

RCR Training –Interactive Activity on Authorship

Rationale: Like many RCR training policies at small colleges and universities, ours has two dimensions: 1) to teach students about established professional norms and adhering to them, and 2) to explore misconduct and its consequences.

However, as we have begun RCR training, we find ourselves talking less about standards of conduct and more about failures: the topic of integrity turns to cases of misconduct, and discussion of collegiality ends up focusing on plagiarism. We believe that examples of science and research gone wrong likely will not lead students to proper and responsible conduct.

In view of this, the writing and discussion prompts below are meant to encourage open-ended, thoughtful, and reflective dialogue about RCR. In this example, **AUTHORSHIP** is the topic at hand.

Format and Content: The format is a familiar one adopted from writing workshops –give a writing prompt, free-write, read aloud, and discuss. Author Joan Didion has captured the premise for such a writing-centered process:

I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking –what I'm looking at, what I see, and what it means. What I want and what I fear.

The raw written material so produced is rather informal and journal-like. The end product is less certain, but when the topic is right, the participants engaged, and the stars align, free-writing can mature toward personal essay –exploring, testing, probing and refocusing on new insights or from new angles –kind of like laboratory science itself.

The prompts below don't have any simple answers or clear answers. They can be approached in any order, skipped, paired or supplemented with other questions.

The key is to find out what you think.

- What does it mean to be an author?
- Are there specific things one must do to be an author on a scientific paper?
- Are the authors of a scientific paper determined before the experiments have been completed?
- What are the rules of authorship and where are they written down?
- Are the rules the same from one lab to the next? If not, who decides?
- What are the minimum requirements (content, format, length...) for a scientific paper to be published?
- What steps must be followed to write/ submit/ publish a scientific paper?

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