Appropriate Responsibilities for Volunteers
A department should not rely on volunteers to perform duties that are typically performed by permanent employees—other than on a short-term basis. Volunteers should be supplementing the work done by employees, not replacing the need for paid staff.

Letter to the Volunteer
To avoid any confusion about the terms of the relationship, the department should send a letter to the volunteer spelling out the begin date, end date (if any), time commitment, responsibilities, who to contact with questions and information about insurance coverage and ID cards.

NEW! Effective March 2013, all appointment and invitation letters must indicate if the scholar is a “Research Scholar”, “Short-term Scholar”, or “Professor”.

“Short-term Scholar”: if appointment is less than six months
A professor, research scholar, specialist, or a person with similar education or accomplishments coming to the United States on a short-term visit for the purpose of lecturing, observing, consulting, training, or demonstrating special skills at research institutions, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited educational institutions, or similar types of institutions.

“Research Scholar”: if appointment is more than six months
An individual primarily conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project at research institutions, corporate research facilities, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited educational institutions, or similar types of institutions. The research scholar may also teach or lecture, unless disallowed by the sponsor.

“Professor”:
An individual primarily teaching, lecturing, observing, or consulting at post-secondary accredited educational institutions, museums, libraries, or similar types of institutions. A professor may also conduct research, unless disallowed by the sponsor.

Insurance Issues
Liability protection is provided to all officers, employees and agents of the University under Wisconsin Statute, Section 895.46(1). Volunteers acting under the direction and control of the University and for its benefit are considered agents and thus covered. This statute authorizes the State to pay claims based on the negligent acts of employees or agents or to defend employees or agents against allegations of negligence, which may have caused injury or property damage to others provided the employee or agent was
acting within the scope of his/her responsibilities to the University. It is important that volunteers acknowledge mistakes that could lead to potential liability claims and that such incidents are reported promptly by the department to the UW-Eau Claire Office of Loss Prevention and Safety.

Volunteers are not covered by worker’s compensation, however. If injured during the course of their volunteer work, they would have the same legal rights as any visitor to the campus to seek compensation if the injury resulted from university negligence.

Questions about liability coverage for volunteers should be directed to the Director of Risk Management. For other questions, contact the Academic Personnel Officer.

2/05 Academic Affairs
Volunteer Letter Template

The following Volunteer Letter must include the terms of the volunteer agreement, who to contact with questions, the insurance paragraph and the ID card paragraph. The Volunteer Fact Sheet must be attached to the letter. Please make sure to print the letter on department or university letterhead.

Dear (name here),

Thank you for your willingness to volunteer your services to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and specifically this department. We look forward to welcoming you as a (research scholar, short-term scholar, or professor) to assist with the (name of the project here) project. Your faculty counterpart will be (name here) in the department of (department name here). Your faculty counterpart’s email address is: (UWEC email address here).

Based on our previous discussions, your activities as a volunteer will be (briefly describe the responsibilities here). You will begin (starting date here) and continue (“for as long as we mutually wish to maintain the relationship” or a specific end date is the better approach). You have indicated that you can spend approximately (an exact or range of hours here) hours per week on these activities.

Please read carefully the attached “Volunteer Fact Sheet.” Note that receipt of this letter makes you an official volunteer and that you will be covered by the State’s liability protection program so long as you perform your duties within the scope of the description provided above. Since volunteers are not covered by the state’s worker compensation program, however, you are encouraged to maintain your own health insurance. If you should be injured during the course of your activities and the injury results from the negligence of a university employee or agent, you would have the same legal rights to seek compensation as would any visitor to the campus.

If you have any questions about your volunteer service to our department, please do not hesitate to let me know. Again, thank you for your willingness to donate your time, energy and expertise. We really appreciate it!

Sincerely,

(name of department chair or dean here)

Attachment: Volunteer Fact Sheet