**Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement**

**The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) is a national study of entering first-year college students’ high school experiences and their expectations for engagement in educational practices during their first year of college. The survey is conducted by the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University-Bloomington. The BCSSE is designed to be paired with an administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) at the end of the first college year to provide an in-depth understanding of first-year student engagement.**

**Texas State University-San Marcos has elected to participate in this national survey beginning with the fall 2009 entering freshman class. We intend to participate in the NSSE beginning spring 2010.**

1. Identify the sources of the potential subjects, derived materials or data. Describe the characteristics of the subject population, such as their anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health. Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. Explain the rationale for the use of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or others, especially those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.

**Entering first-time freshmen and transfers with fewer than 30 transferrable college hours will be asked to complete the BCSSE at one of their group sessions during PAWS Preview (August 21-23, 2009). It is expected that approximately 3,500 students will attend PAWS Preview and therefore be asked to complete the survey. Most will be young, 18-19 years of age, and it is possible that some of the students will be under 18 years of age. It is expected that, other than age, the distribution of these students will mirror that of the student population with regard to sex, race/ethnicity, health, and other demographic characteristics.**

1. Describe the procedures for recruitment of subjects and the consent procedures to be followed. Include the circumstances under which consent will be solicited and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the methods of documenting consent. (Include applicable consent form(s) for review.) If written consent is not to be obtained, this should be clearly stated and justified.

**During the Alkek Library/Computer Training session of PAWS Preview, the BCSSE project manager at Texas State will present information about the BCSSE and ask students to participate in the group setting. The researcher will read a description of the survey (see response to question #3 for content) that explains its purpose and stresses its voluntary nature. In addition, a printed consent form in the format of a letter from the Vice President for Student Affairs (see attachment) will be distributed to freshman participants with the survey. Submission of a completed survey will serve in place of a signed consent form.**

**The consent form does not contain all of the elements required by Texas State’s IRB in its “Requirements Checklist for Consent Forms,” but content of the consent form and the survey description are dictated by the Indiana Center for Survey Research at Indiana University-Bloomington and have been approved by their campus IRB. The national researchers recommended and received approval from their institutional IRB for a shortened version of a consent form document by explaining that a shortened document may increase the likelihood that students will read all of the relevant information; its purpose is to communicate the critical information that students need to know in a way that is easily comprehended by them. We are bound by an agreement to use their standard consent form in order to participate in this national study.**

**Since this survey will be administered to incoming freshmen during PAWS Preview, it is possible that some of the students will be under 18 years of age. We are requesting a waiver of parental consent pursuant to 45 CFR 46.116(c), specifically that the research could not be practically carried out without the waiver given the fact that the students are away from home attending Texas State and that research is conducted with Texas State’s approval to evaluate university programs. No questions on the survey are deemed sensitive, embarrassing, or potential incriminating, so there is no additional risk to this group of students. Students will be asked to complete the survey on campus without the presence of their parents/guardians, so it is not practical or feasible to require parental consent for student participation.**

1. Describe the project’s methodology in detail. If applicable, detail the data collection procedures, the testing instruments, the intervention(s), etc.   If using a survey, questionnaire, or interview, please provide a copy of the items or questions.

**Students will be asked to complete the BCSSE in a group setting during PAWS Preview. The researcher will read the following script before passing out the survey instruments:**

**“The survey I am about to distribute asks you to tell us about your high school and expected college experiences. Information from the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement is used by Texas State faculty and administrators and by other higher education leaders to improve the collegiate experiences of undergraduates. The Informed Consent Statement that I pass out with the survey describes the voluntary nature of the survey and who you can contact for additional information about this. Please keep this statement in case you have any questions after the survey. If you do not wish to participate in the survey, you may turn in the blank survey without any penalty.”**

**Surveys and consent forms will then be distributed to the students.**

**Completed surveys will be reviewed for stray marks and other issues that might interfere with scanning and then shipped to the Indiana University-Bloomington Center for Survey Research for scanning. Data are securely stored after scanning by the Center for Survey Research and subsequently at the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University-Bloomington. After the study is complete, completed surveys are destroyed and data are archived in a secure facility at Indiana University-Bloomington accessible only to authorized personnel. Data are stored with unique identifiers for the purposes of matching BCSSE student responses to responses from the subsequent administration of the NSSE the following spring. A raw data file containing student identifiers will be returned in a secure manner to the Texas State University-San Marcos Office of Institutional Research, who will store the data securely in a manner consistent with its standard data storage practices.**

**Student identifiers are collected for two reasons: First, the pre-college data collected by the BCSSE is intended to be matched with data from the same students who complete the NSSE the following spring. Having the pre-college data on these students will help Texas State assess the true impact of first-year programs and services in terms of student engagement, perceptions of the campus environment, and estimate of gains made in the first year of college. Second, identifiers are necessary for Texas State to match BCSSE data with university records for retention and other studies assessing first-year programs and success in the first college year.**

**BCSSE data collection is a partnership between participating institutions and Indiana University-Bloomington’s Center for Postsecondary Research and Center for Survey Research; Indiana University-Bloomington provides templates, scripts and other information necessary for BCSSE administration. Texas State can customize portions of the recruiting messages to make them more relevant to our students; however, this is limited to using message signatories who are recognizable to students, and other slight modifications, such as inserting our institution’s name. No changes to the main body of the informed consent document are permitted by Indiana University-Bloomington.**

1. Describe any potential risks — physical, psychological, social, legal or other — and state their likelihood and seriousness. Describe alternative methods, if any, that were considered and why they will not be used.

**Risks to student participants are minimal. The nature of the survey questions relate to everyday activities in which students engage; these are questions that often come up during normal conversation, and do not involve topics that are generally considered too personal to share. Participation is voluntary. Identifying information is collected (Texas State ID number and the first three letters of the last name), but completed surveys and raw data are handled and stored so that only authorized persons have access. Completed surveys are returned to Indiana University-Bloomington where they are securely stored, then destroyed.**

1. Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing any potential risks and include an assessment of the likely effectiveness of those procedures. Include a discussion of confidentiality safeguards, where relevant, and arrangements for providing mental health or medical treatment, if needed.

**Risks will be minimized by clearly explaining the purpose of the study to participants and requesting but not requiring them to participate. Completed and blank surveys will all be collected together by the survey proctors, so it will not be apparent who has or has not participated during the survey administration. Completed surveys will be handled only by trained research personnel who are professional staff at Texas State and at Indiana University-Bloomington. Texas State and Indiana University-Bloomington are bound to protect student privacy under the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.**

**Arrangements for medical treatment do not apply.**

1. Describe and assess the potential benefits to be gained by the subjects, as well as the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the proposed study.

**Results from this study are used on the Texas State campus and by higher education professionals nationally to help improve the quality of college education, benefiting current and future students.**

1. Clearly describe any compensation to be offered/provided to the participants. If extra credit is provided as an incentive, include the percentage of extra credit in relation to the total points offered in the class.  Also, if extra credit is provided, describe alternatives to participation in your research for earning extra credit.

**No compensation will be offered nor provided.**

1. Discuss the risks in relation to the anticipated benefits to the subjects and society.

**Subjects are at risk only if their individual survey responses are identified and released in some way, and the risk is minimal. Every caution will be taken to ensure that release of individual information does not occur. Texas State’s Institutional Research Office has procedures in place to protect the confidentiality of individual data, as do the involved offices at Indiana University-Bloomington, and the risk is minimal in relation to the benefits to society of improved higher education programs and services.**

1. Identify the specific sites/agencies to be used as well as approval status. Include copies of approval letters from agencies to be used (note: these are required for final approval). If they are not available at the time of IRB review, approval of the proposal will be contingent upon their receipt.

**The BCSSE will be administered solely on the Texas State campus during the PAWS Preview orientation program.**

1. If you are a student, indicate the relationship of the proposal to your program of work and identify your supervising/sponsor faculty member.

**N/A**

1. In the case of student projects, pilot studies, theses, or dissertations, evidence of approval of Supervising Professor or Faculty Sponsor should be included. Thesis and dissertation proposals must be approved by the student’s committee before proceeding to the IRB for review.

**N/A**

1. If the proposed study has been approved by another IRB, attach a copy of the letter verifying approval/disapproval and any related correspondence. If the proposed study has not been reviewed/approved by another IRB, please state this explicitly.

**The national BCSSE has been approved by the Indiana University-Bloomington IRB, protocol number 08-13060, with an expiration date of March 2, 2010 (see attached letter).**

1. Identify all individuals who will have access, during or after completion, to the results of this study, whether they be published or unpublished.

**Texas State personnel who will have access to the raw data are Susan Thompson, Senior Research Analyst in Institutional Research and BCSSE project manager for Texas State, and other professional staff in the Institutional Research Office. Professional staff in the Indiana University-Bloomington Center for Postsecondary Research and Center for Survey Research will also have access to raw data. Results of this study may be published and therefore accessible to the public, but only in aggregate form.**