



**Annual Report
of the
Nipissing University Research Ethics Board**

October 31, 2017

Dr. Arja Vainio-Mattila
Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research
Nipissing University

Dear Dr. Vainio-Mattila:

As Nipissing University Research Ethics Board (NUREB) Chair for the 2016-17 academic year, I am pleased to submit the NUREB's 2016-2017 Annual Report through you to the Board of Governors.

Highlights

This was a busy year for the REB with the REB receiving and processing a total of 207 protocols, which is up in number from the 2015-16 academic year. The number of protocols received from faculty researchers, undergraduate and graduate researchers as well as administrators rose minimally from the 2015-16 academic year to 98. The number of modifications requested also rose from 26 in 2015-16 to 29 such requests in 2016-17. The number of requests for renewal rose substantially to 63 (compared with 44 in 2015-16). Where we do notice a steady increase from previous years is in the number of final reports submitted. Researchers submitted 81 final reports in 2016-17 compared to 68 in 2015-16. The Romeo system automatically reminds researchers when renewals and final reports are required. The Romeo system makes all of this possible and we continue to seek ways to fine tune its use and effectiveness.

The average turnaround time for decisions (based on minimal risk applications) was 15 working days. This is attributed to the Romeo system and the delegated review process. Approximately five (5%) percent of protocols were accepted 'as is', meaning there were no revisions/clarifications required. Approximately eighty (80%) percent of new applications required some form of revision/clarification with about fifteen (15%)



percent requiring multiple rounds of revision/clarification prior to full ethics approval. These numbers remain consistent from the past year.

Number of Proposals Reviewed and Approved

In 2016-17 the Research Services Office (RSO) received 115 new applications including 17 institutional approval requests (researchers from outside Nipissing University). The average applications received is at a rate of 11 per month (not including renewals, modifications or final reports). In addition to the new applications received, the RSO processed 63 renewals, 29 modifications and 81 final reports.

In order to appreciate the volume of REB submissions, the number of new applications (115) must be multiplied by three, which is the number of times, on average, an application crosses the desk of the Ethics Administrator in a one year period. This includes the initial submission, one round of clarification/revision (on average) and the submission of a continuing (renewal)/final review. Furthermore, the annual number of applications to modify ongoing research protocols (29) must be considered. Thus a more accurate reflection of the volume of applications processed in 2016-17 is (115 x 3) + 29 = 374.

The chart found below presents a summary of the proposals received in the 2016-17 academic year. The same information from the previous year (2015-16) is also provided for comparison.

PROTOCOLS RECEIVED	2015-16	2016-17
Faculty – research, course assignments Graduate students, Undergraduate students and Administration	96	98
Institutional Approval (external to Nipissing)	14	17
Renewals	44	63
Modifications Requested	26	29
TOTAL	180	207
Final Reports Rec'd	68	81

Additional Highlights: 2016-17

This year, it became apparent that we need to have a back-up system in place for times when the Ethics Administrator is not available. The Ethics Administrator is vital to the operation of the REB. This individual oversees the daily operation of the Romeo system and communicates with researchers. The Ethics Administrator is the first person to go through a protocol to ensure that all of the information is there that should be needed and then communicates with the researcher should additional information be required. The Ethics Administrator is also the person who sends out communications to researchers once the reviews from the reviewers have been returned and the Chair has provided a final decision as to the next step in the process. Thus, this individual serves a vital function for the REB and is someone the research community at Nipissing has a difficult time living without. Thus, it was imperative that we establish a back-up system for times when the Ethics Administrator is away from work for an extended period of time, for whatever reason. This year, we took an initial step toward this goal. We are extremely grateful to Martee Storms for her work as the Ethics Administrator and are glad that she will provide training to the individual who can fill in for her when she may be away. The individual who will be substituting for Martee when she is away is April Gardiner, who is the secretary to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

The role of the back-up person, which is currently one of the responsibilities of April Gardiner, the secretary to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, will include:

- Review new protocols for completeness and communicate with researchers should additional information be required.
- Send out protocols to reviewers for their reviews. The Ethics Administrator will provide a list of reviewers who will be receiving protocols and the back-up person will go through that list and send out the protocols for review.
- The back-up person will also post the reviews on Romeo and will inform the Chair when decisions are required.
- The Chair will go through the reviews to make them ready for presentation to the researchers and provide his/her final decision on the protocol. The specific feedback provided by the REB to the researcher will be determined by the chair and then sent out by the back-up person.

Future Developments

Members continue to benefit from the use of the Romeo system, which has been in effect from May of 2015. We are continuing to work on fine-tuning the Romeo system



and are actively seeking ways to streamline the review process. Feedback from the Nipissing University research community is accepted and appreciated.

Ongoing Concerns

Ethics Education

As in previous annual reports, we continue to seek additional support to fulfill our mandate to oversee all approved research with human participants carried out at Nipissing University. While the Romeo system and its use by all researchers at Nipissing is making this oversight somewhat easier, there still exists a need for additional support. While Romeo has eliminated many of the time consuming day-to-day activities of the Ethics Administrator, an Ethics Advisor who can provide education to Nipissing University researchers in the form of workshops etc. would still greatly benefit the research ethics environment at Nipissing University. Thus, we continue to recommend that an Ethics Advisor be appointed who can provide ethics education to faculty, staff and students in the form of workshops etc.

We express our sincere thanks to Martee Storms, the Ethics Administrator, for her work in providing administrative support to the NUREB.

This report was approved by NUREB at its meeting on October 30, 2017. Should you have any questions or need any additional information about the information provided in this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana R. Murphy".

Dana R. Murphy, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
Chair, Nipissing University Research Ethics Board