

ANNUAL REPORT

Institutional Review Board

**University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama**

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Committee Chair

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Date submitted

Submitted to: Dr. Lauren G. Killen
Chair, Shared Governance Executive Committee

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026

I. Executive Summary

During the 2025–2026 academic year, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed a total of 66 new research proposals, 15 project renewals, and 33 addendums. Of the new proposals, 4 required full board review due to the inclusion of participants from protected populations (i.e., children and prisoners).

The IRB also underwent a comprehensive operational restructuring. This initiative focused on optimizing committee meeting dynamics, refining the protocol evaluation framework, and streamlining the overall proposal review lifecycle to enhance efficiency and maintain strict regulatory compliance.

As of the end of the academic year, three new proposals remain in pending status, all awaiting revisions from the respective PIs.

II. The Committee's Charge (from the Shared Governance Document)

1. To review compliance with and administer the University of North Alabama policy on the Use of Human Research Participants
2. To examine the University of North Alabama policy on the Use of Human Research Participants annually and assess university practices in light of the information obtained
3. To propose changes in university practices relating to the use of human research participants
4. To handle any proposals the committee may make affecting university policy according to section C.2 "Shared Governance Procedure for Policy Change Recommendations"
5. To submit a final written report electronically by the first day of the fall semester to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost with a copy sent to the Chair of the SGEC.

III. The Committee met on the following dates:

August 27, 2025

- Full board review for IRB Protocol # 2025-001

September 11, 2025

- Full board review for IRB Protocol # 2025-024

January 14, 2026

- Completion of committee self-evaluation SGEC survey

January 14, 2026

- Full board review for IRB Protocol # 2026-002

March 11, 2026

- Full board review for IRB Protocol #2026-008

IV. What were the Committee's actions and accomplishments this year relative to each of the items of the charge?

- a. During the 2025–2026 academic year, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) received 66 new research proposals, 15 project renewals, and 33 addendums. Of the new proposals, 4 required full board review due to the inclusion of participants from protected populations (i.e., children and prisoners). Three proposals remain pending, awaiting revisions from the respective Principal Investigators (PIs).
- b. All IRB members successfully completed the IRB Member Basic Course through CITI Training.
- c. Committee member roles and permissions were configured within the Canvas system to ensure secure document storage. Canvas was also used as the primary communication platform to notify researchers of required revisions and to provide updates on the status of submissions, modifications, and renewals.
- d. A prisoner representative with the appropriate background and experience was appointed to serve on the IRB, in compliance with federal guidelines.
- e. Protocols were reviewed promptly and within the designated timeframes.
- f. The IRB was restructured to better serve the university in optimizing committee meeting dynamics, refining the protocol evaluation framework, and streamlining the overall proposal review lifecycle to enhance efficiency and maintain strict regulatory compliance.
- g. A new IRB website was created – Slate. Slate will be used in the following academic years for IRB proposal submissions and revisions.
- h. IRB was successfully moved from SGEC to the Provost office to better align with federal and university guidelines.

V. What were the Committee's formal recommendations?

- a. When there is a change in the IRB chair position, it is essential that the incoming chair possesses a strong understanding of the ethical standards and procedures necessary for reviewing research protocols.
- i. The current chair successfully completed all required training and actively engaged in ongoing self-directed learning to support continued growth and competency in the role.
- b. The annual rotation of the IRB chair position presents ongoing challenges, including the loss of institutional knowledge, inconsistencies in protocol submission procedures, and difficulty maintaining continuity in documentation practices.
- c. The IRB should obtain a research compliance officer to ensure ethics are maintained with ongoing IRB approved studies.

VI. What does the Committee plan to accomplish?

A. In the coming year?

The new chair, vice chair, and current committee plan to continue meeting the charge of this committee.

B. In future years?

No basis for judgement on this question.

VII. What are the Committee's weaknesses?

- a. One challenge identified during the 2025–2026 term was inconsistent attendance by committee members during full board reviews.
 - i. To accommodate varying schedules, Doodle Polls were used to identify meeting times that aligned with the availability of the majority of members. Although 100% attendance was not achieved, a quorum was reached for all meetings except one. In that instance, the committee completed the review and voted via e-business following email correspondence and distribution of meeting materials.
 - ii. Meetings were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams to promote accessibility and encourage broader participation.
 - iii. For members unable to attend, meeting minutes were shared via email with an invitation to provide additional comments or concerns. Any feedback received was incorporated into the final response shared with the Principal Investigator (PI) for required revisions.
- b. A second challenge involves university PIs submitting incomplete research proposals to meet the updated IRB submission timeline. Their aim is to get a half-completed proposal approved by the IRB and then submit an addendum at a later date, since addendums are completed on a different timeline (e.g., faster timeline). It may be worth considering including addendums as part of the new review timeline for the IRB so that it encourages PIs to submit their best research proposal initially.

A. What can the Shared Governance Committee help you do to address the weaknesses?

This question should now be addressed to the Provost office since IRB will now be housed here moving forward.

VIII. Comments

N/A