

Interview a Mentor

Assignment: Interview a mentor or advisor. Preferably, this person will be **your** mentor or advisor, and a principal investigator (PI) and faculty member in your department. Ask questions (below) about:

1) Authorship, 2) Intellectual property, and 3) Research ethics education. Record your findings and be prepared to discuss them in class.

1. Authorship Practices

1. What criteria does the group use for determining who is an author on a paper? You might want to consider such possible contributions as: overall project design, project funding, design of individual experiments, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, literature searches and review, writing, editing, and preparation of figures.
2. What criteria does the group use for determining who is **FIRST** author?
3. What criteria does the group use for determining who is **LAST** author?
4. What criteria does the group use for determining who receives an acknowledgement?
5. What practices does the group consider "courtesy authorship" and what is the group policy on courtesy authorship?
6. Who in the group has the right to decide authorship?
7. Have relationships ever been strained due to differing views on authorship? If so, without naming the persons involved, what happened?

2. Intellectual property

1. What classes of research records are maintained by the group (research notebooks, computer files, films, culture collection lists, etc.)?
2. What are the policies (explicit or assumed) of the group on how research notebooks are to be created and maintained? Include the following information:
 - Any specific type of notebook (bound, loose-leaf, electronic)? If the notebook is bound, is there any particular style that the lab prefers? (If possible, bring an example to class.)
 - Any particular type of writing instrument (ballpoint pen, India ink pen, pencil)?
 - What type of information is to be kept in the notebook (dates, experiment number, title, purpose, approach, methods, protocols, results, data sheets, graphs, computer files, conclusions, suggestions for future experiments, signatures, etc.)?
 - Any policies on how the above information is organized in the notebooks?
 - Any policies on re-writing notes before putting them into a notebook?
 - Who owns the notebooks?
 - Who has access to the notebooks?
 - How long must the notebooks be kept? Who must keep them? Any policies on removal of notebooks from the premises? Any policies on copying the notebooks?
3. Has the group ever suffered because of improperly or inadequately kept notes?

[Exercise based on worksheet by Charlotte Bronson, Iowa State University]

3. Education in Research Ethics

1. The National Institutes of Health now requires education in responsible conduct of research (RCR) for all graduate students receiving support from NIH training grants. RCR includes the following topics:

1. Data acquisition, management, sharing, and ownership
2. Mentor/trainee responsibilities
3. Publication practices and responsible authorship
4. Peer review
5. Collaborative science
6. Human subjects
7. Research involving animals
8. Research misconduct
9. Conflict of interest and commitment

How is knowledge of these issues passed on in the lab? Is it mostly informal mentoring relationships? Or are there structured occasions, such as seminars or courses?

2. Is the PI satisfied that colleagues in the department are sufficiently communicating RCR to their graduate students?
3. If the answer to #2 is negative, what more does the PI think that the department should be doing?
4. Is the PI aware of the next offering of the research ethics course in which you are currently enrolled?