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RESEARCH & INNOVATION



## Research Compliance & Regulatory Assurances Newsletter Fifth Edition

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the fifth issue of our quarterly newsletter. I cannot believe the fall is upon us already! I invite you to read through it and join us in expanding our knowledge of the ever-changing research compliance environment and celebrating the accomplishments of our fellow researchers. We hope this continues to foster collaboration and brings us together as a research community

In our fifth issue, we cover topics ranging from the results of our recent customer service survey, to a reminder about rules surrounding undue foreign influence, a look at what exempt IRB research means, and finally a recent publication by a UTEP faculty member and student involving a nanoparticle and its role in biofuel.

Thank you for all that you do to advance research at UTEP. We welcome any recommendations on research highlights, tips, and learning opportunities to promote in future issues.

Go Miners!

Elaine Joseph, Ph.D. C.P.I.A.

Associate Vice President, Research Compliance & Regulatory Assurances

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### Top Story

#### Results of a Faculty Survey on Research Compliance Services

Research Compliance and the Laboratory Animal Resources Center (LARC) recently sent out customer service surveys to faculty and research staff to identify areas where improvements in the services they provide are needed. Between 15% and 30% responded.

Over 70% of the respondents felt that the IRB Office's services was good or outstanding, whereas only 45% felt that the IACUC Office's services was good or outstanding. The survey also solicited open comments and suggestions for improvement. There were several comments offering constructive suggestions for improvement to the review process and simplification of the IRB forms. Most comments related to the IACUC included concerns related to the amount of time to review protocols and improvements to the form for field protocols.

Only 35% of respondents felt that LARC husbandry staff was providing good or outstanding service, whereas 50% felt that LARC veterinary staff was providing good or outstanding service. The most common comment for LARC husbandry staff was that they were understaffed and needed better communication with faculty.

The IACUC, the IRB, and LARC have begun implementing changes to address these concerns and will continue these efforts through the coming semester and year. Both the IACUC and IRB will begin intense training in review procedures for both the committee and the office. For the LARC, we are in the process of hiring four new animal technicians that should begin later this month.

## Did You Know?

### The Rules Around Undue Foreign Influence?

Some foreign countries choose to take advantage of their relationships with US researchers and academic institutions by taking American taxpayer-paid research and using it for their own benefit, often to give their military a competitive advantage. Often these countries will utilize "talent programs" to facilitate this, and sometimes they recruit from researchers from American universities. When a country is listed by the federal government as a "foreign adversary" does this, it is known as "Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program" or "MFTRP". Participation by US researchers in an MFTRP is prohibited by law under the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. While the US government makes clear that researchers participating in MFTRPs will not be granted foreign money or contracts, the Texas Governor's Executive Order GA-48, signed November 19, 2024, provides additional restrictions when dealing with organizations and/or individuals aligned with foreign adversaries listed in **15 CFR § 791.4**.



These rules can be confusing, and it can be helpful to reach out to us in Research Protections, to help you navigate any laws and regulations which you may have questions about. If you have any questions, please email us directly.

[Email us Here](#)

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## Compliance Updates

### What is Exempt IRB Research?

When conducting research involving human subjects, ensuring the protections of participants is paramount. This is where the IRB comes into play. The IRB is responsible for reviewing research proposals to ensure that ethical standards are upheld. Two key terms often encountered in this process are "IRB Exempt Status" and "IRB Approved". Understanding the differences between these two can help researchers navigate the landscape of human studies more effectively. IRB Exempt Status refers to a category of human subjects research that is exempt from ongoing IRB review. This does not mean that the research is exempt from initial IRB review or ethical considerations. Rather, it signifies that the research falls into a category deemed to involve minimal risk to participants. To obtain exempt status, researchers must submit an application to the IRB detailing their study. The IRB will determine if the study qualifies for exemption. This determination is crucial because it ensures an ethical review process. It is important to note that even exempt research requires adherence to ethical standards, such as informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality.



For more information about IRB review and exempt research, contact the IRB Office.

[Email us Here](#)

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## LARC News

### New Color-Coded LARC Cage Card Notifications

The Laboratory Animal Resources Center (LARC) has recently introduced color-coded cage cards to assist you and your laboratory staff, as well as the veterinary staff, in identifying issues and tracking treatments by cage. First blue cards are placed by LARC staff to alert veterinary staff that there is a health concern. The red colored cards are used to notify you of a health concern and by the veterinary staff to track these health concerns. These red cards will be removed by the LARC staff when the treatment is complete. There are yellow cards to indicate a new litter to assist you and your laboratory staff to know when to wean your pups.



There are orange cards to indicate your laboratory when there has been a death in the cage. Finally, there are purple cards when special food or water is applied and pink cards to indicate fasting or water restriction is being performed. Remember to fill these purple or pink cards out completely and leave them on the cage for the duration of the treatment.

If you have any questions about these new colored cards, please contact LARC.

[Email us Here](#)

## In the News

### The Sharifan Lab Identifies Key Interaction Between Nanoparticles and Microalgae Biofuel

Microalgae, such as *Chlorella vulgaris*, may offer advantages over conventional biofuels since they produce high concentrations of lipids, have high growth rates, and can survive and even thrive in a variety of landscapes. Nanoparticles, particularly zinc oxide nanoparticles, are known to trigger oxidative stress in microalgae, increasing lipid biosynthesis. This study, by UTEP's Dr. Hamidreza Sharifan, undergraduate student Luis Pablo Salmeron Covarrubias, and others, published in *Applied Bio Materials*, examined the effects of zinc oxide nanoparticles on *C. vulgaris*. The findings established that zinc oxide nanoparticles are effective at promoting lipid production in *C. vulgaris* at moderate concentrations (20-50 mg/L), making it highly suitable for biofuel applications. This study, funded by grants from both the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), demonstrates that nanotechnology has the potential to enhance biofuel production and increase sustainable energy.



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