Tips for Writing Successful Protocols for Class Projects

Members of the IACUC understand that students submitting protocols related to a course project need approval in a timely manner because there are only a few weeks to complete the projects. However, it is up to the students, in consultation with their professor or research mentor, to include in their protocol the information necessary for approval.

Below are some suggestions for writing a successful protocol:

- The experimental design should be clearly described, scientifically sound, and include appropriate controls. If the methods cannot be sufficiently understood from the information provided, the protocol will not be approved. Similarly, if an experiment is so poorly conceived such that use of animals is deemed pointless, the protocol will not be approved.
- Always back up claims with appropriate citations from the literature and include a complete reference list. Protocols submitted without adequate citations and references will not be approved.
- If manipulating the environment of an animal (e.g., temperature, light:dark cycle, food & water), include information about the life history of that species. For approval, committee members need to be convinced that the manipulations will not harm or unduly stress an animal.
- If adopting out animals at completion of study, ensure it is feasible for animals to become pets due to regulations/restrictions associated with state laws (e.g. some frogs cannot be kept as pets in Washington State), group vs. single housing, or other care requirements.
- When choosing an animal verify the campus has appropriate housing conditions available (e.g., birds cannot be housed in some campus buildings).
- In addition to the content issues above, it is often helpful to have someone unfamiliar with your study review your protocol and provide feedback as to whether or not it is clearly written and understandable.
- Make sure the cover page is completely and correctly filled out, including the appropriate signatures.
- Finally, submit your protocol as a single MS Word or PDF file to the IACUC chair.