

Before Submitting Your Request

Our student population at Suffolk County Community College (SCCC) is a very large and diverse group. These characteristics make them an attractive population for many members of our faculty, as well as other members of the community outside of the College, to utilize in their research.

While the College encourages faculty to engage in research, whether it be for dissertation completion, future publication, or just their own desire to improve their teaching practices, there is also a recognition of the responsibility to protect our students from being over-utilized. In particular, the College may not grant access to students to be utilized for research that does not directly benefit their educational experience. SCCC is not a research institution and does not carry a requirement for students to engage in research as participants, which is often standard practice at many four-year institutions that teach research methods courses. Our approach to granting access to students for research purposes may therefore differ from a sponsoring institution's.

Each year, the College's Institutional Review Board receives several requests for authorization of research from proposers both inside and outside of the College community. Some proposals, while clearly representing valid research concerns, do not demonstrate a benefit to our students or the student experience at the College, which would justify access. The College administration does not allow access to SCCC students or student records for use in research simply because they represent a large, convenient sample.

The authorization process at SCCC begins with a proposer completing our [IRB application for authorization](#), found on the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness page of the College's website. Once an application is received, the proposal will be forwarded to the appropriate administrator for review. The administrative review process determines if the research being proposed is an appropriate use of access to SCCC students, student records, or institutional information.

If the proposal is granted administrative approval, it then moves forward for IRB review. Please see the section on Procedures in the [IRB Policies and Procedures Manual](#) located on the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness page of the College's website for further information on IRB policies and procedures.

Coercion and Influence

Utilizing one's own students in research presents some important considerations. The inherent imbalance of power between student and faculty member creates the potential for students to not feel free to decline participation, for fear of having their grade or their experience in the course negatively affected. Students may feel as if they have to participate, or risk their grade in the course or their relationship with the faculty member. The same concerns can occur when a student initially consents to participation, then decides to rescind their consent.

If a faculty member is proposing the use of their own students in their research, the following factors will be considered throughout the approval process:

- The research does not present any greater than minimal risk to participants
- The research has some potential benefit to the overall student experience
- **If the data being collected can be linked to the identity of the students providing the data** (for example, the data being collected will be linked to final exam scores or course grades, because it is part of the standard student experience in the course), the informed consent agreement presented to students clearly articulates that participation in the research will carry no benefit in terms of grades, financial incentives, or other favorable considerations, and that declining to participate will carry no unfavorable outcomes with regard to grades, course experience, or any other factors. *Please review the [Informed Consent Guidelines document](#), posted on the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness page of the College's website*
- The collection of informed consent documentation will be conducted by a third party who is NOT in a status relationship with the students (i.e., a department secretary, professional assistant, another faculty member who is not involved in the research...)
- Informed consent documentation will remain in a secured location that is inaccessible to the faculty member until AFTER the course is completed and final grades have been posted
- The faculty member will not begin analysis on data provided by participants who have granted informed consent until AFTER the course is completed and final grades have been posted, and will only utilize data from those students who did provide consent
- **If the data being collected cannot be linked to the identity of the students providing the data** (for example, an anonymous survey that contains no identifying information), the faculty member may explain the research to students and provide an opportunity to answer any questions about the research, then leave the room while an uninvolved third party distributes and collects the survey. The faculty member would not know which students did or did not complete the survey. This scenario, however, creates concern regarding the use of classroom instructional time to collect research data
- **The use of classroom seat time for collection of research data is not something taken lightly by the College.** The contract entered into between the student and the College when a student registers for courses does not include the use of classroom time for activities designed to benefit the faculty member through their access to students. Classroom time is allocated for instruction and delivery of relevant course content. If faculty members intend to use classroom instructional time to collect research data, they need to be prepared to justify this use of seat time

- No data will be collected from any students who are under the age of 18. The informed consent forms presented to students must explain that by consenting to participate, the student is confirming they are at least 18 years old. In the case of an anonymous survey, where informed consent forms are not being collected, the researcher explains clearly to students that they may only complete the survey if they are at least 18 years old

Keeping in mind these important points regarding access to students and the College's established policies and procedures will assist proposers in avoiding delays during the approval process.