

November 7, 2014

TO: Jose Wudka, Chair  
Riverside Division

FR: Akula Venkatram, Chair  
Executive Committee, Bourns College of Engineering

RE: Revisions to APM - 330, Specialist Series

The proposed revisions to APM-330 “respond to campus requests to update the policy, recognizing the need to distinguish the Specialist title from the Staff Research Associate (SRA) title and other academic research titles”. However, these revisions do not clearly differentiate the nature of their work and job responsibilities from those with other academic titles. It appears that the main duty of a specialist, as defined “to use their technical or professional expertise to make scientific and scholarly contributions to the research enterprise”, can be fully accomplished by a research assistant, a postdoctoral researcher, or a regular research staff.

Most federal funding agencies do not finance any researcher participating in University and/or public service. However, appointment in this series may be solely based on such service. For example, a specialist can serve “as a liaison with and respond to the needs of various industry organizations, state and federal agencies, and other external groups”. It appears that this activity is more suitable for someone in the regular staff series, and is inconsistent with the key responsibility of a specialist to “make scientific and scholarly contributions”.

The BCOE committee requests clarification of the duties and responsibilities of a Specialist and how they differ from those with other academic titles.