

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A-02100047

Page 1 of 2

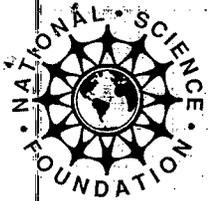
We received an allegation that the subject¹ plagiarized materials into two of his NSF proposals. The first of the subject's NSF proposals² contained text and figures that appeared to be copied from two NSF proposals submitted earlier by the subject's mentor.³ The second of the subject's NSF proposals⁴ contained text that appeared to be copied from a publication⁵ not authored by the mentor. In the second instance, the subject referenced the source publication within the apparently copied text, much of which was paraphrased, but did not offset or distinguish the copied text in any way from his own.

With respect to the first proposal, the subject explained he had permission to use the material he copied from his mentor. The mentor confirmed this permission in a letter to our office. For the text copied into the second NSF proposal, the subject apologized for his oversight but emphasized that he had not copied any ideas and that he had included the reference to the source document in the proposal.

We decided, after careful consideration, to defer this matter for investigation to the subject's University.⁶ Even though the amount of text copied from the publication was minimal, we were concerned that the subject did not fully comprehend the problem of using others' words without appropriate attribution.

Upon receiving our deferral, the University followed its Scholarly Misconduct Policy and initiated its review. The University report concluded that the subject's failure to cite the text extended "beyond what is customary in the field." It added that the subject "was unaware that scientific misconduct could include uncited use of prose." The report stated that the subject had no prior training about "the definition and forms of scientific misconduct" in the countries he trained before coming to the U.S. According to the report, the subject was "intuitively aware" of intellectual theft, however. The

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Page 2 of 2

report stated that the subject had not engaged in either theft of ideas or theft of paragraph structure. The materials used by the subject that he failed to cite included only introductory material. The report said that once the subject learned what verbatim plagiarism entailed, he admitted he had done it. The University found that the subject had committed research misconduct. The University placed a letter of reprimand in the subject's personnel file where it was to remain for 2 years, after which time if no additional complaints were received, it would be destroyed. Further, it required for this same 2-year period that all proposals, manuscripts, and any other writings to be sent outside the University, were to be submitted to the subject's mentor "for review, comment, and approval prior to being sent." In addition, the subject voluntarily agreed to attend and complete an ethics course conducted at the University.

We believe the University's actions related to this matter was sufficient to protect the interests of the Federal government as well as educate the subject to, reasonably, curtail any future similar behavior.

This case is closed and no further action will be taken.