



2010

Annual Report of the Research Ethics Board

George Brown College
March 2011

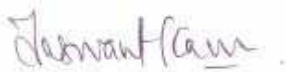
A Message from the Chair

As I begin to write my message for the REB's 2010-2011 *Annual Report*, I am aware that this will be my last report after serving on the Board as the Chair for two consecutive terms since 2007. I am pleased and proud to introduce this report to the *George Brown College* community. I reflect back on a busy and a very productive time over the last four years, working closely with the George Brown College community in a consultative and supportive role, informing, clarifying and nurturing a culture of ethical conduct in research. I look back over the past years with pride and look forward to the future with tremendous hope and anticipation filled with challenges and opportunities under the new leadership.

This year saw significant progress towards the REB's vision of fostering a culture of ethical conduct in research at George Brown College. Besides working on various operational initiatives, this year we were also able to implement our electronic submission system to streamline our review process.

As my term comes to a close, I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and thank all the REB members for their enthusiasm, energy and engagement in fulfilling their commitment to our ethics board. Despite being extremely busy with their regular job assignments, they have considered this to be a very important priority for the college. I have greatly enjoyed the privilege, opportunity and friendship of working with all Members and Alternate Members of the Board since its founding. I also would like to thank: Assistant Vice President, Dr. Robert Luke and my Dean, Dr. Georgia Quartaro for their continuous support and encouragement; also Meadow Larkins, Dawn Davidson and Baaba Lewis for their dedication and willingness.

The forthcoming year will be a year of transition, in terms of the position of the Chair of the Research Ethics Board. As of April 2011, Professor Sarah Evans will assume the REB Chair role. I am proud of what the REB has achieved since 2007, and anticipate the Board's continuing advance under the experienced leadership, vision and wisdom that Professor Sarah Evans will bring.



Dr. Jaswant Kaur Bajwa
Chair, Research Ethics Board

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About this Report

This report is published annually to inform the George Brown College community, research staff and other interested stakeholders of the achievements, forward-looking plans and role of the George Brown College Research Ethics Board (REB). Far more than a summary of the REB's activities, this report documents how various departments and divisions at GBC are engaged in research and are working together to foster and strengthen a rich ethics culture within the College. This report will provide a brief summary of the role, procedures and activities of the REB, as well as outline proposed activities for 2011.

Overview of Research Ethics at George Brown College

GBC is committed to the highest ethical and academic standards for its students, faculty and staff. GBC respects the academic freedom of all research conducted with its support, and ensures that this research meets the highest academic standards. The College requires research involving its employees, students and/or equipment and facilities to be conducted using ethical and moral research practices. The conscious commitment of GBC to upholding modern standards of research ethics has led to a policy obliging all research projects conducted under the auspices of the College, irrespective of the source of financial support or location of research, to undergo a research ethics review.

The REB is a vital part of research at the College and reports directly to the President. The primary purpose of the REB is to ensure that ethical principles are applied to research. The REB endorses and uses the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS)* as a guide. In the event of a problem or discrepancy with a research protocol, researchers and the REB consult the TCPS.

George Brown College's Research Ethics Policy

GBC's research ethics policy, *Ethics Guidelines & Review Process for Research Involving Human Subjects*, applies to all faculty, staff and students regardless of where their research is conducted. The policy states that all research involving humans, even when conducted by researchers who are not affiliated with the College but who may access its resources (either equipment or personnel), falls within the jurisdiction of the GBC REB. The policy clearly states that no research on human participants shall be undertaken without the prior approval of the REB.

The REB ensures that the highest ethical standards are met and maintained from the time the research proposal is submitted, throughout the data collection stage, to the dissemination of results. The Board is accountable to ensure that all research involving human subjects conforms to the ethical standards outlined in the College's policy. In reviewing each research protocol the Board ensures compliance by articulation of TCPS guidelines. The core guiding principles outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement include:

- Respect for Persons,
- Concern for Welfare,
- Justice.

The Research Ethics Board

The REB functions with the commitment and hard work of all its members, who each have experience with the due diligence involved in human research. The Board has shown continued commitment to meet the challenges and ensure consistent conformity to the TCPS ethical guidelines.

Following are the members for 2010 and for the coming year:

REB Members

Jaswant Kaur Bajwa, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board
Center for Preparatory and Liberal Studies

Sarah Evans, RN, MN
Centre for Community and Health
Sciences

Paula Johnson Tew, M.B.A., Ph.D.
Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts

Allison Patrick, RN, PhD
School of Nursing

Jenny Yeow, M.Sc., M.B.A.
Ryerson University

Alternate Members

Rose-Marie Nigli
Student Affairs

Miranda Oliver, M.Ed., TESL
Academic Excellence

Csilla Reszegi, Doctor Pharm., M.B.A.
General Education and Access

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

A. Total Research Ethics Submissions

Table 1 displays the total number of new research applications, annual renewal applications and study completion reports received by the REB from February 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011. On average the REB reviewed 3.2 new REB protocol applications per month. This excludes July and August, when the REB is on summer break.

Table 1. Total number of REB applications, renewals and study completion reports from February 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011.

	New Research Protocols	Annual Renewals	Study Completion Reports
Total	32	15	29

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

B. Type of Research Ethics Submission

Between February 2010 and January 2011 there were no applications to the REB requiring full board review; all applications were reviewed under the delegated process. A delegated review is conducted by one member of the REB and the Chair. Risk is the primary criterion used to determine if a protocol may be reviewed through the delegated process rather than by the full Board. The Tri-Council Policy Statement states that: “if potential subjects can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the subject in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research, then the research can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk.”

Reviews may also be delegated if:

- The review is an annual renewal of a project previously approved by the REB, and the “open file” is up to date;
- The research involves only review of patient records by hospital personnel; or
- The Principal Researcher submits a letter of affirmation confirming that conditions laid down by the REB have already been approved by another institution or funding agency.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

C. Institutional Origin of Research Submissions

Sixty-nine percent of all proposals reviewed by the REB this year were submitted by GBC staff with no other institutional collaboration (Figure 1). The next-highest number of submissions came from researchers based at other institutions. Three applications were for collaborative projects between a GBC researcher and a researcher from another institution.

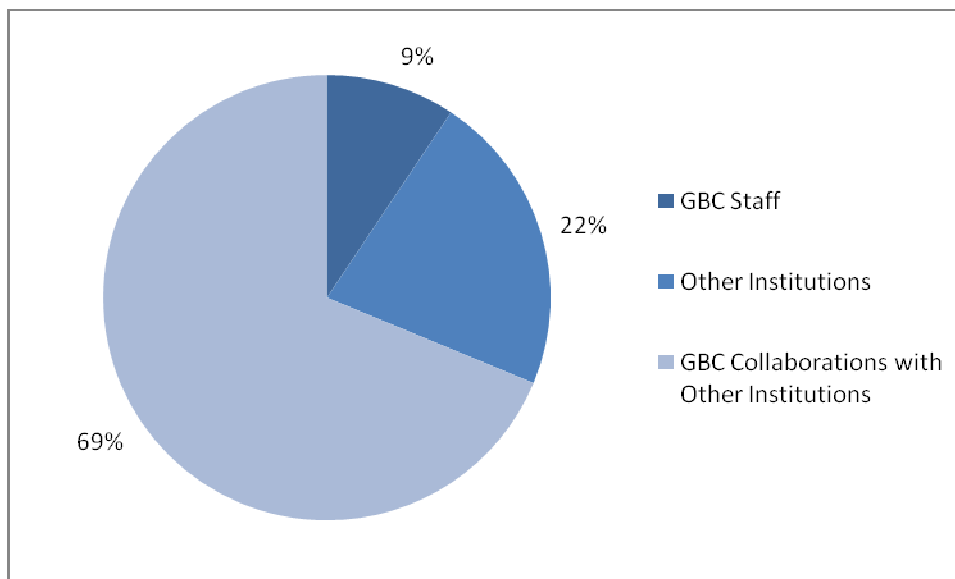


Figure 1. Institutional origin of REB applications from February 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011 in percent.

Ethics Review Process and Statistics

D. Breakdown of REB Submissions by GBC Centre

This year applications have come to the REB from more divisions of the college than any other year. Preparatory and Liberal Studies, Construction and Engineering Technologies, Hospitality and Culinary Arts, and Health Sciences have been particularly active (Figure 2).

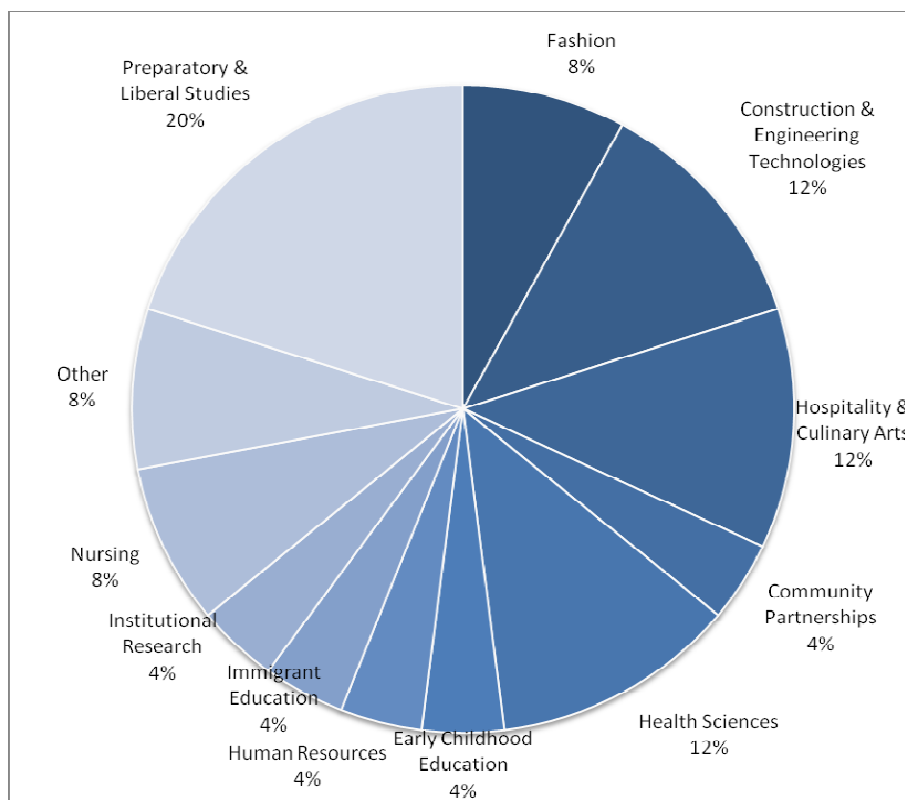


Figure 2. Breakdown of REB submissions by GBC centre from February 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011 in percent.

Achievements in 2010-11

The Board was able to dedicate its fourth year to improving processes. Some of our most important achievements were:

- Implemented an on-line REB submission and review tool which allows applicants to submit REB protocols on-line. The Board members are able to enter comments on-line and produce automated feedback to applicants. The system will also allow better tracking of REB statistics;
- Four board members plus two alternate members attended the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards (CAREB) Ontario Annual Conference;
- Beginning October 2010, required all applicants to the REB to have completed an ethics tutorial;
- Provided workshops and education to various stakeholders in research including faculty, support staff, administrators, and students intending to engage in research;
- The REB had a booth at the College's Festival of Learning on March 2nd where it promoted understanding of research ethics via a fun and interactive game; and
- Participated in the Colleges Ontario Heads of Applied Research (HAR) REB subcommittee. Representatives from Ontario colleges provide structure and process to support quality ethics reviews across the College system, safeguarding research participants and demonstrating consistent and reliable research ethics quality assurance to funders and other institutions.

Goals for 2011

Our goals for the coming year are to:

- Facilitate and enhance the ethics review process by recruiting experts from within and outside the college to contribute their knowledge to the review process;
- Provide workshops, lectures and other forms of education to various stakeholders in research including faculty and students intending to engage in research;
- Work to further optimize the ethics review processes through the implementation of standard operating procedures that are complemented by the newly implemented electronic data management system;
- Sustain efforts to update the skills of all REB members by arranging for them to attend conferences hosted by the National Council on Ethics in Human Research and the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards;
- Continue to participate in external committees to contribute to discussions of matters including REB governance;
- Document succession planning and recruit new members; and
- Undertake a survey of researchers who submitted protocols to the REB between 2007 and 2010. The researchers will be requested to comment on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Board, of the research ethics review processes and of the performance of the REB in providing guidance and timely service.

Conclusion

In 2010-11, we had some new members joining the board, and others leaving after serving their terms. Overall, the Board members have provided extremely positive feedback about their experiences as members of the REB. We hope that the proposed improvements and activities for 2011 will help educate GBC staff and students about research ethics and further promote the college's research culture. As more researchers become familiar with our process, we are certain that the significance of the REB will be recognized in the College research community. As we move forward with the new leadership, we will renew and strengthen our commitment to ethical standards for research involving human subjects.