



To: Deans and Department Heads, Chairs, and School Directors

From: Ron Fricker, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs 

Cc: Executive Vice President and Provost
President of the Faculty Senate
Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation
Associate Deans for Research and for Faculty Affairs
College HR Division Directors

Date: May 23, 2025

Subject: **Considerations for Research-Extended Appointments in Academic Year 2025-26**

1. **Purpose.** Given the continuing uncertainty around federal grants and contracts, this memo provides guidance to principal investigators and college and departmental leadership about the potential risks of using research extended appointments in the coming academic year.
2. **Background.** Research-extended appointments are intended to allow faculty to extend their academic year appointments to calendar year appointments using sponsored research funding. Research extended appointments are typically approved for one or two years at a time, depending on length of the sponsored grant or contract. They may be renewed without limit by submitting a request for extension with documentation of funding.

The benefit of a research extended appointment conversion, compared to simply charging summer salary to a grant, is that the income counts as base salary and thus towards retirement. Virginia Tech [Policy 6200](#) provides additional detail and the [Faculty Affairs website](#) has the necessary forms for requesting or extending a research extended appointment.

3. **Discussion.** Faculty on academic year appointments defer a portion of their academic year salary to the summer so that they can be paid year-round. When faculty convert to a calendar year appointment via research extended appointment they cease deferring their salary. A worst-case scenario is a faculty member on a calendar year contract who converts back to an academic year contract at the end of the academic year. In such a situation, the faculty member will not have deferred any salary and thus would not be paid for the three summer months.

For this reason, faculty applying for a research-extended appointment must submit documentation that shows they have sufficient research funding to pay for their summer months, and departments approving a research-extended appointment guarantee the faculty member's salary summer obligations in the event of a shortfall. While the chance of the cancellation of a government grant or contract previously was low and departments could manage the associated risk, current uncertainty in the funding landscape may result in an increased chance of the cancellation of external grants and contracts.

4. **Recommendation.** In the coming academic year, principal investigators and departments and schools are encouraged to carefully assess their financial risk before requesting a research-extended appointment. Departments will continue to have to guarantee summer salary obligations, and should a shortfall occur will have the responsibility to cover it with indirect/overhead funds. It thus may be preferable in the current environment for faculty to take summer salary in lieu of research-extended appointments until such time as the likelihood of external grants and contracts being cancelled can be better understood and assessed.