

## **Clemson University**

### **Best Practices in Resolving Authorship Disputes**

*Issued January 24, 2014*

In general, authorship issues and related matters should be freely discussed and decided upon early during the research process and prior to writing of the manuscript. However, agreements relating to authorship may need to be changed during the collection of data and preparation of the manuscript. Possible disagreements include interpretation of the criteria for authorship, order of listing of authors, editorial control of content and focus of the manuscript, selection of journal or other publication media, and choice of Responsible Author.

i. A procedure for resolution of disputes over authorship is outlined along with a timetable for each step. It is recognized that extensions in the time to resolve a dispute may be necessary. When this occurs, the reason(s) for the delay in completion should be documented in the final report. All matters related to dissolution of authorship disputes should be held in a confidential manner as much as possible.

Disagreements between or among authors should be resolved in a collegial manner by the Responsible Author in consultation with the other author(s), relevant research personnel, and any other individual who claims authorship. Generally, the Responsible Author has the primary responsibility for making decisions on authorship and other matters related to the publication of manuscripts.

When matters of authorship and related issues cannot be resolved in a satisfactory manner by the Responsible Author, other author(s), research personnel, and other individuals who claim authorship, the Responsible Author and/or other author(s)/ research personnel should present their controversy in writing to the Department Chair. If the dispute arises prior to submission, the manuscript in question should not be submitted for publication before these issues are resolved. The Departmental Chair should meet with the individuals involved in the dispute, collect and retain appropriate information, and make a recommendation in writing as to authorship within 60 days of receiving the complaint. When the authorship dispute involves the Chair, if the Chair has a major conflict of interest, or if the dispute involves more than one department, then a neutral mediator will be appointed by the Dean. The mediator should hold the rank of tenured professor and make a recommendation to the Chair within 60 days. Normally, the Chair will notify the Dean of an impasse, but the individuals involved can also make this notification directly.

If resolution at the local level cannot be achieved, the matter can be referred to the Authorship Dispute Committee in one of two ways. If the matter is taken to the Authorship Dispute Committee with the mutual agreement of all parties, the decision of the Committee will be binding on all parties. If the matter is taken to the Authorship

Dispute Committee without the mutual agreement of all parties, the decision of the Authorship Dispute Committee is not binding, but the Committee will make a written recommendation that will be provided to all parties of the dispute and can be made public by any of the parties involved.

The Authorship Dispute Committee will be comprised as follows: the Dean (or his or her designee) will appoint three senior faculty members (one of whom will serve as Committee Chair from departments other than the involved department(s)) to a committee to investigate the dispute. The review group will not include individuals with personal responsibility for the research, but should include faculty members with unique qualifications relative to the dispute in question (i.e., research expertise, training of graduate students, experience with clinical trials, active peer-reviewed research, etc.). In addition, a representative from the Office of Research will serve as Executive Secretary. Within 75 days, the committee will make a recommendation in writing.

ii. Disputes Over Authorship in Multi-Center Studies

Publication, presentation, and authorship policies should be determined and accepted by all participating investigators at the beginning of any multi-center study. Specifically, it is recommended that a Publication Subcommittee representing all Investigators should be established at the beginning of any multi-center study for the purposes of expediting, coordinating, and monitoring the paper-writing processes. Inherent in these charges is the responsibility to adjudicate disputes over authorship. As with single-center studies, difficulties for a particular paper can be avoided if the identification and sequence of authors is agreed upon by all participants in advance. If a dispute between investigators from separate centers does arise, the solution to the dispute should arise from within the organizational structure of the multi-center study.

iii. It is important to note that the journal editor plays an important role in disputed authorship. See the Committee of Publication Ethics' website for more information: <http://www.publicationethics.org/>

*Reviewed by:*

*Faculty Senate Research Committee, 11/2013*

*Research Integrity Officer, 12/2013*

*Vice President for Research, 1/2014*