## Case study for working with Research Students

### Adapted for EC Workshop from “Authorship”1 by Richelle Allen-King

Dr. Messelman Killinger is a cell biologist at Big University who has a policy about authorship that he discusses with each new member of his research group. He states that only those who have made a significant intellectual contribution to the work will be included as an author on any manuscript. He also states that he is the final authority on what is defined as a significant intellectual contribution, should a disagreement arise. He further states that he will be included as an author on any paper that is the result of research done in his lab.

David T is a post-doc in Killenger's research group and is working to characterize a novel organelle that has been identified in a protozoan parasite. Based on biochemical studies of the purified organelle, David suspects that it may be an as yet unidentified mitochondrion in this organism.

Haruko F, a technician in Killinger's research group, has worked very closely with David on his biochemical studies related to this organelle. She has done most of the trouble shooting and optimization for the experimentation. She also developed a novel method of isolating organelles from the organism.

Benson Z is an undergraduate student who recently began to work in Killenger's research group. Benson participated in the final experiment of this project, which shows that a protein normally targeted to mitochondria in other eukaryotes is targeted to the novel organelle in the study organism. These data suggest that the novel organelle may indeed be a mitochondrion.

Killinger encourages David to submit the results for publication as quickly as possible. David does the writing, gives the manuscript to Haruko for review, and then presents the results at the research group meeting the following week. Following the meeting, Killinger, David, Haruko and Benson discuss authorship assignments for the paper.

### Discussion Question:

Who should be the listed authors of this manuscript and what should be the order of authorship? Why?

### Notes

For the complete case study including additional questions such as “ What constitutes a significant intellectual contribution? Who should decide?” and a discussion of the ethical issues suggested by this case study, check out the cited web reference.

An additional case study that I have used with my research group to stimulate discussion about what differentiates the contributions for authorship versus acknowledgement, check out (2) also on the National Academy of Engineering Ethics web cite.2

1. "Authorship" Online Ethics Center for Engineering 5/19/2006 10:53:42 AM National Academy of Engineering Accessed: Wednesday, November 05, 2008 <www.onlineethics.org/CMS/research/rescases/gradres/gradresv6/vol6authorship.aspx>

2. "When in Rome- Conventions in Assignment of Authorship" Online Ethics Center for Engineering 2/16/2006 8:43:32 AM National Academy of Engineering Accessed: Wednesday, November 05, 2008 <www.onlineethics.org/CMS/research/rescases/gradres/gradresv2/rome.aspx>