

Memorandum of Understanding

This memorandum of understanding made as of December 15, 2023, between:

The University of Tennessee-Oak Ridge Innovation Institute (UT-ORII)

and

The Min H. Kao Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, The University of Tennessee

Background

The University of Tennessee-Oak Ridge Innovation Institute has a goal of increasing collaboration between the University of Tennessee and Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). A significant part of the increased collaboration is increased engagement of ORNL staff in graduate student support and mentoring. While growth in the Bredesen Center's three joint interdisciplinary PhD programs is anticipated, UT-ORII seeks to engage with existing PhD programs in disciplinary departments to help capture this tremendous opportunity. Additionally, UT-ORII will be hiring ~120 joint research faculty that we aim to matrix to ORNL groups and University of Tennessee academic departments to enhance the mission of both partners. We anticipate that these Joint Research Faculty will be tremendous resources for the university's academic departments as they will have complementary research expertise, will grow the research portfolio of participating departments, and be able to contribute to the teaching mission of the department.

Goals and objectives

This MOU aims to establish roles and responsibilities related to the following four categories of engagement between UT-ORII and academic departments at the University of Tennessee:

1. First year financial support of departmental PhD students working at ORNL
2. PhD advising/mentoring by Oak Ridge Graduate Advisors (OGA) and ORNL-based Joint Faculty (JFO).
3. PhD advising/mentoring by UT-ORII joint research faculty.
4. PhD advising/mentoring of Bredesen Center Joint PhD Students by departmental faculty.

Roles and responsibilities

I. PhD Student Support

- a. Support of departmental graduate students by UT-ORII.

When an ORNL staff member collaborates with a department to recruit a PhD student into the department's PhD program, UT-ORII will provide the equivalent of 1 year of financial support for the student. This support requires agreement from UT-ORII prior to the student's arrival on campus, and a commitment from the ORNL staff member to provide support for the remainder of the degree program. UT-ORII is not responsible for any funding beyond the 1-year stated above, and it is up to the department and ORNL staff to ensure continuous funding for the student, as is the case for other students in the department's PhD program. UT-ORII's financial support will typically occur during the first year of the student's degree, but other configurations are possible by mutual agreement between the advisor, department, and UT-ORII. UT-ORII will help the department's faculty create connections with ORNL staff if desired.

- b. Support of Bredesen Center PhD students advised by departmental faculty.

While the main goal of the Bredesen Center Joint PhD programs is to capture ORNL-supported graduate student mentors, UT Faculty are allowed to advise Bredesen Center students and fund them through sponsored projects within their home departments. In this partnership, the department agrees to abide by the Bredesen Center's cost model for the respective PhD program (ESE, DSE or GST) and commit to funding the student through graduation beyond the limits of the initial funding provided by the Bredesen Center. Should funding gaps arise in the faculty's sponsored project(s), the faculty member should seek assistance from their home department to continue the student's funding. Options

may include teaching assistantships, or departmental scholarship or fellowship funds, or partnering with collaborators at ORNL to have the student funded by a UT-B contract. Faculty should alert the Center's leadership to possible funding gaps as early as possible, so that options may be explored to prevent a gap in the student's funding. The Bredesen Center will consider requests for additional student funding on a case-by-case basis. A formal written request should be submitted to the appropriate program director including the following information:

- 1) the reason for the funding gap
- 2) the measures taken to solve the issue before seeking funds from the Center
- 3) the length of time assistance may be needed before additional sponsored funding may become available.

II. Advising privileges.

The Graduate School allows UT tenured, tenure-track, and joint faculty (e.g., JFO, OGA) holding a doctoral degree to chair PhD committees (<https://gradschool.utk.edu/academics/forms-central/phd-committee-form/>). However, departments may choose to establish their own, more restrictive mentoring/advising/chairing guidelines for OGA, JFO, and UT-ORII JRF. Departments may choose to grant different advising privileges to UT-ORII JRF due to their non-tenure track appointments. Departmental guidelines, including any specifics about serving as chair, co-chair, or committee member, are explicitly stated in the EECS departmental bylaws.

- An OGA/JFO/UT-ORII JRF may not serve as Chair unless approved by a vote of the EECS tenure-track faculty but can serve as a committee member.

III. Reporting Obligation.

UT-ORII has an obligation to report to stakeholders how funds are being used and reporting on successes of the financial investments or shortcomings in meeting expectations. The department agrees to provide to UT-ORII information on research activities and academic progress of the students that are recipients of UT-ORII funding through graduation and placement upon graduation. Additionally, the department will provide information on UT-B contract expenditures and overhead revenue.

Duration of the MOU

This MOU will be valid for 5 years starting January 1, 2024.

Signatures

Brynn Voy

University of Tennessee-Oak Ridge Innovation Institute

Leon M Tolbert

Dr. Leon M. Tolbert
Interim Department Head
Min H. Kao Dept. of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
The University of Tennessee