Balancing Safeguards and Services: An ACC Coordinator’s View

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The ACC Coordinator:

- Represents the central administration on the ACC
- Ensures ACC decisions consistent with policies
- Responsible for implementing regulatory safeguards
ACC Coordinator

* Nexus of communication

* Uniquely positioned to balance regulatory safeguards and service
### A Balancing Act

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Safeguards Keep Increasing
What can be done to strike a balance?

* Minimize burden of safeguards while providing excellent services
* Focus on safeguards that most impact:
  * Researchers’ time
  * ACC members’ time
  * Institutional costs
Communication is key

- Be collegial, not adversarial
- Explain why safeguards are required
- Collaborate on solutions
- You’re all on the same team!
Practical Tips
Animal Use Protocol Forms

- Very significant impact on researchers’ time
- Streamlining AUPs makes the submission process much easier
- All questions should have a purpose
  - Unused questions provide no gains in animal welfare
Efficiency can be improved by:

- Providing detailed guidance documents for AUPs
  - Saves ACC and researcher time
- Ensuring proper layout of AUPs
  - Sections flow well; easier to fill out and review
- Prompt follow-up after meetings and regular reminders
  - Passive noncompliance bigger problem than “harassing” researchers
Animal Use Protocol Forms

- Electronic systems have a large upfront cost, but offer long-term savings
  - Protocols faster to complete
  - Less time and paper needed to distribute forms
  - Automated notifications save time and promote AUP compliance
  - Regulatory reporting is easier
  - Trends can be analyzed to provide further efficiencies
ACC Operations

* Publicise meeting dates to help researchers plan
* When major changes made to processes, give >6 months notice
* Be flexible in complying with policies around grants
  * Freezing funds the day a protocol expires is counterproductive
Standard Operating Procedures

* Have accessible SOPs so they can be cited on AUPs
  * Post them on an intranet or shared drive
* Citing SOPs on AUPs saves time for both the researcher and the ACC while promoting animal welfare
  * SOPs should be reviewed annually
* SOPs should be very user-friendly
Post-Approval Monitoring

* Post-approval monitoring (PAM) is necessary part of an ACUP
* Good opportunity to share best practices between labs
* Often the best opportunity to engage with students, as they are the front-line researchers
  * Students often unengaged with the overall ACUP and can learn bad habits from PIs
  * Reaching students directly can have a very positive impact on animal welfare
To maximize the success of a PAM program:

- Consult widely to promote researcher buy-in and cooperation
- Minimize the number of visits to a lab whenever possible
- PAM communications should be **concise** and **infrequent**
  - Maximize the signal/noise ratio
The Keys to Successful Safeguards
Key Points

- Researchers often unfamiliar with the regulatory underpinnings of safeguards
  - Explain why safeguards are in place to promote buy-in
- Make every requirement have a justifiable purpose
- Be clear that you are there to support research, not hinder it
  - Collegiality is very important