



## Leadership Discussion Guide: Authorship Prestige

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Your advisor asks you to add a lab technician as another author for a research paper, even though the technician did not do any work on this particular paper. Your advisor tells you that you need to do this for the technician who is attempting to get admitted into graduate school. What do you do?

### Decision Making Framework:

- 1) List the issues raised by the 2MC.
- 2) What rules or regulations apply to the situation?
- 3) What questions will help you open up the problem?
- 4) What resources could you use or consult to help you make a decision?
- 5) What are your options and how does each option affect others involved in the situation?
- 6) What would you do after considering all of these and in light of your own values?

### Issues

Questionable authorship?  
What do you really know?  
Besides polishing a resume how would this help the technician?  
Whistleblowing: should you tell?

### Rules and Regulations

Federal research integrity regulations  
University's regulations

### Resources

Campus and federal regulations  
Research integrity officer on campus  
Mentor  
Colleagues  
Parents  
National ethics center website

### Options

Refuse  
Wait and see  
Talk to the research integrity officer on your campus  
Talk to the technician  
Talk to adviser or other trusted mentor



## Questions

Had the advisor done anything wrong? What?

Are you the first person your advisor has asked?

Does the technician know about the situation you are being put in?

If you say yes this time will you be asked to do this again?

Had the technician done anything wrong?

If the technician were your friend would your opinion of the situation change?

If you add the technicians name to the paper and then the technician realizes their dislike for research how would this affect your decision? What if the technician realizes their love for research?

What is the source of funding for this project?

Is there any possibility that you could retreat to your Ph.D. lab to regroup?

## Takeaway Lessons:

### 1) Information Gathering

From this situation the biggest need is to understand why. How well does the technician know your advisor. This appears to be a favoritisms predicament. However, you would need more information before going forward.

### 2) Seeking Resources

You may need advice before you take the next step. Are you on close enough terms with a different Ph.D. advisor or any member of your committee to seek confidential advice from one person? Does your new camps have an ombudsperson who might be able to provide confidential advice?

### 3) Asking Questions

Once you have gathered the facts so you have a fuller sense of the situation, One option is to talk with the technician and advisor in the same room. Ask questions but be firm on your position. You should rehearse these questions so you can ask them in a low-key, professional affect, without making charges. Depending on how your fact-finding goes, you may want to have someone else present when you ask these questions.

### 4) Follow the Rules for Having a Dispute Professionally

Before you have your conversation with the visiting faculty member you should read and absorb the rules for having a dispute professionally.

## Next Steps:

If you do not do this then your advisor will be angry at you and if you do this then the paper will have a persons name on it that does not understand the steps taken to do the research. Since this is your advisor this situation gets harder so talking with a mentor is necessary. You could be the first person your advisor is asking this from or you could be yet another person the advisor asked. In the end the only people that should have their names on the paper are the people that contributed to the paper in a way. If there is a way to get the technician to do a little more research or an analysis that would help the paper then have the technician do the work. Then putting the technicians name on the paper would not be dishonest and the work the technician did for the paper would help them in the career moving forward.

## What Really Happened:

The lab technicians name was put on the paper without the technician having to do any work related to the paper. The technician got Ito a great graduate program and dropped out a year later due to not wanting to go into research.

