

Who's Steering the Author Ship?:

Introducing the Authorship Policy & Resolution Procedures



January 26, 2022

Presented by

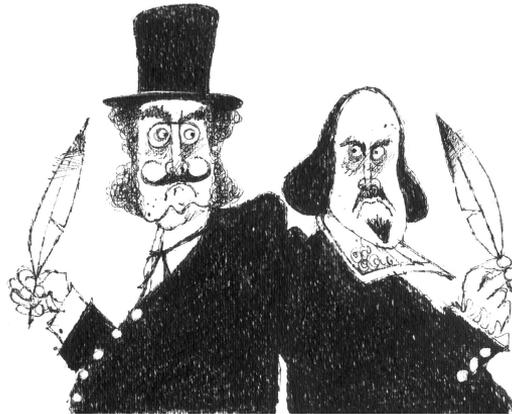
Lisa Rasmussen, PhD, Professor of Philosophy & Graduate School Faculty Fellow

Sam Sears, Associate Vice Chancellor & Deputy General Counsel

Amy Kelso, Senior Associate General Counsel

Overview

- Background & Survey Data
- Case Studies
- [University Policy 318, Authorship Policy & Resolution Procedures](#) (May 25, 2021)
- [Authorship Agreement](#)
- Questions



(Image source: <https://tinurl.com/vxz4iktq>)

Background

- In general:
 - Authorship is a signal of credit and responsibility for the production of work
 - Determination of authorship can vary by discipline and can be challenging to discuss at times
 - Trainee experiences may continue poor practices
- Charlotte experiences:
 - As research ethics instructors, Lisa and Sam saw graduate student tensions about authorship
 - Dean Tom Reynolds reported that ~ ½ of cases he saw as Research Integrity Officer involved authorship disputes
 - UNC Charlotte pilot survey indicated:
 - Problems with authorship order: 47% of trainees (41% of faculty)
 - Wrongful author inclusion: 27% of trainees (32% of faculty)
 - Wrongful author exclusion: 26% of trainees (28% of faculty)
 - Next step: NSF Grant, “Fostering a Culture of Openness and Transparency with Authorship Policies” (5-year, ~\$600k award, 2020)



(Image source: <https://tinyurl.com/vvwb4ls4>)



Survey data Fall 2020, Charlotte graduate faculty and students

I have concerns about the lack of guidance for authorship distribution

17% of Graduate students *strongly agree*

11% of Faculty *strongly agree*

27% of Graduate students *somewhat agree*

19% of Faculty *somewhat agree*

I can comfortably discuss authorship with team members

20% of Graduate students *disagree*

7% of Faculty *disagree*



Have you ever encountered disagreement regarding authorship naming in your research team(s)?

25% of Graduate students said *yes*

34% of Faculty said *yes*

Have you ever encountered disagreement regarding author order in your research team(s)?

37% of Graduate students said *yes*

42% of Faculty said *yes*

At Charlotte, have you ever heard of another person engaging in any of the following behaviors as a result of an authorship naming disagreement?

Being hostile to other team members (13%)

Undermining others' work (9%)

Cutting corners on the research process (6%)

Manipulating data (2%)

Acting competitive with other team members (15%)



Qualitative quotes from Charlotte respondents:

- “In academic papers I've worked on, it seems that the order goes by seniority on a project and not how much someone contributed to a given manuscript.”
- “When you are a grad student, you have very little power, and it is nearly impossible to convey to professors concerns about authorship.”
- “I felt like the ‘need for publications’ for another team member trumped their actual involvement in a project (they only did one set of analyses), pushing my position after this person (who was a professor and I am a student).”
- “I have seen random people being involved in the article in order to increase the visibility of the paper, even though they have not actually contributed to the work.”
- “I wrote the majority of the paper and after submitting it to the team, all of a sudden the scope of the paper changed and so did the authorship which undervalued my contribution. There was a consensus on the direction of the paper from all team members. This action by the team member was intentional to rearrange authorship which was unprofessional.”



(Image source: <http://crostalk.cell.com/blog/how-we-deal-with-authorship-and-author-disputes>)



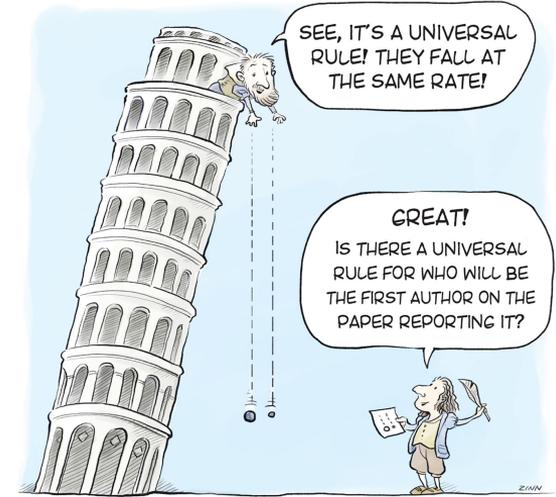
Case Study: The Left-Out Author

(from [HHS Office of
Research Integrity](#))



Authorship Policy: Purpose

- Authorship disputes arise
- Can be damaging to mentor/mentee and collaborator relationships
- Journals will not arbitrate authorship disputes and recommend that institutions resolve them
- In general, authorship disputes among collaborators are **not** within the scope of [Research Misconduct policies](#)
- To foster a culture of integrity in research:
 - Establish an authorship dispute policy
 - Provide training regarding open and transparent authorship decision-making



(Image source: David Zinn (www.zinnart.com))

Definitions



(Image source: <https://tinyurl.com/yvzb4ls4>)

Corresponding Author: When a manuscript has been submitted for publication consideration, the person who identified themselves as responsible for communicating between the publisher and collaborators on the project.

Lead Author: An individual who has taken a prominent role in the generation of ideas for and conduct of the research, as well as in drafting the manuscript; but the criteria for designation of Lead Author may vary by discipline.

Principal Investigator: In sponsored research, the individual usually identified as such on the grant proposal of which the research is a part. However, an individual who leads a research project may occasionally be identified as a Principal Investigator even if the research project is not sponsored by external funding.



Scope & Applicability

Policy applies to:

- UNC Charlotte faculty, staff, and students
 - conducting research, scholarship, or other creative academic activity
 - as part of their employment or enrollment at UNC Charlotte.
- Potential authorship disputes between faculty, staff, and students
- Includes disputes that occur pre- and post-publication

Other policies that might be implicated:

- Disputes may be assessed to determine whether they implicate [Academic Integrity](#) or [Research Misconduct](#) policies; in that event, AI or RM policy generally takes precedence, and claims are processed under one of those procedures rather than authorship dispute procedures.



(Image source: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-10-4720-6_13)



Policy

- Not a single set of standards
- Minimum requirements for authorship:
 - substantial contribution to the work, and
 - accountability for the work that was done and its presentation in a publication
- In effort to prevent disputes and promote constructive, transparent authorship practices Policy 318 establishes:
 - Authorship Principles
 - Constructive Authorship Practices



(Image source: <https://tinurl.com/v36za83m>)



Policy

- *Authorship Principles*
 - Lead Author, Corresponding Author, or Principal Investigator leads conversations among contributors regarding authorship - before, during, after project
 - All individuals who have made a substantial contribution to a project should be named as authors



(Image source: <https://tinypurl.com/v36za83m>)

Policy

- *Authorship Principles, contd*

- All authors on a publication should have a reasonable opportunity to review and approve the final product
- Honorary, guest, gift, or ghost authorship is not acceptable
- Authorship ordering conventions vary by discipline and publication format
- Authorship practices regarding theses or dissertations may vary by discipline



(Image source: <https://tinypurl.com/v36za83m>)

Case: When is Collaboration Enough for Authorship?



(Image source:
<https://tinypic.com/z2u52ld>)

- Kaia Kumar is a senior graduate student in a large computer science laboratory. She spends some time helping a junior graduate student debug an app he is developing as part of his graduate student research.
- A few months later, during a lab group meeting, a manuscript detailing the project is discussed, listing the lab PI and the junior graduate student as authors.
- Kaia believes she merits authorship on the project, but the PI says that her technical assistance, no matter how substantial, does not rise to the level of authorship according to his typical practices.



Discussion



(Image source:
<https://tinypic.com/z2u52ld>)

- What could have been done by each party to avoid this situation in the first place?
 - Kaia?
 - Junior graduate student?
 - PI?



Policy



(Image source: <https://tinypurl.com/v36za83m>)

- *Constructive Authorship Practices*
 - As soon as possible in a research collaboration, PI or intended Lead/Corresponding Author should initiate conversations among the collaborators about authorship
 - Agreements about authorship order should be transparent; [written authorship agreement](#) should be developed and shared with all collaborators
 - include proposed authorship order, authorship standards collaborators agree to follow, and indications regarding when authorship changes should be discussed



Policy



(Image source: <https://tinurl.com/v36za83m>)

- *Constructive Authorship Practices, contd*
 - Because research roles can change throughout the lifecycle of a collaboration, important to revisit authorship agreements as circumstances warrant
 - University departments and research units should include reference to Policy 318 in orientation materials for new students and faculty
 - Collaborations with researchers at institutions other than UNC Charlotte should follow the recommendations in Policy 318:
 - [a written agreement](#) explicitly establishing authorship order, authorship standards collaborators agree to follow, indications regarding when authorship changes should be discussed, and dispute resolution methods



Case: The Wrong Kind of Contribution?



(Source:

<http://67goldenrules.com/guided-mindfulness-meditation/>)

- Dr. Ganiro Egbe is a psychologist working on projects involving mindfulness. Carlos, one of Dr. Egbe's graduate students, is responsible for leading participants in an experiment related to this project.
- In the course of one semester, Carlos successfully runs over 100 participants through the experiment, keeping careful records of the procedures and results. Carlos hopes to apply to PhD programs in the near future, and is glad that his participation in this project will qualify him as an author, a significant boost for his PhD application.
- However, after the project is completed, Carlos discovers that he has been thanked in the acknowledgment section, but not listed as an author.
- When he asks Dr. Egbe about this apparent omission, Dr. Egbe states that since Carlos was paid for his work, and provided only technical assistance, his contribution is not sufficient to be named as an author.



Dispute Resolution Procedures

- *Informal Dispute Resolution*

- Consult any [written authorship agreement](#)
- Involve a neutral third party, such as an informal mediator or an Ombuds, who may facilitate discussions but whose role is not to render a decision
 - Separate Ombuds offices for faculty (<https://ombuds.charlotte.edu>), graduate students (<https://graduateschool.charlotte.edu/current-students/ombudsman>).
- Contact the Chair, a Graduate Program Director, or Dean for informal assistance
- If informal resolution fails, submit dispute to Authorship Dispute Panel for formal resolution



(Image source:

<https://www.enago.com/academy/study-suggests-first-authors-contribute-more-in-research-misconduct/>)



Dispute Resolution Procedures

- *Formal Dispute Resolution*

- Initiation

- Contact Dean of the Graduate School with summary of the dispute and supporting documents
- Dean reviews to determine whether a formal resolution is appropriate, and if so, appoints an Authorship Dispute Panel

- Authorship Dispute Panel

- Three-person Panel appointed by Dean hears dispute
 - If a graduate student is involved, Panel must include a graduate student
- Panel and both parties are required to maintain confidentiality of all parties, deliberations, and documentation



(Image source:

<https://www.enago.com/academy/study-suggests-first-authors-contribute-more-in-research-misconduct/>)



Dispute Resolution Procedures

- *Formal Dispute Resolution, contd*

- Resolution

- Panel makes written recommendation to the Dean of Graduate School summarizing the dispute, documentation considered, and recommended resolution, along with its rationale.
- Dean notifies disputant and respondent(s) of Panel's recommendation
- Panel's recommendation not binding on parties but may be considered as presumptive evidence of the appropriate authorship designation if either disputant or respondent fails to implement the recommendation
- Dean may notify non-complying party's supervisor or other appropriate administrator if Dean determines that party's failure to implement recommendation warrants consideration of disciplinary or other appropriate action

- Supplemental Guidelines: Under development



(Image source:
<https://www.enago.com/academy/study-suggests-first-authors-contribute-more-in-research-misconduct/>)



Case Study: When Authorship Gets Personal

(from [HHS Office of
Research Integrity](#))



UNC Charlotte Authorship Agreement



Authorship Agreement

Authorship on a paper, presentation, or other scholarly work indicates a substantial contribution to a project and accountability for the results. Authorship decisions often affect reputations and careers, and they can be a source of tension, even within healthy collaborations. This tool may help to facilitate open, transparent communication about authorship decisions among collaborators.

Authorship is often best discussed as early as possible in a project. Research projects can be long and involved, and parts of a project may be disseminated at different times. As a result, authorship on each part or product may vary; for example, if a project has two main parts, a different person may lead each section and become first author on a publication.

Even if roles have not yet become clear, early conversations about authorship help to set expectations and to clarify the importance of open and honest discussion throughout the process. This agreement is meant to be a "living document"—one that can be revisited and changed as circumstances evolve over the course of a project.

Instructions.

The prompts and questions provided are designed to foster transparent conversations among collaborators in order to reach a shared set of expectations. All fields are required; however, acceptable answers include "not applicable" and "undetermined" if those responses best reflect the circumstances of your collaboration. A copy of this form should be distributed to all collaborators and/or stored in a shared location. If you plan multiple outputs (e.g., multiple publications; conference proceedings and articles, etc.) from one project, use a different form for each intended output. Please refer to [University Policy #318: Authorship Policy and Resolution Procedures](#) for additional information and resources.

Section 1.

Declaration of student project

Is this a thesis, dissertation, or other student-driven project? Yes No

For works derived substantially from student theses, dissertations, and other student-driven projects, a typical expectation is that the student should be listed as first author.

Is the student interested in pursuing dissemination of this project as an author? Yes No Unsure

Section 2.

Project background & publication goals

Working project title and description.

Possible conferences/publication venues for submission.

Authorship guidelines to be used (e.g., American Psychological Association).*

Approximate timeline for/date of submission.

*See the [CBerIT Contributor Role Taxonomy](#) form as a widely adopted example. Some publication venues may have specific authorship guidelines or requirements.



Questions?



Contacts



(Image source: <https://tinypurl.com/vvyb4ls4>)

- Sam Sears, Associate Vice Chancellor & Deputy General Counsel, ssears4@uncc.edu
- Lisa Rasmussen, PhD, Professor of Philosophy & Graduate School Faculty Fellow, lasmuss@uncc.edu
- Amy Kelso, Senior Associate General Counsel, askelso@uncc.edu

