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**collaborative  
academic  
authorship**



# **Interventions to Support Healthy Authorship Practices in Research Teams**

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# Research Team



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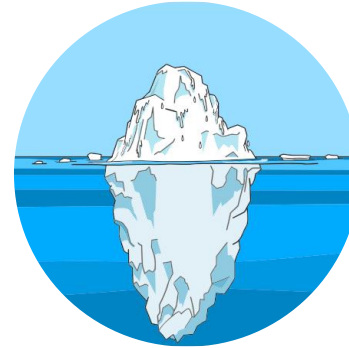
# Institutional drive towards healthy authorship practices & research climate



# Why focus on authorship?



Authorship establishes **credit & accountability** for intellectual contributions.



Authorship practices are often part of the **'hidden curriculum'** of graduate education.



[freebie.photography](https://www.freebie.photography)

**Perceptions of authorship ethics** influence perceptions of research climate; poor perceptions may lead to more detrimental research practices



<https://flic.kr/p/221vxSD>

**Transparent practices** may be particularly helpful in interdisciplinary teams.

# Students & faculty differ in perceptions of authorship practices

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*“When you are a grad student, you have very little power in decisions made in a lab. Unless the PI or faculty advisor asks for feedback and engages you in the process, it is nearly impossible to convey to professors concerns about authorship;*

*The belief behind that is: grad students should just be lucky to have manuscripts/projects in the first place and need to accept the authorship position they are given.*

*Also, sometimes authorship decisions are made because of who 'needs' manuscripts versus an actual reflection of the contributions made - which is unfair and can negatively affect grad students.”*

- Graduate student survey respondent

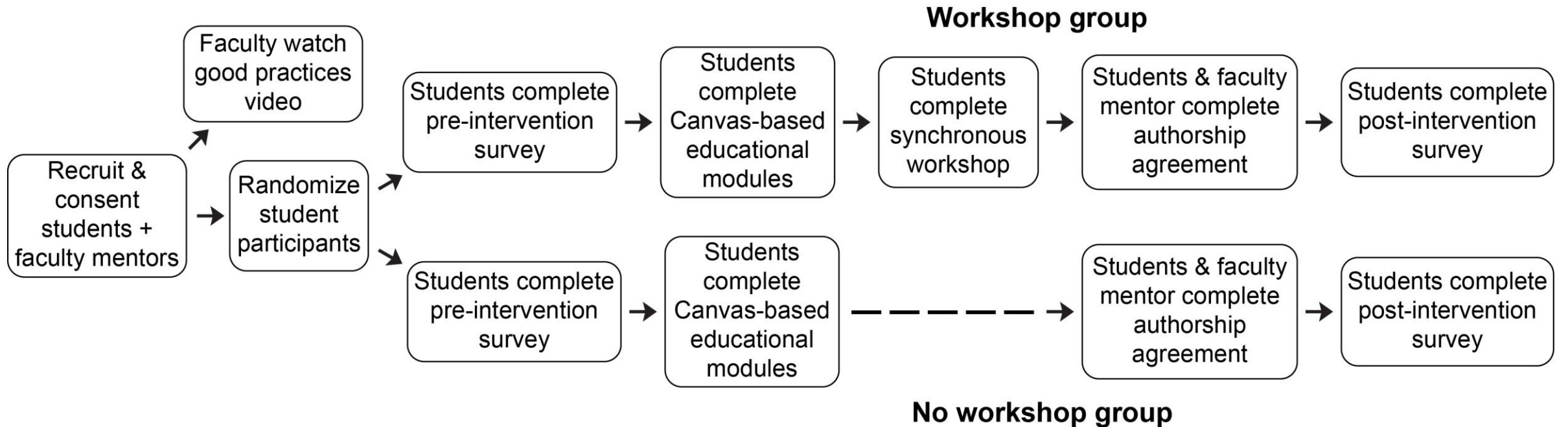
# **Intervention to support ethical authorship**



## Participants

- 185 graduate students, mainly from STEM areas. Must be engaged in collaborative research.
- 118 faculty mentors

## Study design





# Training Content



Online, asynchronous training course

# Authorship Agreement

Authorship on a paper, presentation, or other scholarly work indicates a substantial contribution to a project and accountability for the results. Authorship decisions often affect reputations and careers, and they can be a source of tension, even within healthy collaborations. This tool may help to facilitate open, transparent communication about authorship decisions among collaborators.

Authorship is often best discussed as early as possible in a project. Research projects can be long and involved, and parts of a project may be disseminated at different times. As a result, authorship on each part or product may vary; for example, if a project leads to more than one publication, each may have a different first author or list of authors. Even if roles have not yet become clear, early

conversations about authorship help to set expectations and to clarify the importance of open and honest discussion throughout the process. This agreement is meant to be a "living document"—one that can be revisited and changed as circumstances evolve over the course of a project.

## Instructions.

The prompts and questions provided are designed to foster transparent conversations among collaborators in order to reach a shared set of expectations. All fields are required; however, acceptable answers include "not applicable" and "undetermined" if those responses best reflect the circumstances of your collaboration. A copy of this form should be distributed to all collaborators and/or stored in a shared location. If you plan multiple outputs (e.g., multiple publications; conference proceedings and articles, etc.) from one project, use a different form for each intended output. Please refer to [University Policy #318: Authorship Policy and Resolution Procedures](#) for additional information and resources.

## Section 1.

### Declaration of student project

Is this a thesis, dissertation, or other student-driven project?  Yes  No

## Section 2.

### Project background & publication goals

Working project title and description.

Possible conferences/publication venues for submission.

Authorship guidelines to be used (e.g., American Psychological Association).\*

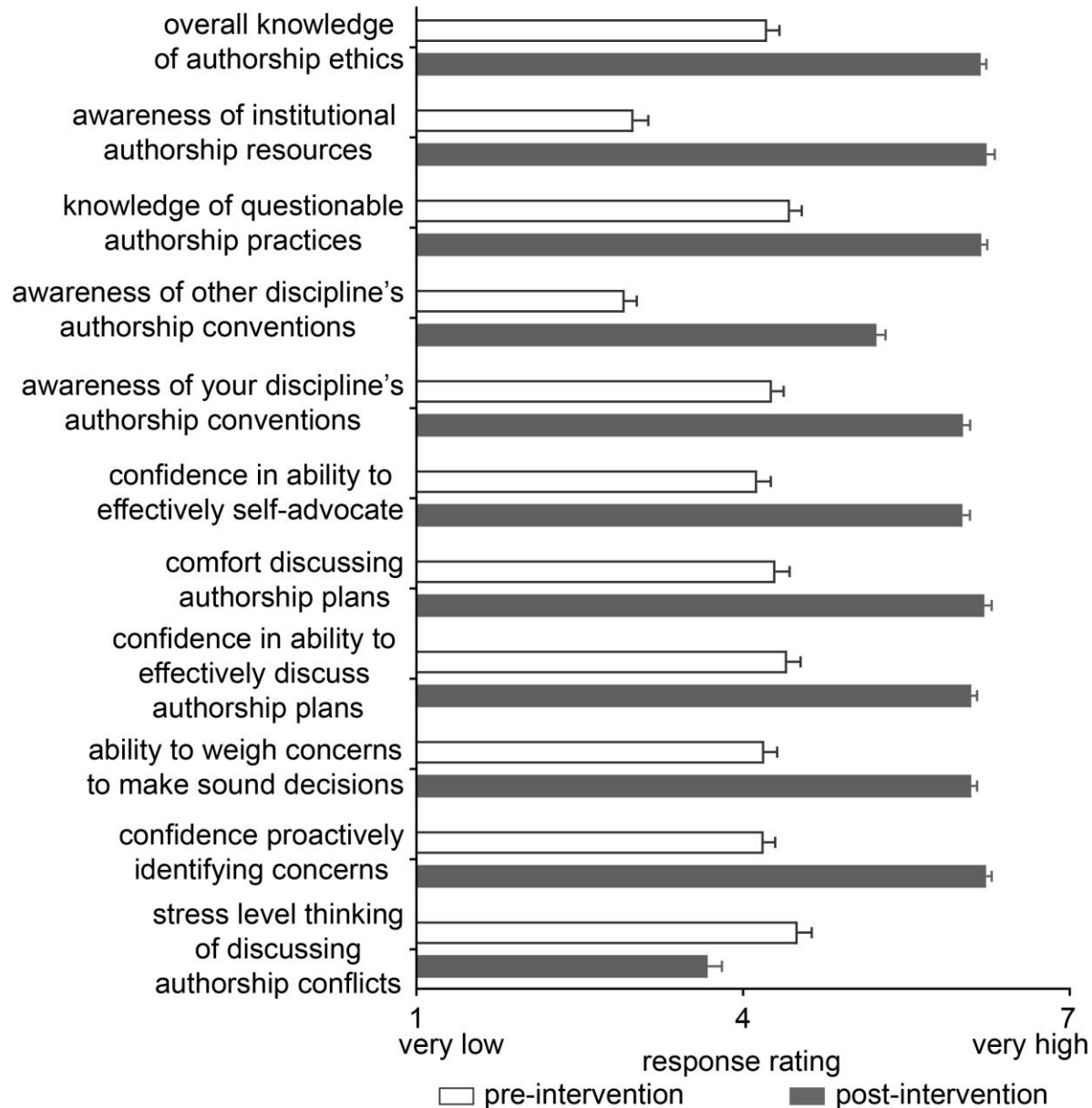
**Living agreement.** Walks parties through a detailed discussion of authorship expectations for a project:

- Where might work be published?
- What kinds of authorship guidelines will be used?
- What are the expected responsibilities of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc. author?
- Who is tentatively an author on this work? What is the tentative order of authors?
- How long can a prospective coauthor be nonresponsive before the rest proceed with publication without them?

Rasmussen et al. (2023). Authorship agreement. The Authorship Project. <https://doi.org/doi:10.55370/nc.921>

Rasmussen et al. (2023). Nature Human Behaviour. DOI: 10.1038/s41562-023-01758-8.

# Evaluation Results



Positive outcomes for (1) students' **knowledge** of authorship & (2) **confidence** navigating authorship decisions. (3) Reduced **stress** about potential conflicts.

No outcome differences for students with added workshop.

# Evaluation Results

Authorship agreement well-liked by students & faculty.

Students on using the agreement form to discuss a project with their faculty mentor:

*“This was very useful. The conversation went well and some things came up that I never would have thought of. For example, my advisor is in a different discipline from me and they really thought I should explore solo authorship opportunities for my dissertation publications, which is not the norm in my discipline. We had a really great conversation about this where we both learned things and made a plan for exploring norms further.”*

*“It was very useful to have a conversation about authorship with coauthors, and it clarified what the plan for authorship would be going forward. There was no discussion about the topic when I started the project, so it was good to solidify what the expectations actually were for all parties. The Authorship Agreement brought up points that I would not have thought to discuss, so it was a useful blueprint to bring to the conversation.”*

# Evaluation Results

- 99% of participants agreed: “Participation in this training deepened my appreciation for the ethical complexity of authorship.”
- 95% of participants reported being likely to initiate authorship plan discussions with collaborators.

*“I now know that different disciplines have different “rules” about authorship. I also gained a perspective of how things can change along the way concerning authorship. I realized that the “unspoken” agreements are not a good way of dealing with authorship because these promises or expectations usually end up in disappointment or worse.”*

*“This was very useful. The conversation went well and some things came up that I never would have thought of. For example, my advisor is in a different discipline from me and they really thought I should explore solo authorship opportunities for my dissertation publications, which is not the norm in my discipline. We had a really great conversation about this where we both learned things and made a plan for exploring norms further.”*



# Conclusions

- Online training & use of collaborative authorship agreements can benefit students.
- These resources are low-cost & scalable.

*“My perception of the University's research culture is positive based on these [authorship] resources. They help portray an atmosphere of fairness and honesty.”*

- Graduate student survey respondent,  
2024 survey

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COURSE



For Faculty & Staff

TAKE THE  
FACULTY/STAFF  
COURSE

Academic Authorship Training

# let's talk about *authorship.*



This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. (2024200).  
Developed by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Graduate School for use by scholars everywhere.

photo by Christina @ weintechchat.com via Unsplash