

Auburn University

Statement of Principal Investigator Eligibility

Approved by the Office of Vice President for Research: November 7, 2018

When Auburn University submits proposals to external sponsors and accepts awards for sponsored projects, the university assumes significant financial and legal obligations. Sponsors fund projects based on the professional expertise of the Principal Investigators (PIs) submitting proposals; however, the formal award is made in the name of Auburn University. Under the general oversight and authority of Auburn University, the Principal Investigator of a sponsored project is the individual who bears primary responsibility for technical compliance, completion of programmatic work, fiscal stewardship of sponsor funds, and compliance with administrative requirements of the project. Thus the university must ensure that individuals serving in the capacity of Principal Investigator have the technical competence and administrative capabilities to carry out a sponsored project. The following Statement of Principal Investigator Eligibility provides institutional requirements for who may serve as a Principal Investigator on an externally sponsored project at Auburn University.

Category 1: Any individual who holds one of the following positions may be identified as a principal investigator for sponsored activities:

- Tenure track faculty (Assistant Professor, Associate Professors, Professor, Librarian II – IV and Archivist II - IV)
- Non-tenure-track research faculty (Assistant Research Professor, Associate Research Professor and Research Professor, Principal Research Scientist/Engineer) and extension faculty (Assistant Director, Associate Director, Extension Specialist, Regional Extension Agent and County Extension Coordinator)
- Clinical Professors (Assistant Clinical Professor, Associate Clinical Professor and Clinical Professor)
- Research Fellow IV, Research Engineer IV and above
- Director of a formal university Institute or Center

Category 2: If the Department Head and Dean or Extension Director are confident in the abilities of an individual, authorizing signature on the proposal cover form will serve to approve one of the persons listed below to serve as a sole Principal Investigator on an externally sponsored project at Auburn University. Alternatively, any individual listed below may be identified as a Principal Investigator for sponsored activities if one of the individuals listed in Category 1 is also named as a Co-Principal Investigator on the project:

- Emeritus faculty
- Curators
- Archivist I
- Librarian I
- Clinical Lecturers and other clinical positions not in Category 1
- Lecturers and Senior Lecturers
- County Extension Agent

Category 3: Any individual who holds one of the following positions may be identified as a Principal Investigator for sponsored activities only if one of the individuals listed in Category 1 is also named as a Co-Principal Investigator on the project:

- Instructors
- Adjunct/Affiliate faculty
- Resident
- Research Fellow/Engineer III and below
- Postdoctoral Fellow

On a case-by-case basis, the Department Head and Dean or Extension Director of the performing unit can name other individuals (not identified in the categories, above) to serve as a Principal Investigator. In these cases, approval of the Vice President for Research is required.

There are some cases when funding is available to support general research-related efforts, but is not tied to a specific research program. In rare circumstances in which an Auburn University employee wishes to serve as a PI but does not meet the eligibility criteria set forth above, approval of the Provost and/or Vice President for Research is required.

In some cases, a sponsoring agency may have restrictions for who may serve as a Principal Investigator on a particular project or program that are more stringent than Auburn University PI eligibility guidelines. In these cases, the sponsor's requirements will take precedence over institutional guidelines for that particular project. In the case where a sponsor may require, allow, or expect an individual to serve as a Principal Investigator who, under normal Auburn University guidelines would otherwise not be eligible, the individual will have a tenure track faculty member serve as a Co-Principal Investigator for internal purposes and assume responsibility for compliance with sponsor and institutional requirements. Fellowships or other training awards are examples where sponsor and institutional requirements may conflict.

Furthermore, it is recognized that the definition of the term "Principal Investigator" may vary across different regulatory documents, e.g., Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) or Institutional Review Board (IRB). In these cases, the regulating body (e.g., IACUC, IRB) determines PI eligibility. The individual with the ultimate administrative and fiduciary responsibility of the project (regardless of the title that is actually used) is expected to fulfill the role of Principal Investigator (i.e., the PI bears primary responsibility for technical compliance, completion of programmatic work, fiscal stewardship of sponsor funds, and compliance with administrative requirements of the project)

Individuals allowed to serve as Principal Investigators on sponsored activities are expected to comply with the Auburn University Principal Investigator Handbook. Nothing in this statement is intended to conflict with policies described in the other documents. Questions of possible conflicting statements will be addressed to the Vice President for Research for clarification.

Effective date of revised guidelines: November 15, 2018
Establishment of original guidelines: September 13, 2001

Guidelines will be reviewed annually by the Office of the Vice President for Research in collaboration with the Faculty Research Committee and the Associate Deans for Research