

Scenario #1

Theresa is a graduate student and is currently working on completing her first manuscript for her research. This quarter, she is TA'ing a course that is slightly outside her direct discipline, under the supervision of a faculty member that she does not know well (not her thesis advisor). Her TA contract stipulates that the position should take 20 hours/week. Between the time in class (3 hour section), grading, prepping for her section, and office hours, Theresa feels that she is spending more than 20 hours a week on the position, and she is not getting enough of her own work (research, manuscript writing) done. In particular, she finds that she spends a huge amount of time just preparing for her section each week - 8-10 hours - and yet still arrives in class feeling underprepared to teach. By the time class is done, and the grading has begun, she is overwhelmed, overworked, and stressed. To top it off, there are three students who routinely attend office hours because they are struggling in the course (both her section, but also the lecture portion of the course) and they want extra assistance. She wants to help, but she is concerned that they are dominating the office hours and thus forcing her to keep office hours 'open' for longer time so that she can help all of the students with questions. She has decided that she needs to speak to the professor in charge of the class about limiting the time she spends on grading and office hours.

Professor Thornton has been at the university for over 30 years, teaching courses within his discipline. This quarter, he is teaching a course where he lectures, and the TA, Theresa, teaches the section. In the past, grading has been typically done by the TA in the course, but this year, the TA doesn't seem to be able to keep on top of the grading tasks. Students are complaining to Professor Thornton that work is not being returned in a timely fashion, and when it is, there is not a clear grading rubric that they understand. Professor Thornton has also noticed that the TA does not always attend his lecture, or shows up late and frazzled. He is frustrated by the lack of support he is getting for a course that he has taught for many years, and hasn't encountered this problem before. He is aware that she feels she is spending too much time on the course and he wonders if the problem is that she is not managing her time well, such that routine tasks are taking her too long to accomplish - leaving important tasks for the class unfinished.

Scenario #2

Professor Carillo has built a successful analytical laboratory with unique facilities that many other colleagues wish to use. She employs a technician (at a significant cost) to run her lab, and to train and advise outside users on how to analyze samples and interpret their results. Professor Carillo recently had two faculty members from another university come and run samples in her lab. They spent a week in her lab, working closely with her technician. While Professor Carillo was not around for much of their visit (she had teaching, meetings, and her own research to attend to), she did pop in and make sure that things were going smoothly with their research. At one point, she made some suggestions about experimental design and analyses of results that she felt were important to the overall study.

At the end of their visit, Professor Carillo was shocked to learn that her colleagues intended to publish multiple papers from the work in her lab, but had only invited her to participate as an author on one of them. She was forced to inform them, via email, that her policy is that any research that requires such significant input from her technician and/or her analytical expertise would have to include her as an author. She felt angry to be put in a situation where she had to articulate that boundary, and now seems to have a less collegial relationship with the other two faculty.

Professor Toll recently worked in Professor Carillo's lab, running samples that he had prepared ahead of time. While the techniques in Professor Carillo's lab were new to him, he was an expert in the other aspects of the research he was pursuing - which had required fieldwork, extensive time sampling and preparing for the work, and other analyses that had taken place on the same samples. The week spent in Professor Carillo's lab was very productive. Professor Toll was happy with the support he received from Carillo's lab technician, and was happily surprised that he would only be charged a minimal amount for sample analysis since the work was in a 'developmental' stage. Professor Toll was also a bit miffed at how little he saw his colleague, Professor Carillo, in the lab.

The analyses turned out very successful, and Professor Toll, the lead author, realized that they may be able to publish multiple papers using this one set of samples. As a courteous gesture, he contacted Professor Carillo and let her know that he would like to include her in the first of the publications as an acknowledgement of the role her lab played. He was shocked when she replied that her lab policy is that any manuscript that required a significant contribution from her, or her technician, at the analytical phase would be required to include her as an author. He is also feeling a bit embarrassed that he has to inform his other coauthors (students and colleagues) that they have to add an author to the paper who they feel had very little input on the work.

Scenario #3

Professor Newby joined the faculty 18 months ago, just in time to learn the outcomes of the Department's most recent program review. In response to the feedback, the Department has aligned itself into two groups: those who wish to keep a "traditional" geology focus in the undergraduate curriculum (primarily senior faculty, including the department chair) and those who wish to "modernize" the curriculum to include an environmental focus (primarily junior faculty). Newby's specialty allows for a comfortable fit within either of these curricular structures, however Newby sees modernization as a path to increasing enrollments and improving the vitality of the department. Faculty meetings have become extremely contentious as the Department works to chart a path forward. Professor Chair (the Department Chair) chided Professor Newby in a recent meeting for not voicing clear support for the traditional program. Professor Chair also grumbled to Professor Newby after the meeting that promotion and tenure decisions would be difficult if the number of majors doesn't stabilize. Professor Newby feels caught in the middle.

Professor Chair has been the Department Chair for 15 years, and has seen the Department through many ups and downs. Over the last few years undergraduate enrollments have started to decline despite Professor Chair's countless hours spent recruiting and battling administration to maintain resources in the Department, including the funds to hire Professor Newby. Professor Chair (and the other senior faculty) believe their traditional geology focus is still relevant and that the proposed updates to modernize the curriculum would weaken student outcomes. Professor Chair is frustrated that the junior faculty can't see the long-term view from where they are. Professor Chair secured the hire of Professor Newby and assumed Professor Newby was a traditionalist based on research focus areas. Now Professor Chair doesn't understand why Professor Newby has been mostly quiet in faculty meetings during these discussions. In fact, Professor Chair pulled Professor Newby aside after one of the recent faculty meetings to remind Professor Newby of how important these discussions are.