CCSU SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

1. A student collected data for a Cognitive Lab assignment the previous semester. The assignment involved recruiting friends and relatives to memorize and recall word lists using different mnemonic strategies. Participants were tested individually and orally agreed to be tested. The data was reported (though not collected) anonymously. Now the student wants to present the results at a local professional conference and is requesting IRB approval.
In this case, it is very unlikely that the IRB would approve this protocol. Though the manipulation is benign, the data is not currently being collected, and the data was collected for a purpose other than to contribute to generalizable knowledge, the researcher did not properly consent participants and therefore would not have received IRB approval without this protection in place.

2. A student is employed at a local social services agency that has collected data as part of an internal program evaluation conducted last year. The student is working with a faculty member who suggests that perhaps the data is publishable. Originally the project did not go through IRB approval at the agency or elsewhere, so the student submits the protocol for IRB review at CCSU.
The IRB's decision regarding this secondary data project would depend on details that would have impacted the approval status of the project had it been submitted for review prior to data collection. For example, what was the nature of the data—was the data collected considered sensitive, was it collected such that individuals could be identified, etc.? In addition, what are the details about the consent process—were respondents told that the data would be used in a specific way or would participants be at risk if the outcome were to be made public? If the student researcher could demonstrate that risk to participants is minimal and all processes employed by the original researchers were compliant with conventional ethical standards, it is likely that IRB approval could be granted. Additionally, if the existing agency data was completely anonymous, and there was no way to re-identify participants (e.g., no extant master list to reconnect the data to the original participants), that could also lead to IRB approval.

3. A student researcher collected data as part of an undergraduate research course to examine factors that relate to personality. The student completed the appropriate Initial Protocol Submission Form including instruments, consent form, CITI training certificate and received approval from the research methods professor to proceed with data collection as the project conformed to the CCSU IRB policy on class assignments. Participants completed a battery of inventories, but the student researcher did not analyze all the data from all the inventories. The following semester the student researcher re-analyzed the data including the inventories previously ignored and discovered an interesting pattern of outcome worthy of conference presentation. The student submitted the protocol for IRB review.
The IRB would likely approve this project given that the student complied with conventional ethical standards and the project meets all other criteria to be considered a secondary data analysis study.

4. A student is in the middle of data collection for a class project that was previously approved by the professor. The student decides that sharing the data at a conference would be a good resume builder. The student wants to include data that was collected prior to IRB approval as part of that data set.
In this case, the IRB would not approve the project as data collection that is ongoing cannot be considered as a secondary data analysis study. However, the student can delete the data collected prior to approval and move forward with data collection after IRB approval was obtained.

5. A Master's thesis student collects data with the approval of the advisor, but IRB approval was not sought. The data is anonymous, not sensitive, minimal risk, appropriate consent was obtained, etc. The student requests IRB approval the following semester.

The IRB would not approve this project as retroactive approval of human subjects research (e.g., theses/capstones) cannot be granted, regardless of the perceived level of risk to participants.