

---

# Authorship vs. Inventorship

04/03/2025

## Authorship vs. Inventorship

If you invent something in the course of your research, it is important to remember that “authorship” and “inventorship” are not the same thing.

An academic paper might have multiple authors: those involved in designing or performing the experiments, collecting data, writing the resulting manuscript, acting as a consultant or sounding board, or even funding the effort. Authorship is generally a matter of custom and institutional guidelines.

Inventorship, on the other hand — i.e., the inventors listed on a patent — is a legal determination, to the point that in extreme cases, failure to list the correct inventors on a patent application (and only the correct inventors) can result in the patent being invalidated. Legally, an inventor must have contributed to the actual conception of at least one element of the inventive idea. Someone who built the inventive device after it was conceived, gathered parts, tested it, promoted it, or wrote up the results, without more, is not an inventor.

If you want to give recognition to someone who helped out but did not conceive at least part of the invention, go ahead and list them as an author on the paper, but do not include them as an inventor. USU Technology Transfer Services is happy to give you further guidance.