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Research Integrity Officer: Dr. Carole Kenner, Dean, Nursing and Health Sciences

Institutional Procedures for Research Credit, Data Ownership, and Authorship Disputes

1. Purpose

TCNJ is committed to maintaining the highest standards of research integrity. This procedure provides a structured internal framework for resolving disputes concerning the representation of research roles, data ownership, and authorship - this procedure may also be used for other, yet unidentified, disputes relating to research, creative endeavors, and/or outputs arising from scholarly work. The goal is to ensure fair mediation and prevent premature external escalations that could cause irreparable harm to professional reputations.

Note: this procedure DOES NOT cover the areas of research misconduct (i.e., fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism, as defined by [45 CFR Part 689](#)). For research misconduct concerns, see TCNJ's research misconduct policy and related procedures (PolicyStat ID [19447013](#)).

2. Mandatory Internal Exhaustion

Before any faculty member, staff, or student may contact external entities, including academic journals, publishers, or professional societies, regarding accusations of research misrepresentation, unauthorized publication by a colleague, or other representations arising from unresolved disputes identified in Section 1 above, they must complete the internal resolution process outlined below.

3. Resolution Process

Step I: Consultation with the Research Integrity Officer (RIO)

The process begins when a complainant brings a concern to the Research Integrity Officer (RIO).

- Initial Meetings: The RIO will meet separately with the complainant(s) and the target(s) of the complaint to understand the nature of the concern(s) and review any supporting documentation.
 - The accused faculty member(s) would receive information about the nature of the charge in advance of the meeting with the RIO and have the opportunity to speak on their own behalf and present evidence.
- Joint Mediation: The RIO will then convene a meeting with both parties involved in the dispute, the goal of which is to facilitate an open dialogue, clarify roles, and reach a mutually agreeable mediated resolution.
- Dean Involvement: At the RIO's discretion, the Deans of the respective parties may be invited to participate in this conversation.
- The mediated resolution would be memorialized in writing and signed by all parties.

Step II: Elevation to the Vice Provost, Serving as the Institutional Deciding Official (IDO)

If Step I does not result in a resolution, and/or if the RIO has a conflict of interest, the matter is formally elevated to the IDO. (In the case where the RIO has a conflict of interest, the IDO will begin the process with Step I, consulting with the Provost, as necessary; if Step I does not result in a resolution, then the IDO would proceed to Step II, as below. Alternatively, the IDO or Provost may appoint another individual to stand in for the RIO for Step I.)

- Formal Review Meeting: The Vice Provost for Academic Engagement, as IDO, will chair an ad hoc meeting including:
 - The Research Integrity Officer (RIO), a Dean independent of the disputants, and four faculty members, including a faculty member from the school or schools involved.
 - Both parties involved in the complaint.
 - This meeting may be recorded to document perspectives for subsequent review by the IDO.
- Review of Evidence:
 - Both parties will be notified of the nature of the dispute (i.e., over research roles, data ownership, authorship, or another scholarly dispute category).
 - Evidence will be made available to ad hoc committee members ten business days in advance of the meeting.
 - The IDO and ad hoc committee will hear statements from all participants and review the history of the conflict, any data ownership records, or other written documentation or evidence of each participant's point of view.
 - Evidence shall be retained in a confidential file.

Step III: Final Determination

Following the formal review meeting, the Vice Provost/IDO will consult with the Office of General Counsel and with the Provost to ensure the proposed decision aligns with institutional bylaws, legal standards, and academic policies. In the case of a student-involved complaint, the Vice President of Student Affairs may also be consulted; in the case of a non-Academic Affairs staff-related complaint, the appropriate senior officer may also be consulted.

- **Binding Conclusion:** Upon concurrence with the recommendations by the Provost and General Counsel, the Vice Provost, serving as the IDO, will issue a written conclusion. This decision is final and binding.
- **No Appeal:** There is no further administrative appeal process for this conclusion.

4. Violation of Dispute Resolution Procedures - A Breach of Professional Ethics

Bypassing this dispute resolution process, including but not limited to specifically contacting publishers or external bodies to rescind or challenge a colleague's work before the internal process is complete, may be considered a breach of professional ethics and may be subject to institutional disciplinary action.

Continuation of the dispute after a mediated resolution has been concluded by the RIO (as in Step I), or a final determination has been made by the IDO (as in Step III), **may similarly** be considered a breach of professional ethics and may be subject to institutional disciplinary action.