

Researchers criticize safeguards group setup

By PAUL WILLIAMSON
Of the Emerald

Strict new guidelines aimed at protecting persons involved in federally funded research projects are ruffling some feathers among University researchers.

Under guidelines established by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), all projects involving human subjects must be approved by a University-based Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). Last March, HEW strengthened the safeguards re-

quired for experiments which involve some risk to human subjects.

"The committee is not set up to disapprove projects," says Fred Wilhelm, assistant dean of the graduate school and coordinator for the CPHS. "But sometimes we have to negotiate with the principle investigator on specific points, usually relating to the confidentiality of information gathered from subjects."

Although objections have not been leveled at the committee in principle, some professors have

become disenchanted with the system. Criticism centers on what the professors feel is the slowness and unnecessary discontinuity of the committee's review process.

"If I have three weeks to qualify for a federal grant and it takes two weeks to write up the proposal, that leaves a week to get it passed by the committee," says Charles Greenwood, project director for the Center at Oregon for Research in the Behavioral Education of the Handicapped. The review committee meets only once a month.

Greenwood also criticizes the lack of continuity in the committee's review process.

"Sometimes, when I am renewing an annual grant proposal that passed through the committee the year before, I find some new committee member that wants the whole thing explained over again," he says.

The annual turnover rate among committee members is about 25 per cent, according to Wilhelm.

Many professors say they would like to see a clearer distinction made in identifying acceptable and extreme risks but Joan Acker, a sociology professor, says the individual ethics of researchers will supply the necessary safeguards. "Only in extreme cases of physical or psychological risk should the committee step in," she says.

Wilhelm also believes there should be no concrete checklist outlining acceptable risks. "The diversity of the experiments we review make such an idea impossible. We have to generalize to be thorough," he says.


Some members of the committee favor expanding its authority under the assumption that all projects involving research or experimentation should be reviewed. They are currently considering having community service and public affairs trainees submit a consent form to everyone they work with in counseling situations. The forms would outline the possible risks caused by the trainees' non-professional status.

But this proposal has drawn an answer from Anita Runyan, a Community Service and Public Affairs director, who points out that graduate students are not required to hand out consent forms even though they have a non-professional status.

Although the new guidelines have been criticized by researchers most do not think the committee should be discontinued. Lichtenstein says the mere presence of the committee has made researchers more honest in considering risks to human subjects involved in their projects.

"A greater proportion of the proposals now have adequate safeguards built in before they go before the committee," he says.

Ironically, the committee members recently have had to take the role of the human subject themselves. A group of sociology graduate students are conducting research of the committee's impact on social and behavioral science research. But before they began, they secured consent forms from all the committee members.



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Oliver

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early childhood education.

"I had just come out of a poor marriage and was ready to be something on my own," Oliver explains. "Going back to school gave me a tangible independence, something I could hold on to."

"If you look at my life, there's been a restlessness that's moved with me. It was that same restlessness, that desire to be moving on and doing something new that brought me here."

Psychology was a logical choice for a major, Oliver says.

"I had a lot of 'whys.' At the time psychology seemed to have some of the answers.

"But it was more than that. I got involved in art because it was a very human, creative extension of who I was. I got involved in psychology because it seemed to complement that."

Oliver's interests next turned toward student government. She quickly became involved in the Child Care and Development Center — as a parent and steering board member and then as a teacher for a year. She began

working with minority interests as associate director of the Black Cultural Center (prior to its closure last August) and then was elected to a seat on the Incidental Fee Committee last fall.

"I got involved with ASUO student politics because — like art and psychology — it gave me a chance to participate with my surroundings. My focus continued to be human interest."

Running for ASUO president, a race she won last week with a nearly two to one margin over vice-president Jim Davis, was a further extension of this concern.

"I felt it was time for a woman, a mother, a black and a person who's been through as many pitfalls as anyone, to bring special qualities to student government."

But the 27-year-old mother doesn't think politics will take over her life. "I've never done only one thing at a time. I do several things at once, incorporating them into my life without letting them take over."

Still interested in the art into

which she sunk ten to fifteen years of her life, Oliver plans to return to the field eventually. Skilled in non-objective drawings, she hopes to set up her own commercial art business in fabrics.

"But I have lots of dreams, lots of pictures in my mind that I plan to make come true. I plan to just simply keep myself happy — to do everything I want to."

One of those dreams is "traveling around the world twelve times," but Oliver says she'll have to wait until her children — Jesse, age 7, "Khi," 5, and Kalisha, 3 — are old enough to go along.

"I've always tried to incorporate my kids' needs with what I wanted to do so that we could fulfill their needs and desires as well as mine. We understand each other well."

The new ASUO president-elect says her active life-style poses no real problem in raising her children. "I've always believed in cooperative, extended family lifestyle. All of the children have different godparents who they can call on if I'm unable to be there. I've always encouraged them to be independent and I think they appreciate that."

"We're a very close family," Oliver explains as Kalisha returns to cuddle up close. "I think of my kids as being humans in a little package. I have an incredible respect and appreciation for them and they return that same respect to me."

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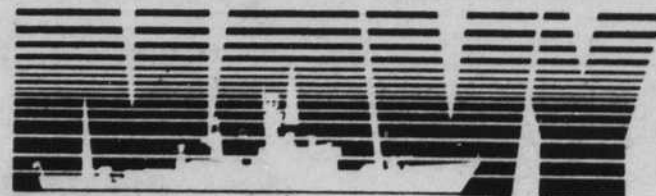
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