Navigating Authorship Disputes

Appalachian State does not have a policy or guidance for authorship practices. We encourage identifying and agreeing to authorship roles before the project begins, and to put these roles in writing. We have offered guidance on this on our webpage, <https://researchprotections.appstate.edu/conduct-rcr/rcr-resources>.

Disputes should first be handed within the research team, with the lead or senior researcher(s).

If disputes cannot be resolved, the Department Chair of the lead researcher should be asked to review, including Chairs of disputed parties where applicable.

Questions to ask:

1. Who are all the named authors, contributors, etc. on the work?
2. What were their roles? How were roles defined?
   1. If roles were not defined by activity/contribution, here are resources:
      1. Standards of the journal or publisher
      2. Standards of the appropriate professional association
      3. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICJME) standards <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>
      4. CRediT taxonomy definitions <https://www.casrai.org/credit.html>
3. Is a formal authorship agreement in place?
4. If not, what was agreed to at the onset of the collaboration?
5. Walking the parties through the CRediT taxonomy may help to clarify contributions and ascertain the level of contributions. For example, who originated the idea? Who generated the first draft?
6. Consider active vs passive contributions (passive means not directly engaged in the actual research).

Things to Consider:

1. Is there a contract with the journal/publisher? Who is named in the contract and does it match any agreed to roles within the group?
2. If two or more parties have equally substantive contributions, is one in a position where first author matters more professionally? Can authorship be shared with one name going first in this situation?
3. Are there any intellectual property concerns to consider? Does the dispute involve the naming or credit to an inventor/creator? If so, the IP Council may need to review, even if they reviewed the original disclosure.
4. Are there possible conflicts of interest involved? If so, discuss with the Dean as to whether the Conflicts of Interest Council should review the project. The Dean has the authority to request a review.
5. Are there allegations of misconduct (plagiarism) involved in the dispute? Authorship disputes in and of themselves are not research misconduct, but a claim that someone’s work was used without credit could be investigated. If someone is alleging plagiarism, notify the Vice Provost for Research to determine whether an additional inquiry is needed.