

Institutional Review Board of the Cooper Union

2013 Annual Report

Prof. Robert Q. Topper, Chair

The Institutional Review Board of the Cooper Union (IRB) is responsible for the review and supervision of all human subject research carried out by faculty, staff, administrators and students of the Cooper Union. This report encompasses IRB activity during the 2013 calendar year. In part, the statement of purpose of the IRB reads as follows:

“The Institutional Review Board of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art (IRB) has the responsibility for the oversight of all research involving human subjects conducted or supported through research activities which are conducted by faculty, students and/or staff associated with the Cooper Union. The goal of this oversight is to protect the rights, privacy and welfare of all human participants in research while respecting, supporting and enhancing the responsible and ethical scholarship activities of the faculty, students and staff.

To achieve this goal, the IRB has the authority to review, approve, modify or disapprove research protocols submitted by faculty, staff and student investigators which involve human subjects as well as to monitor and review their progress. The review and monitoring processes are to be guided by federal rules and regulations, and are based on the Protection of Human Subject Code of Federal Regulations, the Belmont Report and provisions of 45CFR46 – Protection of Human Subjects. These regulations require institutions receiving federal funds to have all research involving human participants be approved by an IRB.”

The following individuals served on the IRB during 2013. Individuals whose names are marked with (*) served as IRB secretary for one or more meetings. All members have completed the NIH Office of Extramural Research’s online training program entitled “Protecting Human Research Participants.”¹

Continuing Members from 2012:

Melody Baglione, Ph.D.; Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Julie Castelluzzo, M.S.; Librarian (*)

Toby Cumberbatch, Ph.D.; Professor of Electrical Engineering

Benjamin Davis, Ph.D.; Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering (*)

Christina Ho, M.Eng.; External IRB Member; Con Edison

Robert Q. Topper, Ph.D.; Professor of Chemistry, IRB Chair (*)

New Members (joined during 2013):

Yashodan C. Risbud, M.Eng.; Director, C.V. Starr Research Foundation and Adjunct Professor

Former Members (left during 2013):

T.C. Westcott, M.B.A.; Vice President for Finance, Administration and Treasurer (*)

¹ <https://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php> . Accessed 6/4/2014.

The IRB schedules four regular meetings each year, typically twice each academic semester. A meeting is cancelled if there are no proposals pending for Full review or other business pending. In 2013 three meetings were held and one was cancelled. A quorum was present for every meeting.

Any work which involves physical experimentation of any kind must first be approved by the Faculty Safety Coordinator as well as the Dean(s) of the school or faculty within which the Principle Investigator is affiliated. However, some experimental work is permitted by Federal law to be reviewed within the Expedited category while other projects require Full review, which occurs during a regular IRB meeting. In 2013, two proposals received Full review and four received Expedited review, and all were approved.

When proposals receive Expedited review status, the work is done online and separate from the regular meetings. Some work only involves a relatively straightforward use of surveys, and for this sort of study a streamlined process has been established. The process is only used for certain kinds of survey-based studies, which can claim Exempt status through a self-guided application. Previously only paper-based surveys were allowed to use the streamlined process but in 2013, this process was modified to allow the use of electronic survey tools as long as certain criteria are satisfied. Although this mechanism was not used during 2013, it was used extensively in 2011 and 2012, and at this writing several investigators are using it during 2014. Work which falls within the Exempt category need not file an annual report, but all other studies are required to submit. Failure to submit an annual or closure report minimally results in nonconsideration of future proposals until the report is submitted. All proposals that have been approved through Expedited review, or which have been reviewed and determined to lie in the Exempt category, are discussed at IRB meetings.

In 2013, the IRB continued to use three Moodle sites developed and maintained by Prof. Topper to facilitate and enhance the committee's work. One is open and publically available, and explains the IRB's role and activities;² one requires Moodle registration and contains all documents necessary for researchers to apply for IRB review and approval of projects;³ and one is used solely by IRB members for agendas, minutes, annual reports, and information which must be kept on file in case of audit, such as resumes and NIH training certificates for IRB members.⁴ Currently there are 51 students, faculty, administrators and staff registered for the use of the internal Moodle site.

Administrative support continues to be needed for the IRB to fulfill its mandate. It is extremely important for all deans and administrative department heads to communicate with their supervisees regarding the necessity for their human subject research work to be reviewed before its commencement.

² <https://moodle.cooper.edu/moodle/course/view.php?id=571> . Accessed 6/4/2014.

³ <https://moodle.cooper.edu/moodle/course/view.php?id=573>. Accessed 6/4/2014. All Cooper Union community members can register for this site.

⁴ <https://moodle.cooper.edu/moodle/course/view.php?id=572>. Accessed 6/4/2014. This site is for IRB members only.

Table 1. Summary and Status of Applications - 2013 (*Principal researcher in italics*)

Research Proposals			
Application #	Researchers	Title	Status
01-2013	<i>C. Sable</i> , M. Min, B. Yankou	Gesture Interpretation Glove (GIG)	Approved 2/5/2013 (Expedited Review)
02-2013	<i>G. Del Cerro</i>	2013 Senior Exit Survey	Approved 3/8/2013 (Expedited Review)
03-2013	<i>T. Cumberbatch</i> , E. Colon	Environment Sensing for the Visually Impaired	Approved 4/30/2013 (Full Review)
04-2013	<i>S. Keene</i> , E. Forkosh	Usability Study and Algorithmic Validation of Wearable Heart Monitor System	Approved 12/15/2013 (Full Review)
05-2013	<i>C. Sable</i> , E. Weintraub, H. Weintraub	Underdetermined Binaural Source Separation	Approved 11/1/2013 (Expedited Review)
06-2013	<i>G. Delagrammatikas</i> , J. Margherito	Albert Nerken School of Engineering Summer High School Program	Approved 11/15/2013 (Expedited Review)
Self-Guided Reviews of Exempt Student Surveys			
Application #	Researchers	Title	Status
(none)			

In addition to the reviews summarized in Table 1, numerous inquiries were made to the IRB Chair by faculty, administrators and students regarding which kinds of research required review and which did not.