Conducting Survey Research with Wabash Participants

Any person or group wishing to conduct survey research with Wabash constituents (students, faculty,
staff, alumni) is required to obtain permission from the Wabash Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to
beginning data collection. The IRB is charged with ensuring that the College complies with federal
standards for the humane treatment of human subjects, including but not limited to informed consent,
ethical data management, and privacy in recordkeeping.

Projects require varying levels of IRB documentation depending on a variety of parameters – for
instance, whether the data to be collected are sensitive, how the results will be disseminated, and
whether the results are intended to contribute to generalized knowledge or are solely for institutional
improvement. In most cases, routine course evaluations and evaluative feedback surveys of college-sponsored events do not require any IRB review or documentation. More formal projects intended for
institutional improvement – for example, a structured assessment of some aspect of the academic
program – will most commonly fall under the “exempt” category, but will require filing for that status
with the IRB. For complete guidelines on project classifications and corresponding documentation,
please consult the Wabash IRB web site: http://wabash.edu/irb/ .

Especially for those who are new to the IRB approval process, a conversation with the Chair of the IRB,
Dr. Karen Gunther, will go a long way toward clarifying how IRB procedures will apply to your project,
what documentation is required, and how long the process is likely to take. Please feel free to contact
her (guntherk@wabash.edu; x6286) with any questions you have about your project. The Institutional
Research Analyst, David Dalenberg (dalenbed@wabash.edu; x6288) and other members of the IRB
(listed on the IRB website) may also be able to answer questions about the IRB process.

IRB approval does NOT imply permission to use College resources (money, facilities, materials and
equipment) to conduct research. Researchers intending to use such resources should consult
appropriate managers for permission prior to beginning data collection.