Clemson University Research Policies Manual
Clemson University Sponsored Project Management

Assignment of Principal Investigator/Project Director

Approved: February 12, 2013
Effective: February 12, 2013

Statement
The duties that are delegated through the assignment of an individual as the “Principal Investigator” or “Project Director” require that the individual placed within that role has appropriate, formal and legal institutional authority to supervise, direct or otherwise control all decisions necessary for successful project performance.

Therefore, the University has designated the following categories of personnel as eligible to serve as Principal Investigator (or Project Director) on a sponsored project:

- All full-time regular faculty, regardless of academic rank;
- Visiting faculty/scientists during the time they are employed by the University;
- Full-time staff including research faculty and post-doctoral scholars;
- Other University employees as designated by the approval of the Vice President for Research using the variance form (Request to Serve as Principal Investigator/Project Director)

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance toward certain commonly titled categories of individuals within the University that are determined to be ineligible, and in one case, “conditional” for the assignment of the Principal Investigator (or Project Director) role. In the final, or fourth category, the assignment, while not deemed unacceptable, entails certain increased risks for the performing department and University so that appropriate administrative conditions may be required for University acceptance.

Discussion
Within each category below is a brief discussion describing the particular issue(s) of concern.

Policy
1. **Adjunct or Emeritus Faculty, and other individuals not employed by the University** – In recognition of its oversight role of the University’s project performance, personnel supervision, legal responsibilities and various internal and federal compliance requirements associated with sponsored program accounts, an individual, regardless of holding title of “Adjunct” or “Emeritus,” or any other person not formally employed by the University, is ineligible to assume the position of Principal Investigator. A suitable level of institutional oversight toward responsible and accountable project conduct must be legally sustainable within the University’s policies and procedures; therefore, employment status serves as an important determinant for
proper assignment as Principal Investigator on a sponsored project. Adjunct and/or Emeritus Faculty are provided access to University resources and in turn significantly enhance its intellectual endeavors and capabilities; additionally, they may serve as a consultant on external funded research proposals for which the Principal Investigator is a regular faculty member. However, unless a bona fide employment relationship exists beyond the adjunct or emeritus appointment, these individuals may not assume the roles of Principal Investigator, Project Director, Co-Principal Investigator or other equivalent titles.

2. **Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)** – Although this classification qualifies as a University employee, a student in the GRA category is **ineligible** to serve in the role of Principal Investigator unless the sponsor’s guidelines require appointment of such specific personnel in order for the project’s application to be valid. The standard, appropriate action is to name a faculty member, e.g. the student’s advisor, with the necessary technical qualifications to serve as the project’s PI.

3. **Temporary Employee and Temporary Grant (TGP) Employee Positions** – The TGP’s termination date coincides as a matter of routine with the completion date of a sponsored project, and often such circumstance will also occur with a “temporary” employee’s position. The University has significant obligations to the sponsor associated with the project’s completion date, e.g. submission of final technical and intellectual property reports, as well as the coordination of financial closing actions. These duties can require effort of the PI past the sponsor authorized completion date of the project, and their fulfillment may be difficult to satisfy should the PI depart immediately prior to, upon, or shortly after the end-date of the project. To fulfill the expected role of the Principal Investigator in the most adequate and complete manner possible, the University’s preference is that the duties be assigned to a “permanent” faculty position, as opposed to a position which is authorized under an employment agreement with a specified termination date. **Care must be observed** with the appointment of an individual as Principal Investigator whose official actions are sanctioned and reimbursed only within the period of project performance. Consequently, assignment may be **conditioned** upon certain actions, e.g.; appointment of Co-Investigator from within the faculty; extra oversight by department chair, etc.

Variance to Policy
Upon request of the chair of the department where the research funding resides, and concurrence by the Dean or applicable Associate Dean, the VPR or his official designee may grant a variance of this policy when circumstances sufficiently warrant such action to further the goals of Clemson University.

Approved:

[Signature]

Vice President for Research