OP 70.06: RESEARCH ENGINEERS

Purpose

A comprehensive university requires a cadre of personnel who are able to devote full time effort to research. The purpose of this document is to establish a consistent set of titles for such positions pertaining to engineering research activities and to establish promotion criteria and approval process as it relates to HRM 60-323 for the positions. Existing procedures are to be used for establishing positions, advertising vacancies, and filling positions.

Policy

All regulations of Mississippi State University concerning employment and promotion must adhere to the By-Laws and Policies of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (1970, with subsequent amendments). Every person employed by the University is expected to meet high standards of professional integrity, collegiality and objectivity, and to further the goals of his/her unit(s) and the University. In addition, a person of research engineer rank must have a minimum of an engineering or computer science degree; a strong commitment to higher education, and in particular to the mission of Mississippi State University; and a willingness to assume the responsibilities and obligations appropriate to a professional university employee.

Position Titles

Four levels of appointment are to be used for Research Engineer positions:

1. Research Engineer I
2. Research Engineer II
3. Research Engineer III
4. Senior Research Engineer

Personnel appointed to these positions should: (a) be involved in research engineering support (b) hold a bachelor's degree in engineering or computer science and (c) meet specific criteria developed by the organizational unit where the person is located.

General Criteria for Appointment to Research Engineer Positions

Criteria for appointment/hiring, promotion and retention of Research Engineers outlined in this policy are the same regardless of fund source.

Rank	Education	Experience
Research Engineer I	B. S. in engineering or computer science	Less than one year in a related area
Research Engineer II	B. S. in engineering or computer science	Two years professional experience in a related area; requires two years at previous level or equivalent
Research Engineer III	B. S. in engineering or computer science	Four years professional experience in a related area – requires two years at previous level or equivalent
Senior Research Engineer	B. S. in engineering or computer science	Six or more years professional experience in a related area – requires two years at previous level or equivalent

Suggested Performance Standards of Professional Activities

In every case, the performance of research engineer personnel will be judged by all parties involved in promotion decisions on the basis of written policy statements or criteria (i.e., specific requirements) developed by the specific units with which the individual is associated. All criteria should be based on the application of the highest professional standards associated with the university work. Some suggested items to consider in establishing evaluative criteria at the unit level follow:

Annual Evaluation and Review of Research Engineers

Supervisors of Research Engineers are required to annually evaluate employee performance. Annual performance evaluations should provide Research Engineers with insight regarding progress towards promotion. On an annual basis, each department head or appropriate officer and each of his/her employees in research engineer positions will agree in writing to the employee's objectives, responsibilities, and expectations. This written agreement must be consistent with the promotion criteria for research engineer positions of the department, specific unit and the University. This agreement will be reviewed by the next appropriate administrator, and a copy placed in the employee's promotion file. If the department head and employee cannot reach an agreement, the matter will be referred to the next appropriate administrator.

An annual performance review, based on the predetermined agreement, will be conducted by the department head or appropriate officer and each research employee in his/her department before the budget is made for the next year or when specified by the central administration of the University, whichever occurs first. A copy of this review, signed by both parties, will be reviewed by the next appropriate administrator and placed in the employee's promotion file. The employee may attach a dissenting statement to all copies of this review.

A permanent, confidential file for each research engineer employee is to be maintained by the department head or appropriate officer. No record in the file is to be added, changed, or withdrawn without the knowledge of both parties. The responsible administrative officer will make all pertinent information available to the appropriate individuals when the employee is a candidate for promotion, or when the information is needed in an appeals or grievance case.

Guidelines for Promotion of Research Engineers

It is desirable for the University's Research Engineers to advance professionally. The purpose of these guidelines is to describe promotion criteria for each of the Research Engineer levels to qualify for advancement to the next level. Performance is defined and evaluated in an individual's annual evaluation as outlined in University Operating Policies and Procedures 60-503: http://www.policies.msstate.edu/ .

The promotion of Research Engineers will be initiated by a letter from the supervisor with supporting documentation as appropriate, and must be approved by signature through the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

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Performance Standards for Promotion of Research Engineers

The University recognizes achievement of Research Engineers by advancement. Promotion is never granted routinely for simple satisfactory accomplishment. Rank also reflects comparable stature with others in similar disciplines in other university settings. Promotion is based on performance and demonstrated competence and not solely on length of service, but a reasonable time must elapse for the individual to demonstrate competence and have it confirmed through periodic evaluation. Professional achievement elsewhere will be considered for promotion.

Evaluation criteria within the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) are listed in Table 1. Criteria are based upon levels of independence/leadership, creative contribution/scientific endeavor, and professional development/activities.

TABLE 1.   Evaluation criteria for promotion of Research Engineers within the ORED

	Research Engineer Promotion Level		
	I to II	II to III	III to Senior
Minimum Years of Employment at Previous Level	2 years	2 years	2 years
Minimum Educational Requirement	B. S. in engineering or computer science	B. S. in engineering or computer science	B. S. in engineering or computer science
Performance* Standards	Excellence in 1 area with satisfactory in at least 1 additional area	Excellence in 2 areas	Excellence in two areas with satisfactory in at least 2 additional areas
Annual Evaluation**	Average overall rating of 3.0 or higher on each of the last three annual evaluations	Average overall rating of 3.0 or higher on each of the last three annual evaluations	Average overall rating of 3.0 or higher on each of the last three annual evaluations

* Performance is defined as Scholarly Activities, Oral Presentations, Impact and Outcome Measures and Grants, Contracts and Resources related to Program Mission.

** Documented in the ORED Annual Evaluation Form

Supervisors of Research Engineers are responsible for providing a working environment that allows the employee to function as a professional member of the University and achieve orderly growth in professional stature and rank. Specific responsibilities of supervisors include:

1. Conduct an annual performance appraisal based on job-related criteria and submit on the Division of Research - Research Engineers, Research Associates, and Post-Doctoral Fellow Evaluation Forms
2. Submit a "Progress Toward Promotion" form Division of Research - Progress Toward Promotion, Research Engineers and Research Associates, in addition to the "Annual Performance Appraisal" form
3. Assist Engineers in collecting and preparing documents for the "Application for Promotion" form Division of Research - Application for Promotion, Research Engineers and Research Associates.

4. Provide opportunities for professional development and achievement.
5. Acknowledge the intellectual contributions of Engineers by including them as coauthors of research publications, when appropriate.
6. Supervisors should involve Engineers in classroom/workshop instruction, presentations to professional groups, outreach and technical assistance activities and the writing and administration of grants consistent with source of funds and time and effort reporting.
7. Incorporate potential salary adjustments in development of extramural budgets, since Research Engineers are often extramurally funded.

Schedule for Promotion Decisions

Departmental recommendations may be submitted to the appropriate dean, director and then to the ORED Vice President any time of the year. The Vice President will evaluate the recommendations of the dean/director based on applicant satisfying the criteria, as set forth.

A letter requesting an appropriate salary increase must accompany the promotion packet. Letters should include the current salary and proposed post promotion salary. Signature approval for salary increases should follow guidelines in HRM's Staff Compensation Program (HRM 60-323).

Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every four years or as needed by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development or when revisions are made to HRM 60-323 with recommendations for revisions presented to the President. Input may be provided to the Vice President by Human Resources Management.

REVIEWED BY:

/s/ David R. Shaw   10/19/2015
Vice President for Research and   Date
Economic Development

/s/ Timothy N. Chamblee   10/26/2015
Assistant Vice President and Director   Date
Institutional Research and Effectiveness

/s/ Joan Lucas   10/22/2015
General Counsel   Date

APPROVED:

/s/ Mark Keenum   10/26/2015
President   Date