

1996-97 GRADUATE COUNCIL

BERKELEY DIVISION of the ACADEMIC SENATE

Date: December 3, 1996

To: Department and graduate group chairs: for distribution to faculty and students

From: Phil Cowan, Chair, Graduate Council

Re: A NEW POLICY ON FAIRNESS OF AUTHORSHIP CREDIT IN COLLABORATIVE FACULTY-STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

At its meeting its meeting on October 7, 1996, the Graduate Council unanimously adopted a new policy on authorship credit in collaborative faculty-student publications.

Why is a policy needed?

1. For students who intend to pursue academic and/or research career, scholarly publications that reflect the product of their research work are essential to being considered for a job and establishing a career.

2. Faculty members are almost always directly involved in the student's scholarly work as mentors, employers, collaborators, or consultants.

3. When publications emerge from collaborative faculty-student effort, it is not always clear who should be given authorship credit, and in what order the authors' names should appear on published work.

4. The Graduate Dean and the Graduate Council have been made aware over the years that there is widespread uncertainty in graduate students about what constitutes fair practices for the determination of authorship. Practices vary widely between and within departments on the Campus.

5. Graduate students are understandably reluctant to raise issues of authorship at the beginning of projects, and skeptical about the efficacy of raising issues once the work has been completed. Students feel that authorship credit is a difficult issue to raise, because their questioning of the arrangements can be interpreted as a challenge to the mentor on whom the student depends for intellectual and/or financial support as well as future letters of recommendation.

6. The lack of clarity concerning fairness in authorship is evident not only in graduate students. Faculty members, too, are often uncertain about fair practices. Some feel that their intellectual and written contribution to a student's published work has not been sufficiently acknowledged.

Diversity of practices in different disciplines and departments

In considering the task of formulating a Campus-wide policy on Fairness in Authorship Credit, the Graduate Council is aware that different traditions of joint authorship exist in different disciplines and departments on the Berkeley campus.

- In some fields, the Principal Investigator of the lab is first author of all publications.
- In some fields, faculty members rarely or never receive authorship credit on student publications, no matter what their contribution to the project or the product.
- In some fields, authorship depends on intellectual leadership and actual contribution to the ideas for the project and the written product
- In some fields, authorship rules are clear, in others they are subject to negotiation

- In some fields, GSRs are automatically included as authors when the outcome results from paid work. In other fields, GSRs are automatically excluded as authors when the outcome results from paid work.

A Campus-wide process for establishing authorship credit

In light of the variability, ambiguity, and uncertainty regarding faculty-student authorship of published work, there are no specific rules that can be enunciated by the Graduate Council that will address the situation in all departments and academic disciplines. Instead, the Graduate Council is mandating a set of processes within each department that will clarify expectations concerning authorship for each student and faculty member.

A. Faculty-Student Level

1. When the student 'signs on' to work with a faculty member, either in a paid or non-paid capacity, the faculty member must outline his or her expectations about publication of work and authorship credit. This initial statement should be open for discussion and negotiation, but both students and faculty members may refuse to collaborate if they do not reach agreement on principles of authorship credit.
2. Considerations about authorship credit do not always remain static as the work evolves. Students and faculty members should re-open discussions of authorship credit whenever the nature of the working collaboration changes (e.g., one participant takes on a larger or smaller role in the collaboration).

B. Department level

1. Departments must publish general guidelines concerning authorship and make them available to all graduate students, with a copy to the Dean of the Graduate Division and the Chair of the Graduate Council.
2. Departments should hold a general faculty-student discussion on this issue at the beginning of each academic year in an attempt to make expectations about authorship clear.
3. Departments could benefit from holding faculty discussion of the issue of fairness in authorship credit.

C. Appeals process

The intent of the above required and recommended procedures is to avoid situations in which graduate students or faculty feel that their contribution to published work has not been fairly recognized. Our intent in distributing of this policy statement to faculty and graduate students is to make authorship discussions a routine part of initial conversations about intellectual collaboration.

Nevertheless, no policy can prevent the occurrence of all instances of actual or perceived unfair treatment. Although inequities can occur to either faculty or graduate students, we believe that graduate students are usually more vulnerable to faculty practices and less able to take action when they feel that fairness has been violated.

In cases of disagreements about authorship the follow steps should be taken:

1. Faculty members should try to monitor the authorship process by keeping in mind the original discussion about expectations (Section A 1 and 2) and discussing any changes with the student as they arise.
2. Students who feel that the arrangements are unfair should raise the issue with their mentor.
3. If the disagreement is not resolved to both participants' satisfaction, an appeal can be made to the Head Graduate Advisor, who should convene a committee of Graduate Advisors and graduate students to hear the disagreement and attempt to resolve it.
4. If the disagreement is still not resolved, the Graduate Appeals Procedures can be used by students to resolve the issue.