Operational Memorandum # 104

External Research Requests

Purpose: To establish a clear process for reviewing and approving research involving Hartnell College students and/or employees conducted by people external to the institution.

Background: There is a growing interest in researching interventions, support services, teaching approaches, and best practices at community colleges. In the spirit of developing evidence-based practices, the Office of Institutional Research supports these efforts while also ensuring confidentiality, minimization of risk to participants, and voluntary participation and informed consent. This Operational Memorandum outlines the process external researchers shall follow when requesting the opportunity to conduct research with Hartnell College students and/or employees.

Process

If an external researcher would like to request permission to conduct research at Hartnell College, the study must undergo a review process. The following guidelines apply to persons not employed at Hartnell College who wish to conduct research about our college, or for Hartnell College employees who are conducting research for external purposes, such as for graduate degree work.

As with any professional research, approval is contingent upon a review of the research plan to ensure that there is no risk to participants, that informed consent is followed, and that anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed. We also require researchers to obtain permission from a formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) review at their home institution. Research requests must be submitted to the Director of Institutional Research. The research proposal shall include the following:

- A completed Research Proposal Form;
- A description of the study, including the names, academic background, and experience of the researchers; the study's purpose and background; the study's research methodology, intended participants, and recruitment strategies; and information about processes to maintain confidentiality and data security;
- Copies of any research instruments to be used, including survey instruments, interview protocols, or focus group questions;
- A copy of the informed consent form to be used;
- A copy of university or agency IRB approval for the study.

The proposal will be reviewed for consideration of approval based upon college/district criteria. All proposals will be reviewed by the Director of Institutional Research and either the Institutional Research Analyst or Institutional Data Analyst. Reviewers will undergo training on Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols once every three years through the CITI program, which is the standard of training in the institutional research field.

The turnaround time for the review process will be no more than two weeks. Once approval is granted, the approval to conduct research is for a one-year period.

If, during the course of any research project, a substantial change in design is made such that the research methods or techniques are different, the risk/benefits balance have been altered, or the informed consent is modified in some way, the Office of Institutional Research must be informed in writing for subsequent approval.

The development, administration, and data analysis of the research study is the responsibility of the external researcher(s). The Office of Institutional Research shall not provide assistance in the recruitment of participants, survey administration, conducting of interviews or focus groups, or data analysis. However, the Office of Institutional Research, in conjunction with functional offices, can provide a contact list of deemed necessary, along with essential information to help researchers effectively navigate their research at Hartnell. Any information provided to researchers will be in compliance with FERPA laws and regulations.

Approved: April 16, 2024

SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

We invite you to participate in a survey on [INSERT TOPIC] as part of a research project conducted by [NAME OF RESEARCHER]. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand the purpose of the survey, what your participation will involve, and any potential risks and benefits associated with your participation.

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to gather information about [INSERT TEXT]. The data collected will be used to [INSERT TEXT].

Participation: Participation in this survey involves completing an online questionnaire that should take about XX minutes to complete. The survey will ask you about [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION]. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this survey [OR, There is the risk of [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION, INCLUDING THE LIKELIHOOD OF RISK]. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The benefits of participating in this survey include [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION].

[OPTIONAL: You may feel uncomfortable or upset while answering questions about XXXXX. If you feel distressed as a result of participating in the survey and wish to talk with a professional, please contact [INSERT RESOURCE].]

Confidentiality: Your responses to the survey will only be accessible to the survey team.
Your name or any identifying information will not be linked to your responses in any reports resulting from this survey. [OR, IF NO EMPLOYEE INFO IS BEING COLLECTED] Your participation in this survey will remain anonymous, and no identifying information will be collected.

[IF YOU ARE A MANDATED REPORTER, AND IF THE SURVEY INCLUDES QUESTIONS THAT COULD RESULT IN DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT] If information is disclosed in the survey about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult, or elder, or incidents of sexual harassment or violence, we may be obligated under California and/or federal law to report the incident.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact [INSERT NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS]. Thank you for considering participation in this important effort.

Sincerely,
[NAME OF RESEARCHER]

__ [CHECK] I affirm that I am at least 18 years or older.

__ [CHECK] I consent to participating in this survey.