are happy to have two highly qualified new members on the board. They will gain first-hand experience in the protocol review process and will have the same roles and responsibilities as all other IRB members. They will be tasked with serving as a liaison between the IRB and student researchers at ETSU to help improve the research review experience for their peers.

Importance of Disaster Plans for Research

The current COVID-19 pandemic situation brings to the forefront the overwhelming importance for institutions, IRBs, and researchers to have written disaster plans in place. Historically, research institutions have only prepared for the impact of local and regional weather events such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and flooding. These types of events require rapid response to ensure immediate safety of individuals with focus on overcoming the limitations faced after the often brief event is over such as regaining electricity and accessing files. While no one could have prepared for the prolonged affects that we are facing now with the need for practicing social distancing, disaster preparedness can help mitigate the challenges.

A written plan should address the following key areas:

- Communication plan with key stakeholders
- Data access, storage, and integrity
- Compliance and reporting
- Practical modifications or adaptations
- Ramping down or halting all activity

PIs and research teams should attempt to anticipate and identify issues that need to be considered in order to protect and sustain their research during and after a disaster. The first and foremost issue is ensuring the health and safety of both the research team and subjects. Secondly, researchers should focus efforts on ensuring compliance and preserving scientific integrity. Please visit the [ETSU IRB website](#) for additional information and resources related to COVID-19.



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