

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A02020016

Page 1 of 2



In December 2001, the complainant¹ wrote to NSF² alleging managerial misuse of a government supported website. Specifically, the complainant alleged that his papers were inappropriately excluded from a website that was developed by the PI with an NSF grant.³

The complainant said he submitted 10 papers for posting on the website. They were not posted, and the complainant resubmitted them. They were blocked again, and the complainant's password was subsequently removed. The complainant said he was told his papers were not posted because (i) his papers were not self-contained, *i.e.*, he submitted multiple papers on a single topic; and (ii) he did not have a proper affiliation. The complainant argued that there is no explicitly stated requirement on the website that papers be self-contained. He also noted that he had previously posted papers to the site using the same affiliation he used with the blocked papers.

We learned that although the condition of accepting only self-contained submissions (i) was not posted as a requirement at the website, although the PI said it was the standard practice and all submissions are screened for compliance. Analogous with print journals, authors are occasionally allowed to submit multi-part submissions on the order of a few parts, but not to overwhelm readers with a 10-part submission. Consistent with that general practice, we found the site had some two-part submissions, with a rare three-part submission, and a single four-part submission by the same authors⁴ (out of roughly 2500 submissions per month). Thus, like its print counterparts, it is the accepted practice of the site not to simultaneously publish a large number of multi-part papers by the same author. The PI acknowledged that not all of the web pages are up to date, but they will be upon completion of the redesign of the website.

The requirement for recognized institutional affiliation (ii) is stated at the site. Also stated is an option for how individuals not affiliated with a recognized institution

¹ (footnote redacted).

² He emailed the Director on 31 December 2001, who forwarded it to OIG on 2 January 2002.

³ (footnote redacted).

⁴ The four-part submission was unique in that it was a reference article for the site's original users rather than a paper representing original research.

	Agent	Attorney	Supervisor	AIGI
Sign / date				

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Page 2 of 2



may submit their papers to the website via sponsorship from someone at a recognized institution. The PI acknowledged that he does not routinely check affiliations, but investigates if there is a complaint. In this case, after the second attempt by the complainant to post his papers, his affiliation was examined and his affiliated organization was found to seemingly consist only of him.

Accordingly, it was not recognized as a proper institution, and the complainant's password was removed; however, the complainant's previous papers were allowed to remain on the archive. If the complainant still wishes to have his papers published at the website, he has the option of seeking a sponsor at a recognized institution.

We conclude the complainant's (i) simultaneous submission of multiple papers did not conform to expected practices of the site, and (ii) his affiliation did not meet the criterion of a recognized institution. Thus, we conclude the allegation of mismanagement for failing to publish his papers is not substantiated. Accordingly, this case is closed and no further action will be taken.