

Lehigh University

Eligibility to serve as Principal or co-Principal Investigator on sponsored projects

I. Background and purpose

The Principal Investigator¹ (PI) is directly responsible and accountable for meeting some of the university's obligations to a project sponsor. By submission of an application to a sponsor the university affirms the readiness of the PI to serve in the role, and upon acceptance of an award, both the university and the PI commit to fulfillment of the PI's role.

For research projects, PI responsibilities include planning, conduct and dissemination of research and fiscal management of project resources² and both specific expertise and accountability up the academic line, i.e., ultimately to the Provost, is required. Similarly, submission of applications and acceptance of awards for other kinds of sponsored projects are contingent upon the readiness and formal accountability of the PI.

A co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) is a person who shares with the PI a substantial degree of responsibility for directing and managing a sponsored project and may carry the preponderance of responsibility for directing and managing a specific portion of the project. The PI remains accountable to the sponsor for the entirety of the project.

This policy describes who may serve as PI and, as applicable, any specific conditions that apply to proposal for, or assumption of, the role.

II. Policy

Only employees of the university may serve as Principal Investigator or co-Principal Investigator for the Lehigh component of a sponsored project³, except as necessary to meet the specific requirements of a sponsor's funding program⁴.

The following table describes who may serve as PI and any specific conditions that must be met. When not specified as pertaining to the employee's status during the performance period of the sponsored project, these conditions apply at the time of submission of the application and during the performance period.

¹ Research sponsors may allow or encourage multiple investigators to share the PI role. Qualification as PI as described here apply equally to single- and multiple-PI arrangements.

² The term Principal Investigator is also used in Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) policies, both of which apply whether or not the activity is externally supported. Qualification to serve as Principal Investigator is defined separately in each of those policies. Assuring compliance with IRB and IACUC policies is, nonetheless, among the responsibilities of the Principal Investigator on a sponsored research project.

³ For multi-institutional projects, individual institutional policies on who may serve as PI apply, except as may be necessary to meet requirements for sub-recipient monitoring.

⁴ Inclusion of a non-employee as PI to meet the requirements of a non-Federal sponsor's program requires approval of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies.

Position	Can Serve as PI	Can serve as co-PI
Tenure track and tenured members of the faculty	Yes	
Emeritus faculty	Yes, contingent upon assumption of an appropriate staff position, typically on the Research Scientists/Scholars/Engineers track, throughout the performance period of the sponsored project. The staff position may be part-time, coincident with the effort allocated to the project.	
Professors of Practice	Yes, with department chair's and dean's approval, whether in the appointment letter or separately.	
Adjunct faculty	No	
Staff on the Research Scientists/Scholars/Engineers track	Yes, for RE/S-3 and higher levels. The PI must be employed at least 75% of full time, i.e., 9-month equivalent, during the performance period of the project.	
Post-doctoral Research Associates	Yes, with department chair's and dean's approvals for the specific project.	
Visiting faculty	Yes, with department chair's and dean's approvals, whether in the appointment letter or separately. If it is reasonably likely that the project period will extend beyond the term of the appointment including any available renewals, either (a) the dean must express the college's clear intent to retain the employee in a suitable PI-eligible position for the remainder of the employee's time as PI, or (b) plans acceptable to the sponsor must be in place for a listed co-investigator to assume the PI role.	
Other Visiting positions	No	
University Research Fellows	No	
Instructors/Lecturers	On non-research projects only, e.g., on grants for educational projects, with department chair's and dean's approvals.	
Graduate Students	On projects specifically designated for graduate students only, with written commitment of a department chair or dean to the goals of the project and designation of a financial manager for the project budget.	No
Other staff	Yes, with approval of the dean or the vice president to whom the employee's unit reports.	