

VIRTUAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE LLC

# VRI IP, Authorship, Research Ownership & Publication Governance Policy

Default rules for institutional IP, scholarly contributions, authorship, licensing, publication, sponsors, software/data, and inventions

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**Organization:** Virtual Research Institute LLC

**Document Type:** Public Intellectual Property, Authorship, and Publication Policy

**Status:** Adopted — Current Official Version

**Effective Date:** August 25, 2026

**Version:** 1.0

**Supersedes:** None — first public policy version

**Applies To:** Students, families, mentors, contractors, staff, collaborators, sponsors, partners, and VRI-administered research activities

**Policy Statement.** This policy distinguishes ownership, scholarly authorship, inventorship, licensing, confidentiality, institutional materials, participant contributions, collaborative outputs, and publication rights.

**Relationship to Other Documents.** Transaction-specific mentor, sponsor, university/lab, data-license, and project IP/Data/Publication agreements may modify the default framework for the relationship they govern.

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# 1. Purpose

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VRI research may produce papers, proofs, code, datasets, models, figures, presentations, inventions, curriculum, reusable project infrastructure, and other materials. Different rights may attach to different parts of the same project.

The purpose of this policy is to avoid two common errors: assuming VRI owns everything merely because work occurred in a VRI program, or assuming a student/mentor automatically owns or may publish everything merely because the person contributed to the project.

Rights depend on authorship, ownership law, contribution, contracts, background rights, sponsor/university terms, data licenses, confidentiality, and other applicable restrictions.

# 2. Scope

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This policy applies to VRI-administered student research, mentor-created or commissioned materials, VRI program materials, project repositories, scholarly outputs, archive/publication activity, and project-specific collaborations unless another valid written agreement controls.

It does not transfer rights belonging to an unrelated third party and does not authorize use that another license, university, employer, sponsor, publisher, or law prohibits.

# 3. Key Legal and Scholarly Distinctions

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**Ownership** concerns who holds legal rights in a work, invention, dataset, software component, brand asset, or other protectable subject matter.

**Authorship** concerns scholarly credit for a genuine intellectual contribution. Authorship is not purchased by tuition, created by status, or automatically assigned by ownership.

**Inventorship** is determined under applicable patent law and is distinct from copyright authorship or academic acknowledgment.

**License** is permission to use specified rights without necessarily transferring ownership.

**Confidentiality** restricts disclosure/use of information regardless of who ultimately owns associated IP.

These concepts must not be collapsed into one another.

# 4. Definitions

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**Background IP.** IP, methods, materials, code, datasets, curriculum, documentation, designs, inventions, trade secrets, know-how, or other protectable material created/acquired before a specific VRI project or independently outside commissioned VRI work.

**VRI Institutional IP.** VRI-owned or VRI-controlled company materials, including its brand, names, logos, websites, software, databases, program architecture, policies, forms, templates, rubrics, training systems, operating manuals, proprietary workflows, nonpublic process documentation, proposal/review systems, AI prompts/configurations created for VRI, and VRI-created curriculum/project infrastructure, subject to third-party rights.

**Scholarly Output.** Research papers, proofs, code, analyses, datasets where rights permit, figures, models, notebooks, posters, presentations, manuscripts, discoveries, inventions, and comparable research products.

**Commissioned VRI Work Product.** Material specifically created for VRI under a written employee, mentor, contractor, vendor, sponsor, or project arrangement that assigns or otherwise grants the relevant rights to VRI, excluding documented Background IP except to the extent the agreement licenses it.

**Collaborative Output.** A Scholarly Output created by two or more contributors or subject to multiple rights/obligations.

## 5. Background IP

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A person or entity does not lose legitimate Background IP merely by participating in VRI.

Participants should identify material Background IP when it will be embedded in a VRI deliverable, reusable program asset, sponsored project, public release, or commercializable work and the applicable rights are not already clear.

VRI may require a written license sufficient for the intended VRI use before incorporating Background IP into a reusable institutional product, public archive, software release, or sponsored deliverable.

## 6. VRI Institutional IP

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VRI owns or controls VRI Institutional IP to the extent supported by creation, assignment, license, contract, or applicable law.

Examples include VRI's:

- name, marks, logos, visual identity, and brand assets;
- website, platform, institutional software, integrations, and VRI-created code;
- databases and proprietary data organization/structures where protectable;
- program architecture, pathway structures, workflows, templates, rubrics, forms, policies, and procedures;
- internal operating manuals, training systems, review/ranking systems, and proprietary process documentation;
- AI prompts/configurations and automation systems created for VRI;
- VRI-created curriculum/project infrastructure and commissioned work product; and
- internal confidential business, pricing, operational, and strategy materials.

Program access is not a general license to copy, scrape, republish, commercialize, or use VRI Institutional IP to operate a substitute or competing service.

Nothing in this section prevents lawful use of general skills, ideas, academic knowledge, or non-confidential know-how that does not constitute VRI-owned material or protected confidential information.

## 7. Student Original Scholarly Contributions

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A student retains the ownership rights the student lawfully holds in the student's genuine original scholarly contributions, subject to collaborator rights, mentor rights, VRI licenses validly granted, project-specific terms, sponsor/university/employer rights, third-party materials, and applicable law.

Student ownership does not extend to VRI Institutional IP, another person's Background IP, third-party code/data/content, sponsor-confidential material, restricted datasets, or material merely licensed for project use.

Because many VRI students are minors, any license or assignment that VRI expects to rely on beyond ordinary program administration should be documented through the appropriate enrollment/guardian agreement and reviewed for enforceability where needed.

## 8. Mentor and Researcher Background IP

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Mentors retain legitimate documented Background IP and general scholarly know-how they bring to VRI, subject to their obligations to universities, employers, funders, sponsors, publishers, collaborators, and other rights holders.

A mentor's research field, pre-existing question, scholarly reputation, general method, or independently developed research agenda does not automatically become VRI property merely because the mentor leads a VRI project.

A mentor must not contribute material the mentor lacks authority to use. VRI may require disclosure or confirmation of relevant institutional/employer/sponsor restrictions before launching a project.

## 9. VRI-Commissioned Work Product

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VRI may commission curriculum, project infrastructure, software, documentation, training, proposal materials, templates, or other deliverables for institutional reuse.

Ownership and licenses for commissioned work should be stated in the applicable employment agreement, contractor agreement, SOW, or assignment. The agreement should distinguish Background IP from newly commissioned VRI Work Product.

Public policy alone is not a substitute for an effective written work-product/assignment clause when one is needed.

## 10. Reusable Curriculum and Project Infrastructure

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The reusable institutional form of a VRI research offering may include a project description, prerequisite framework, reading path, exercise sequence, milestone design, VRI-specific rubric, template, instructional scaffold, and administrative structure.

When created as VRI-owned or commissioned material, these institutional components are VRI Institutional IP even if the underlying academic subject, theorem, public dataset, scientific question, or general research method is not proprietary to VRI.

VRI should not claim ownership over general academic ideas merely because it organized them into a VRI offering; protection attaches to VRI's actual protectable expression, software, confidential process, and contractually controlled work product.

## 11. Collaborative Scholarly Outputs

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Collaborative outputs may include rights held by multiple contributors and may also incorporate Background IP, licensed material, sponsor rights, or VRI Institutional IP.

No participant may assume unilateral authority to sell, exclusively license, publish, open-source, submit, or materially modify a collaborative output when doing so would affect another rights holder or violate project terms.

Teams should identify ownership, authorship, confidentiality, and publication constraints before external release whenever reasonably possible.

## 12. Code and Software

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Project code may contain student/mentor original code, VRI-owned code, open-source dependencies, model/API terms, licensed libraries, and third-party components.

Before external release, VRI and the project team should identify applicable licenses and confirm that the proposed distribution is compatible with them.

VRI may require a project-specific repository structure, copyright notice, license file, contributor record, or separation of reusable institutional code from scholarly code.

A student's contribution to VRI institutional software or a commissioned software deliverable should be governed by a written agreement if VRI expects ownership beyond the default scholarly framework.

## 13. Data, Datasets, and Database Rights

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Possession of data does not imply ownership or unrestricted publication rights. Data may be subject to privacy law, confidentiality, contract, database rights, terms of use, sponsor restrictions, open-data licenses, or research ethics requirements.

A project must document the source and permitted uses of material datasets. Restricted or sensitive data may not be released merely because the analysis or code is publishable.

VRI may own or control proprietary databases and database structures used for operations even when individual public facts stored within them are not proprietary.

## 14. Figures, Models, Notebooks, and Research Artifacts

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Figures, models, notebooks, simulations, research logs, proofs, and other artifacts should be treated according to their actual contributors and incorporated rights.

VRI may require source files and editable versions for verification, continuity, publication review, archive formatting, or academic-integrity purposes without thereby claiming underlying ownership beyond its lawful rights.

## 15. Authorship Standards

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Scholarly authorship is based on genuine intellectual/scholarly contribution and relevant disciplinary, publisher, conference, sponsor, or institutional standards.

Enrollment, tuition payment, mentor status, executive title, sponsor funding, program administration, or mere access to a project does not by itself create authorship.

VRI may require contributor statements and may decline to endorse a submission whose authorship list materially misrepresents contribution.

## 16. Contributor Acknowledgment

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A person who contributed meaningfully but does not satisfy authorship standards may be acknowledged when appropriate and permitted.

Administrative support, funding, technical help, mentoring, data access, editing, or other contributions should be credited according to disciplinary norms and applicable venue rules.

Sponsors do not receive authorship merely because they fund a project.

## 17. AI-Assisted Contributions and Disclosure

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AI systems are tools, not VRI-recognized human authors. Students and mentors remain responsible for the work they submit and for complying with venue/tool disclosure rules.

Meaningful AI assistance may require acknowledgment, methodology description, prompt/output preservation, source verification, or disclosure depending on the project and venue.

AI-generated material does not create a false human contribution and may not be used to inflate an authorship claim.

## 18. No Authorship Guarantee

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VRI does not guarantee authorship to any participant. Completion of a program, contribution to a team, presentation at a symposium, payment of tuition, or receipt of a certificate does not automatically confer authorship.

Likewise, absence from an author list does not by itself determine ownership of underlying material; ownership and authorship are distinct.

## 19. VRI Administrative and Archive License

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To administer programs, verify academic work, preserve institutional records, and maintain the Public Research Archive, VRI may require an appropriate nonexclusive license from lawful rights holders through enrollment, mentor, project, or publication agreements.

The intended ordinary license should permit VRI, for approved educational, administrative, archival, verification, quality-control, and institutional-history purposes, to store, reproduce, format, excerpt, redact, de-identify, and display approved Scholarly Outputs.

Unless a separate signed agreement provides otherwise, the ordinary administrative/archive license should not transfer underlying scholarly ownership to VRI and should not authorize VRI to sell or exclusively license a participant's scholarly work.

## 20. Public Research Archive Rights

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The ordinary Public Research Archive is student-de-identified under Policy 04. Approved project titles, abstracts, mentor information, topic/term metadata, summaries, and de-identified scholarly outputs may be published after VRI review and subject to lawful rights.

VRI may redact, reformat, excerpt, delay, withhold, or remove an archive item to protect privacy, confidentiality, academic integrity, sponsor obligations, third-party rights, or legal requirements.

Archive publication does not create a transfer of authorship or underlying ownership beyond the license/rights supporting the publication.

## 21. De-Identification and Privacy Relationship

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Policy 04 governs student de-identification, publicity separation, and privacy. The ordinary public archive should not expose student names or other direct student-identifying information under the current model.

A separate publicity/media permission does not silently change the archive identity rule. If VRI later changes the archive identity model, it must do so through a controlled policy/enrollment revision and applicable consent/legal review.

## 22. External Publication

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Before external publication of VRI-related work, the team should review authorship, ownership, confidentiality, data rights, sponsor/university terms, third-party licenses, AI disclosure, publication venue terms, patent concerns, and VRI brand/affiliation statements.

VRI may require a reasonable institutional review before its name, marks, confidential material, or restricted project resources are used in an external submission.

VRI review does not guarantee acceptance, peer-review outcome, correctness, or legal clearance by the receiving venue.

## 23. Preprints

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Posting a preprint is a public disclosure and may affect confidentiality, publisher terms, sponsor rights, competitions, and patent strategy.

A VRI-related preprint should not be posted until the project team has resolved required authorship, permission, data, confidentiality, sponsor, and patent review.

## 24. Journal and Conference Submissions

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Submissions must follow venue rules for authorship, conflicts, AI disclosure, data/code availability, ethics, and copyright/license grants.

No participant may bind VRI or another contributor to a publisher's terms without appropriate authority.

If venue terms require a license or transfer inconsistent with existing rights, the conflict must be resolved before submission.

## 25. Competitions and External Programs

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Competition submission may involve public disclosure, special eligibility rules, broad organizer licenses, publicity rights, or representations regarding ownership/originality.

Students and families must not independently submit collaborative or restricted VRI project material to a competition without required mentor/VRI and co-rightsholder approval.

VRI does not guarantee competition eligibility or outcome.

## 26. Open-Source Release

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Open-source release is a legal grant of rights, not merely making code visible online. Before release, VRI and the team should confirm ownership/contributor authority, remove restricted code/data/secrets, identify third-party licenses, select an appropriate license, and review sponsor/university constraints.

A person may not place VRI Institutional IP or another person's protected code under an open-source license without authority.

## 27. Confidential and Restricted Project Materials

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Project access may include confidential sponsor information, unpublished mentor work, internal VRI materials, protected data, restricted repositories, or other limited-use content.

Participants may use such material only for the authorized purpose and must follow return/deletion or continuing-confidentiality requirements.

Lawful protected reporting is not prohibited by confidentiality language.

## 28. Sponsor Rights

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Sponsor funding does not automatically confer student admission, authorship, access to student PII, ownership of all project IP, or a right to dictate favorable findings.

Any sponsor rights to Background IP, newly created IP, data, publication review, confidentiality, licensing, commercialization, or attribution must be stated in a written agreement before affected work begins.

VRI may decline sponsor terms inconsistent with law, safety, academic integrity, participant rights, or institutional standards.

## 29. University, Laboratory, and Employer Rights

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Mentors and collaborators may have obligations to universities, laboratories, employers, funders, or other institutions. VRI does not assume those institutions' IP merely because their personnel participate.

Before using institution-owned code, data, unpublished research, equipment-derived confidential information, patentable work, or other restricted assets, the project should confirm authority.

A mentor should disclose material institutional restrictions that could affect student use, publication, or VRI rights.

## 30. Third-Party Data and Licenses

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Third-party materials remain subject to their own terms. Public availability does not always mean unrestricted reuse.

Projects should document material licenses for software, datasets, images, text, models, and other dependencies. VRI may require removal or substitution of a third-party component before publication if rights are unclear or incompatible.

## 31. Publication Review Required by Agreement

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A sponsor, university, data provider, or other partner may have a valid contractual right to review material before publication for confidentiality, patent, or compliance purposes.

Such review should not be described as a right to demand a favorable scientific conclusion. Project-specific agreements should define scope and timing.

## 32. VRI Name, Brand, and Affiliation in External Publications

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Use of VRI's name in an author affiliation, acknowledgment, sponsor statement, endorsement, press release, or promotional claim must be accurate and consistent with VRI's brand and affiliation rules.

Participation in a VRI project does not authorize a participant to imply that VRI endorses unrelated products, services, political positions, investment claims, or other activity.

VRI may require correction of materially misleading affiliation statements.

## 33. Patentable Inventions

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If a project appears to produce a potentially patentable invention, public disclosure should be paused when reasonably necessary and the matter escalated for qualified review before publication, competition submission, public presentation, repository posting, or other disclosure that could affect rights.

Not every idea, algorithm, model, or discovery is patentable. VRI does not promise that it will pursue a patent.

## 34. Inventorship Versus Ownership

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Inventorship is determined by applicable patent law and cannot be created or removed by institutional preference.

Ownership of an inventor's rights may depend on valid assignments, employment/contractor obligations, sponsor/university agreements, and law. VRI should not improvise patent ownership after the fact.

A student's authorship on a paper does not necessarily establish patent inventorship, and vice versa.

## 35. Public Disclosure Before Patent Review

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Project teams must alert VRI before publicly disclosing work that may reasonably raise patent/commercialization concerns.

VRI may temporarily delay a VRI-controlled public release to obtain qualified review. A delay should be limited to what is reasonably necessary for the review and applicable agreement.

## 36. Commercial Licensing and Commercialization

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Commercialization of collaborative or patentable work requires a separate written arrangement among relevant rights holders. No public policy clause should be treated as a complete commercialization agreement.

VRI may negotiate licenses for VRI-owned IP and may participate in commercialization of jointly controlled work when supported by rights and written agreements.

Student/mentor participation in commercialization, revenue sharing, assignment, equity, or royalty rights must be expressly documented rather than assumed.

## 37. Authorship and Ownership Disputes

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A participant should raise a dispute promptly and provide contribution records, agreements, relevant drafts/version history, and other available evidence.

VRI may preserve the status quo, delay publication, restrict access, request a neutral academic review, or seek legal review while the matter is evaluated.

VRI will not intentionally use a certificate or payment decision to coerce a participant into surrendering a legitimate IP claim.

## 38. No Automated Adjudication of IP Disputes

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Ask VRI, AI reviewers, ranking systems, email assistants, or other automated systems may explain approved general policy but may not finally decide authorship, copyright ownership, patent inventorship, licensing disputes, sponsor conflicts, or individualized legal rights.

Such disputes require authorized human review and, where appropriate, qualified legal or academic advice.

## 39. Relationship to Mentor Contracts and SOWs

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Mentor contracts/SOWs should address Background IP, commissioned VRI work product, reuse of project materials, confidentiality, publication, VRI brand use, data, inventions, and post-engagement obligations at the level appropriate to the engagement.

A mentor public profile or proposal listing is not itself an IP assignment.

## 40. Project-Specific Addenda

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Projects involving sponsors, restricted datasets, university/lab IP, confidential information, material external software/data licenses, or likely patentable/commercial work should use a written Project IP/Data/Publication Addendum or comparable agreement before affected work begins.

The addendum may modify this default policy for the named project and participants when lawful and properly agreed.

## 41. Historical VMRC, LSU/Cain, and Third-Party Materials

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VRI does not assume ownership of materials created for or owned by the Virtual Math Research Circle, LSU, the Cain Center, a university, sponsor, prior employer, mentor, or other third party merely because VRI personnel previously used or helped create them.

Historical materials may be used only where VRI has an appropriate ownership, license, permission, public-domain, fair-use, or other lawful basis for the intended use.

VRI should maintain an IP chain-of-title inventory for core enterprise assets, including domain, repository, software, brand, curriculum, templates, databases, contracted work, images/fonts/assets, and third-party/open-source dependencies.

## 42. Administration, Amendments, and Counsel-Dependent Matters

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VRI may issue project procedures, templates, contributor statements, repository rules, review checklists, and addenda consistent with this policy.

The following subjects may require qualified counsel before a binding agreement is finalized: minor IP licenses/assignments; contractor work-product assignment; university/employer Background IP; patent assignments; moral rights; sponsor commercialization rights; open-source/dataset licensing; cross-border IP; and restrictions such as non-circumvention or competitive-use provisions.

This policy may be revised prospectively through VRI's controlled policy-release process. A project-specific executed agreement continues to govern the relationship it addresses unless law or the agreement provides otherwise.