BACKGROUND

At Intermountain Healthcare, all research projects must be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for an official research determination. The IRB, not the researcher or department manager, determines the appropriate review categorization of each study. Our IRB – which primarily processes biomedical protocols – started to receive an increasingly large volume of student research applications for capstone projects, survey studies and other social behavioral research (SBER) protocols over the last two years. The volume of SBER student project reviews became prohibitive and the IRB could not effectively facilitate these research determinations and reviews with existing resources. Additionally, the institutional infrastructure did not adequately account for the diverse nature of applications we received. We designed and distributed student resource documents detailing lists for department staff involved with processing student projects. We contacted nursing leadership at our department. We discussed issues related to the different types of departments had access to timely updates and information. Then, we needed to differentiate between projects proposed by students who were employees of our organization and projects proposed by non-employed students. This poster examines how we initiated, conducted and finalized the process of building and implementing a comprehensive framework for processing student research projects in our primarily biomedical setting. We developed and distributed student resource documents via our online research application submission system, and made them available for downloading from our corporate website. We developed checklists (for IRB staff).

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS

• Students are encouraged to consider impacted resources when planning for research.
• Written approval from impacted department managers is required.
• Undergraduate students are encouraged to utilize publicly-available data and resources at their academic institution when conducting research projects.

In general, undergraduate student projects may not be supported unless they align with a department or clinical program goal. The IRB may make exceptions to this for students who are employed at Intermountain and have an opportunity to work on ongoing research or quality improvement projects.

RESULTS

Our institution designed and implemented a new comprehensive framework for processing student research projects in our primarily biomedical setting. We developed and distributed student resource documents via our online research application submission system, and made them available for downloading from our corporate website. We developed checklists (for IRB staff).

METHODS

First, we determined who (which departments) should be involved in the process of building our new framework. Key decision makers met and formed a working group which mapped out a basic needs assessment plan. The group designed and agreed on an interdepartmental communication process to ensure that all affiliated departments had access to timely updates and information. Then, the communication process was vetted with frontline staff in each department. We discussed issues related to the different types of student research and made a list of recommendations for students to consider prior to designing a research project. We developed checklists for department staff involved with processing student projects. We designed and distributed student resource documents detailing information about regulatory requirements, institutional policies, roles and responsibilities. We contacted nursing leadership at our facilities and provided information about our new student research framework. We notified our system-wide research community of the new process via in-service meetings, corporate newsletters and website updates.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

CONCLUSION

We introduced and implemented the new process during the spring of 2014 and we are continuously monitoring and evaluating it using data obtained through querying our research management system. We periodically survey students who submit projects for review as well as IRB staff involved in processing student research applications.