



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A05120082

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We received an allegation of intellectual theft from the complainant,¹ who, as a result of his review of the subject's NSF proposal,² alleged the subject's proposal contained ideas that were very similar to his own. The complainant said he presented these similar ideas in a proposal he submitted to NSF the year before.³ In addition, the complainant said he received another of the subject's proposals to review that had been submitted to another agency⁴ a few months prior to the subject's NSF proposal that also contained some of these same similar ideas.

The complainant emphasized that he kept his information confidential so there was no way the subject could have learned of his ideas except through the NSF review process, either directly to the subject or through a third party who shared the complainant's proposal with the subject. The complainant added that if the subject did not have access to the complainant's NSF proposal, the subject must have derived the ideas himself, which he admitted might have occurred. The complainant provided the name of one of the subject's fellow researchers⁵ whom he thought might have acted as a potential link to the ideas in the complainant's proposal. The complainant stated he had recommended this third party as a potential reviewer for his NSF proposal.⁶

Our review showed that neither the subject, nor the third party identified by the complainant, received the complainant's proposal for review. Further, none of the collaborators or former professors listed in the subject's NSF proposal Biosketch received the complainant's proposal for review.

We concluded that there is no evidence of a breach of confidentiality of the peer review process.

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

¹ [redacted] (complainant), [redacted]
² NSF proposal [redacted], entitled "[redacted]" was submitted by the subject [redacted]
[redacted] NSF funded proposal, [redacted], entitled "[redacted]" was submitted by the complainant as the sole PI.
⁴ [redacted]
⁵ [redacted]
⁶ [redacted]