



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

## **Joint Authorship of a Paper (adapted from NSPE Case No. 85-1)**

### **Year**

1999

### **Description**

This case addresses issues of fair authorship credit in research practice. It is an open-ended scenario for discussion based on a case from the NSPE Board of Ethical Review.

### **Body**

Image



--photograph by Anila Jahangiri

Jan and Keith, both engineers, are faculty members at a major university. Both are seeking tenure from the university, and as part of the requirement, they are required to publish original articles in scholarly and technical journals.

As a graduate student, Jan developed a paper that he had never published, but now feels would be an excellent topic to publish in a journal. Jan discusses this idea with Keith, and they agree to work together on revising the paper.

Jan does most of the work of revising the paper to bring it up to date. Keith's contributions are minimal, but Jan agrees to include Keith's name as co-author, so as to enhance Keith's chances of obtaining tenure. The article is accepted and later published in a scientific journal.

Is it ethically acceptable for Jan go back to his graduate work for an article to publish? Should Jan's thesis supervisor be credited in some way, and if so, how? Should Jan acknowledge the source of the funding for his thesis research in the paper? Is it responsible for Jan to ask Keith to help revise the article? How much could (or should) Jan and Keith have agreed upon at the start of their collaboration? Was it either unethical or unwise for Jan to include Keith's name as co-author?

[NSPE Code of Ethics](#) An earlier version may have been used in this case.

## Notes

See the original NSPE case at: [Joint Authorship Of Paper - Case No. 85-1](#).

## **Rights**

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## **Resource Type**

Case Study / Scenario

## **Parent Collection**

Professional Ethics in Engineering Practice: Discussion Cases Based on NSPE BER Cases

## **Topics**

Authorship

Publication Ethics

## **Discipline(s)**

Engineering

Research Ethics

## **Publisher**

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Authoring Institution

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