

2023

Crediting Collaboration Equitably

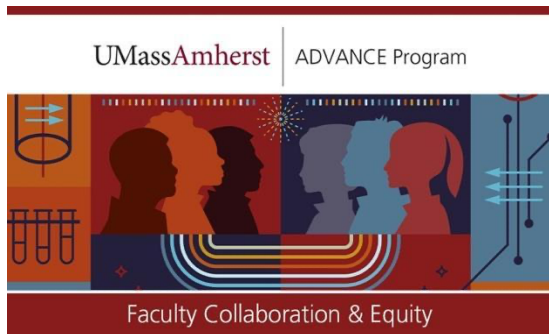
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CREDITING COLLABORATION EQUITABLY



This tool—**Crediting** collaboration equitably—is part 3 of a three-tool series for embedding equity into all phases of research collaboration. See also **Creating** equitable research collaborations (part 1) and **Continuing** equitable collaboration relationships (part 2).

Even as team science has increased, the process of evaluating faculty for tenure and promotion still tends to rely on metrics of individual performance; this can yield gendered and racialized results. The UMass ADVANCE program works to ensure greater equity among faculty members through the power of collaboration. This tool is for **faculty members serving on personnel committees**, or anyone engaged in **evaluating peers**, to inform evaluation processes to credit research collaboration equitably. There are also tips for **faculty engaging in research collaboration** to develop practices for sharing credit.

HOW IS CREDITING COLLABORATION INEQUITABLE?

All faculty experience challenges in research collaboration, including issues of time, logistics, and interpersonal dynamics. Race and gender intersect to shape the ways in which collaboration is evaluated to disproportionately inhibit the careers of white women and women of color as compared to men.

Women, especially those who are untenured, receive less credit for their work both informally and formally: women are more likely than men to be viewed as **riding on their collaborators' coattails**, **systematically denied credit for their ideas**, and **subsumed under the reputation of men** collaborators. Women faculty from underrepresented minority groups, as well as those who are not U.S. born, may be even **less**

credited for their collaborations, including having their **ideas stolen with no credit**, due to biases in collaboration and recognition practices by gender, race, and nationality.

Key barriers that arise for women faculty in earning credit for their research collaborations have been identified from our research. For case studies, we have incorporated research findings into the cases to highlight difficult situations. In Case Study 1, personnel committee members and other faculty should engage collectively with the discussion questions, to brainstorm how to evaluate colleagues equitably.

Case Study 1: Where Credit is Due

Shelley is a Black woman assistant professor. She is going up for tenure and promotion with a competitive research portfolio, including a coauthored publication in her discipline's flagship journal that recently received a prestigious research award. Most of Shelley's scholarship stems from her being a Co-PI on a collaborative project funded by a major grant, except for one sole-authored article based on her dissertation. Shelley is the corresponding author on more than half of her publications, and has published more than peers previously awarded tenure in her department.

How might Shelley's case be evaluated, given her collaborations? How would you speak on her behalf in a personnel committee meeting?

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Many faculty members strike a balance between independent and collaborative work to earn tenure and promotion, though this differs by field and method. Women, particularly women of color, are much more likely than men to describe needing to prove their specific contribution to colleagues evaluating their cases.

Research has shown that reviewers may assume the senior person on a collaboration is always the intellectual leader. Race and gender may bias how collaborative work is read, as well as rank. When personnel committees and department leaders develop practices that more fairly credit collaborative work, it is especially helpful for recognizing the contributions of women and faculty of color, but these practices are also helpful for all faculty who engage in research collaboration.

HOW CAN FACULTY DEVELOP EQUITABLE CREDIT FOR COLLABORATIONS?

Credit is not a one-time negotiation at publication, contributions need to be acknowledged all along.

There are steps collaborators can take to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of workload and credit that will make evaluations of collaborative research smoother down the road. Research teams might consider the following:

- Read the UMass ADVANCE tools on Creating Equitable Collaborations, Continuing Equitable Collaborative Relationships, [Resources for Equitable Research Collaborations](#), and [Equitable Research Collaboration Between Faculty and Grad Students](#).
- Discuss with collaborators how to center equity throughout the research process, including pre-proposal, proposal, start-up, during the project, and project closure.
- Have periodic conversations about team roles and expectations, including publication and authorship plans.
- When it is time to publish, revisit Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and other formal documents the team has developed to articulate roles, responsibilities, and authorship agreements. If you have an MOU, it should be updated regularly.
- Strive to make every individual's role in the collaboration clear, identifying particular expertise or the through-line across their research agenda.
 - Senior collaborators should highlight and promote the expertise that junior colleagues bring to research teams.
 - All authors could identify their specific contributions as a member of the research team as part of personnel cases. Use the [CREDIT taxonomy](#) for a model.
- Be an ally to collaborators who have less power than you do. Notice how they are treated in team meetings and speak up on their behalf if their inputs are being miscredited or unheard.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SAFEGUARDS FAIL?

Even when steps to support equitable research collaborations are taken, there are times when safeguards fail and conflicts regarding crediting collaboration arise. Discuss Case Study 2 below to help your team develop norms for addressing conflicting expectations.

Case Study 2: When Safeguards Fail

Your research team has been working together on a project for several months. At the outset of the project, you developed an MOU understanding that outlined an equitable division of labor and authorship agreements for each publication. However, one of the senior team members has been unresponsive to emails and failed to carry his weight on the publication due to administrative responsibilities. You stepped in to finish the analyses and write up sections originally assigned to him. The final draft of the paper has been circulated amongst the team, but he did not respond or provide input. It is time to submit the paper, and you feel like the authorship of the paper should change to accurately reflect everyone's contributions.

What happens next? How would you broach the subject of authorship to your team? To your senior colleague?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [UMass ADVANCE Seed Funding Best Practices](#) and [Seed Funding Checklist](#)
- UMass Amherst Graduate Council & Research Council [Policy Statement on Joint Authorship](#).

This resource is based on research, presentations, and suggestions made by Ethel Mickey, Ember Kanelee, Joya Misra, Laurel Smith-Doerr, Dessie Clark, and Jennifer Normanly. Thanks to the UMass ADVANCE team for input.

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