Michigan State University Guidelines on Authorship

**Purpose:** All MSU researchers are encouraged to share their work in the form accepted within their discipline. The intent of this document is to serve as a general guideline for consideration of important issues surrounding authorship as scholars construct a piece of work for public distribution.

**Definitions:**

*Author:* creator of and/or contributor to a research/scholarly publication or creative endeavor

*Publication:* a publicly shared piece of scholarship or creative work that relates new information and knowledge. Includes books, journal articles, abstracts, websites, exhibitions and performances of works of art or any work that can be explicitly documented.

1. **Authorship:** A person claiming authorship or being designated as an author of a creative endeavor should meet *all of* the following criteria:

   • Participation in conception and design of the creative work, study, analysis or interpretation of any data.
   • Participation in the drafting of the creative work or manuscript or in the editing of the creative work or manuscript.
   • Final approval of the version of the creative work or manuscript to be published.
   • Ability to explain and defend appropriate portions of the work or study in public or scholarly settings.

Most journals or sites of publications state criteria for authorship, and the journal/group to which one intends to submit their work should take precedence over the MSU criteria. Potential authors should check with the journal-specific criteria with respect to all aspects relevant to publication, including appropriate approval for animal use, human use, exports, material transfer agreements, etc. For example, when considering scientific publications, the MSU criteria follow the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (www.icmje.org) but are not limited to Biomedical Journals.

2. **Acknowledgements:** Contributions that do not justify authorship should be acknowledged separately in accordance with disciplinary standards. For example, consult the specific journal or placement of scholarly piece for requirements of acknowledgement. Contributions to a work that do not constitute authorship can include, for example, technical support or assistance in obtaining funding.

3. **Head Author and Order of Authors:** The Head author is defined as the person who leads a research/scholarly effort and makes a major contribution to a multi-authored work. The Lead author is also responsible for gathering the appropriate consents necessary (animal, human use) and for validating the integrity of the work.
The Head author takes the lead of discussing the contributions, recognition and order of all authors that participate in the study. All authors, regardless of position, have a voice in this discussion. *Ideally, author arrangement is agreed to proactively, formally, and in writing prior to the initiation of the study.* A sample agreement that allows for formal recognition and agreement on authorship can be found as an appendix to this policy. As the study evolves, agreements regarding authorship may need to be further discussed. Not all journals include statements on author order, so the Head Author should guide this process and adhere to the norm of their discipline.

4. **Accountability:** EVERY author listed on a publication is responsible for 1) approving the final version of the manuscript, including designation of the Head Author and order of authors; and 2) verifying the integrity of the research/scholarly work performed. In cases of alleged research misconduct, ALL authors are considered responsible for the integrity of the research. Thus, every author must strive to hold him/herself accountable.

5. **Disputes over authorship:** If disagreements over authorship occur (e.g., who has a right to be an author, the order of authors), it is the initial duty of the Head author to find a resolution in consultation with the other participating authors. If resolution within the immediate author group cannot occur, any concerned party from the group is encouraged to contact a disinterested third party acceptable to all authors. At MSU, this can be served by the Research Integrity Officer (RIO), and these discussions are confidential. During the process of resolution, all interested parties should refrain from unilateral actions that may damage the authorship interests and rights of other authors.