Cooper
October 16, 2015

Physics 596 – Fall 2015

Scientific Ethics Case Study #5*

Peggy Platt, a graduate student in the biochemistry department at State University (SU), completed her third year and had to take her preliminary examination. Following her examination, a member of her dissertation committee suggested some experiments that Platt could perform at another institution, because a faculty member there, Dr. Gleeson, had facilities that were set up for these experiments. Platt made arrangements for a visit.

While conducting her studies at Gleeson's research institution, Platt also helped members of Gleeson's lab do preliminary experiments on their system. These experiments verified that they needed to do studies similar to the unpublished studies Platt had completed at SU. She helped them set up the instrumentation for these studies and made sure the instruments worked.

A couple of months after returning to SU, Platt received a preprint of a paper from Gleeson's lab, which reported their findings on the studies they had begun while she was there. Platt was neither asked for input on writing the article, nor was she included as a co-author. Instead, the acknowledgments mentioned Platt's "helpful discussions."

Platt felt that her contributions to Gleeson's group entitled her to co-authorship on the paper. When questioned by Platt, Gleeson had several reasons for excluding Platt's name on the paper. First, Gleeson stated that Platt did not do the experiments and therefore did not deserve to be included. Furthermore, Gleeson asserted that they had planned to conduct the studies prior to Platt's arrival. Finally, he said that a post-doc in Gleeson's lab was applying for jobs; having Platt as a co-author on would detract from his visibility.

***Before discussing the case:** Identify people in the group for the following presentation duties: (i) A person to present the 'case' in their own words to the rest of the class; (ii) a person to present one point of view in this study; (iii) a person to present the opposing point of view; and (iv) a person to lead a class discussion of the case. Feel free to take notes as necessary to present your discussions to the class.

Take 15-20 minutes to discuss this case study and prepare to relate your discussions to the rest of the class. Consider the following questions: What are the criteria for being included as a co-author on a publication? Did Platt's contributions fulfill these criteria? Were any of Gleeson's arguments

valid reasons for excluding a researcher as a co-author? What could Platt have done to prevent this situation from arising?

*From APS News, Ask the Ethicist (November 2003): http://www.aps.org/apsnews/1103/110318.cfm