

Practice on Naming PIs

Office of Research & Economic Development (ORED), University of Nebraska–Lincoln
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Principal Investigator (PI): A Principal Investigator is the primary individual responsible for the preparation, study design, conduct and administration of research in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and institutional policy governing such activities. Research may be performed under a grant, cooperative agreement, training or public service project, contract or other sponsored project. Research also may be conducted without an outside sponsor or funding.

Co-Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator (co-PI/co-I): Co-PIs/Co-Is are key personnel who have responsibilities similar to those of a PI on research projects. While the PI has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of a research project, the co-PI/co-I is also obligated to ensure the project is conducted in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and institutional policy governing the conduct of sponsored research.

Eligibility: PI or co-PI status is a privilege granted to eligible university personnel who meet certain criteria. Persons holding positions in the following categories may be designated as PIs in applications for externally sponsored funding:

1. All tenured and tenure-track assistant, associate and full professors.
2. All persons holding appointments as research assistant professor, research associate professor, research professor and extension specialist.
3. All persons holding adjunct, visiting, emeritus or other faculty positions (including professors of practice) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, not included under category 1 or 2, and who have the approval of the appropriate leadership of a department/school and the dean of the relevant college or division. Such approval is indicated by the approving person's signature via the Proposal Approval and Submission routing process in NUgrant. PIs in this category also shall name a co-PI from appointment types included in category 1 or 2 above. In the event a co-PI is not named, the appropriate leadership of the department/school and the dean of the relevant college or division shall accept full fiscal and administrative liability and responsibility for the actions of the PI included in this category.
4. All post-doctoral fellows who have the approval of the appropriate leadership of a department/school and the approval of the dean of the relevant college or division. Such approval is indicated by the approving person's signature via the Proposal Approval and Submission routing process in NUgrant.
5. All professional staff who are not also students, except as noted in category 6 below, provided they have the approval of the appropriate leadership of a department/school and the approval of the dean of the relevant college or division, or the vice chancellor of an administrative unit. Such approval is indicated by the signature of the approving person via the Proposal Approval and Submission routing process in NUgrant.

6. Several sponsors offer pre-doctoral grants whereby the work is conceived of and carried out entirely by graduate students. A graduate student may serve as a PI, where appropriate, provided he or she has the approval of the appropriate leadership of a department/school and the approval of the dean of the relevant college or division, or the vice chancellor of an administrative unit. In addition, a faculty member must be identified as a mentor and named as a co-PI (supervising investigator for IRB projects) in NUgrant and oversees the project nominally (examples: NASA: Harriett G. Jenkins Predoctoral Fellowship Program [JPFP]; NIH: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral Fellowships [F31] to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research; NIH: Predoctoral Training at the Interface of the Behavioral and Biomedical Sciences; DOE: The National Methane Hydrates R&D Program - Graduate Fellowship Program). The faculty member named as co-PI must be eligible to serve as PI in one of the other categories listed above. Approval for the graduate student to serve as PI is indicated by the signature of the approving person via the Proposal Approval and Submission routing process in NUgrant. Undergraduate students may be designated as co-PIs only. When a sponsor's program guidelines require the undergraduate student to be listed as PI on the proposal application, the student's mentor/adviser shall be the PI of record on the Proposal Approval and Submission routing process in NUgrant and responsible for the conduct and oversight of the project.

In the event of a new hire who will meet the criteria defined in one of the categories listed above, approval to submit proposals may be granted if a copy of the signed offer letter is provided, indicating the start date and position along with an approval from the department chair or college/division dean. For a proposal to be submitted by a new hire, the department will prepare a NUgrant record with all pertinent information. Once the position status is available in NUgrant, the proposal will be completed and routed.

In case of a dispute, the vice chancellor for research and economic development will have jurisdiction.

See also: ORED Practice on Changing PIs or Key Personnel and ORED Process when a PI or Co-PI leaves UNL.