

**Office of Sponsored Programs Guidance**  
**Principal Investigator/Project Director (PI/PD) Eligibility**

**Background:**

ECU strongly encourages and fully supports faculty and staff engagement in externally sponsored research, instruction, and service programs that embrace the institutional values of student success, public service, discovery and innovation, and regional transformation. Such engagement requires commitment from qualified individuals to ensure ethical conduct of the activities, appropriate stewardship of funds, and project results.

Proposal submission and award acceptance by ECU for research or other sponsored activities carry significant financial and legal obligations. Although proposals are funded and contracts are awarded based in large part on the expertise of the faculty member(s), awards generally are made to the University. Thus, ECU must ensure that the individual primarily responsible for the conduct of the project has the technical and administrative competence to carry out the project activities, the access to university business and financial processes to appropriately manage project funds, and the likelihood of a continued relationship with the University for the duration of the sponsored project.

The purpose of this Guidance is to identify individuals who are eligible to serve as Principal Investigator/Project Director (PI/PD) for proposal submission and to serve as Lead Principal Investigator (Lead PI) for internal financial management of sponsored projects.

**Definitions:**

Sponsored Project - A sponsored project is a research, testing, instructional, evaluative, or public service project, supported with external funds through a grant, contract, cooperative agreement, clinical trial agreement, purchase order, or other funding instrument, that carries a requirement for ECU personnel, trainees, and/or students to perform a specified program or deliver a specified product. Sponsored projects are separately budgeted and managed as individual Banner funds.

Principal Investigator/Project Director (PI/PD) - A generic designation for the individual identified in the proposal/bid stage who will be responsible for overall leadership of the sponsored project, including directing the research or project activities, financial oversight, and compliance with relevant university policies and sponsor terms and conditions. "Principal Investigator" is the preferred term for leaders of research projects, while "Project Director" is more appropriate for leaders of instructional and service programs. Some sponsoring agencies use the dual term "Principal Investigator/Project Director" (PI/PD).

Sponsor-Recognized PI/PD - For purposes of this Guidance, the individual who is identified to the sponsor as having primary responsibility for the technical/programmatic conduct of the funded project. The Sponsor-Recognized PI/PD may or may not be directly responsible for financial management of the project, depending on his/her employment status with the University and/or cognizant administrator authorization.

Internal Lead Principal Investigator (Internal Lead PI) - The project role assigned in the RAMSeS research administration management system to the individual who will be responsible for the financial management of the sponsored project. This individual may or may not be primarily responsible for technical/programmatic management of the project.

Internal Principal Investigator (Internal PI) - The project role assigned in RAMSeS to the individual who is the Sponsor-Recognized PI/PD but who is not eligible to serve as Internal Lead PI. This individual typically has responsibility for the technical management of the project, while the Internal Lead PI has the primary responsibility for financial management. However, the Internal PI is expected to work closely with the Internal Lead PI in funds management as it relates to the technical/programmatic conduct of the project.

Mentor - A tenured/tenure-track or fixed-term faculty member or full-time permanent EPA administrator who, for purposes of this SOP, oversees the work on a trainee or student initiated sponsored project. This individual is designated as Internal PI for externally funded post-doctoral training projects or as Internal Lead PI for student initiated sponsored projects.

Cognizant Administrator - For academic units, the cognizant administrators are the department chair and the dean. For administrative units, the cognizant administrators are the unit director and the applicable vice-chancellor.

### **Sponsored Project Role Eligibility:**

Attachment A details role eligibilities for different types of employees and individuals who will have leadership responsibilities in ECU sponsored projects.

### **Cognizant Administrator Approvals:**

Assignment of any individual who is not a permanent or fixed term employee as an Internal Lead PI requires special consideration by cognizant administrators. When considering approving any individual except full-time permanent or fixed term employees to serve as Internal Lead PI, attention should be given to the following factors:

- The nature of the position the individual occupies;
- The likely duration of employment of the individual through the end of the proposed project period;
- The physical presence or accessibility of the individual; and
- The individual's administrative/financial expertise and experience with University business and financial systems.

Approval of Internal Lead PI status by the cognizant department/unit administrator signifies the department's/unit's agreement to assume technical and/or financial management of the project if the individual becomes unable or unwilling to serve for any reason or does not comply with all sponsor and University policies and procedures for management of grant funds. The department/unit is responsible for any cost-overruns or expense disallowances. Approval of the Internal Lead PI status by the dean/vice-chancellor signifies concurrence with the department/unit administrator's agreement.

Approval of Internal Lead PI and Internal PI roles is accomplished through the normal RAMSeS proposal review and approval process. Although additional justification and documentation are not required by OSP for proposal submission, the unit cognizant administrator(s) may request, as due diligence, written justification before approving assignment of non-permanent employees and non-compensated individuals to these roles.

If approval for Internal Lead PI status for a non-permanent employee or non-compensated individual is deemed inappropriate, the individual may instead serve as an Internal PI with a tenured/tenure-track or fixed-term faculty member or full-time permanent EPA administrator designated as Internal Lead PI.

### **Exceptions:**

Designation of individuals as Sponsor-Recognized PI/PD and/or Internal Lead PI who occupy position types or have a status not included in this SOP or any other exception from this SOP will require approval of the cognizant administrator(s) and the University's Chief Research Officer.

**Attachment A**

SPONSORED PROJECT ROLE ELIGIBILITY*	RAMSeS Role					
	Sponsor Recognized PI/PD	Internal Lead PI	Internal PI	Co-I or Other	Mentor as Internal Lead PI**	Mentor as Internal PI**
<b>Permanent and Fixed Term Employees</b>						
Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty	●	●	●	●	●	●
Fixed-Term Teaching/Research/Clinical Faculty	●	●	●	●	●	●
Full-Time Non-Faculty EHRA Staff	●	●	●	●	●	●
Full-Time SHRA Staff	●	●	●	●		
<b>Non-Permanent Employees</b>						
Visiting Faculty	●	●	●	●		
Artists- and Writers-in-Residence	●	●	●	●		
Adjunct Faculty	●	●	●	●		
BSOM Affiliate Faculty	●	●	●	●		
Fixed-Term EPA Administrators	●	●	●	●		
Part-Time/Temp/Hourly EPA Administrators				●		
Part-Time/Time-Limited/Intermittent SPA Staff				●		
<b>Non-Compensated Individuals</b>						
Emeritus Faculty	●	●	●	●		
Emeritus Administrators	●	●	●	●		
Adjunct Faculty Courtesy Appointment	●	●	●	●		
BSOM Affiliate Faculty Courtesy Appointment	●	●	●	●		
<b>Trainees and Students (Trainee/Student Initiated Proposal)</b>						
Post-Doctoral Trainees	●	●	●			
Graduate Students	●		●			
Undergraduate Students	●		●			

\* Assignment to any role listed is subject to review and approval by cognizant unit administrators.

\*\* A faculty or EHRA staff mentor is required for trainee and student initiated sponsored projects.

**NOTE: In addition to cognizant unit administrator approval, approval of the Vice Chancellor for Research is required for designation of any individual not included in the list above, including any person with a joint appointment with an external entity, as a Sponsor Recognized and/or ECU Internal Lead PI/PD. Such requests should be communicated to the Office of Sponsored Programs prior to proposal submission.**