

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
 OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
 OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

**CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM**

<b>TO:</b> AIGI	<b>File Number:</b> A02020009	<b>Date:</b> 3/1/02
<b>Subject:</b> [REDACTED]		Page 1 of 2

We were informed of a concern<sup>1</sup> that a program officer<sup>2</sup> had been slow to recuse himself from participating in the management of a new NSF program<sup>3</sup> and this behavior constituted the appearance of a conflict of interest. According to the information, both the program officer and his spouse are prominent researchers among the community of scientists whose members are likely to submit proposals in response to the program announcement. Allegedly, the program officer had recused himself from participating in the program months after the announcement had been issued and this created a “chilling” effect among potential applicants, some who were allegedly not even bothering to apply.

The program officer told us that the announcement represented the culmination of years of work on his part. He wanted to participate in the NSF management of this research thrust and had asked his wife not to apply. He said he is particularly sensitive to appearances because of his official position and his and his spouse’s active research careers. He said he had made a particular point of urging members of the scientific community to apply in an effort to allay any concerns about conflict of interest.

The announcement was made public in [REDACTED] and the deadline for applications was [REDACTED]. After the announcement was publicized, the program officer left to work at his research site for the summer. On his return in September, he learned that his wife was to be included in a proposal submitted in response to the announcement. The program officer immediately alerted the Designated Agency Ethics Officer<sup>4</sup> of the matter. The DAEO told the program officer he had to recuse himself from the program because the outcome could have a direct and predictable

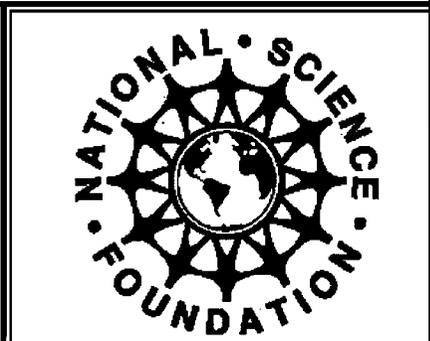
<sup>1</sup> [REDACTED], a reporter for [REDACTED] magazine, was seeking information about this matter.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. [REDACTED], a program officer in the Division of [REDACTED] in the Directorate for [REDACTED]

<sup>3</sup> The new NSF program is [REDACTED]

<sup>4</sup> Mr. [REDACTED], National Science Foundation

Name:	Prepared by:	Cleared by:		
	Agent:	Attorney:	Supervisor:	AIGI
Signature & date:				



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**ACTION MEMORANDUM**

<b>TO:</b> AIGI	<b>File Number:</b> <del>                    </del> A02020009	<b>Date:</b> Today
<b>Subject:</b> Case Closeout		Page 2 of 2

impact on his spouse's income. The program officer recused himself and has not participated in any efforts related to the program since that time.

The proposal<sup>5</sup> that included the program officer's spouse's participation was submitted in [REDACTED]. The spouse was not a PI and was named as a non-co-PI participant. Her resume was included among the Biographical Sketches. The budget included some summer salary and travel expenses for the spouse.

In the process of our review we noted that the program officer's name appeared on the program announcement. At our suggestion, the program removed his name.

We concluded the program officer had acted appropriately, notifying the DAEO as soon as he was aware of the potential conflict of interest and the DAEO took reasonable action in recusing the program officer from participation in the management of the program and evaluation of the submitted proposals.

<sup>5</sup> [REDACTED] as PI. The proposal requests [REDACTED] period.