



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A02010002

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On January 4, 2002, we received a complaint that a PI¹ violated Grant Proposal Guidelines in a CAREER proposal². Specifically, it was alleged that (1) 'Beginning Investigator' was checked on the cover sheet, but the PI was not a beginning investigator; (2) 'NO' was checked in answer to the question 'Is this proposal being submitted to another Federal agency?', but in fact an overlapping proposal was submitted to NIH; and (3) the Current and Pending Support form was incomplete. The matter was opened for inquiry on January 25.

With respect to the first allegation, the Grant Proposal Guide defines beginning investigators as 'individuals who have not been a principal investigator (PI) or co-principal investigator (co-PI) on a Federally funded award with the exception of doctoral dissertation, postdoctoral fellowship or research planning grants.' The PI was not a beginning investigator by this definition. However, we found that the PI was a first-time NSF applicant who may have assumed that *beginning investigator* is synonymous with *junior faculty member* or *scientist beginning his/her career*. We noted that the language of the CAREER solicitation is consistent with this understanding.

With respect to the second allegation, we determined that FastLane automatically checks 'NO' on the proposal cover sheet if the user enters no information in a section entitled 'Other Federal Agencies'. Thus, what appears to be a false response to a question may simply represent failure to complete a FastLane form.

With respect to the third allegation, we found that the Current and Pending Support form did not include support listed on the PI's website, and did not include the PI's pending NIH proposal.

Because the PI notified NSF and withdrew his proposal upon receiving an award from NIH, we concluded there was no attempt to secure duplicative funding and no harm to the Government. Accordingly, this case is closed.

¹ [redacted]

² [redacted]

	Agent	Attorney	Supervisor	AIGI
Sign / date				