



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A09020010

Page 1 of 1

NSF OIG received an allegation that a Proposal<sup>1</sup> written by a Doctoral Advisor<sup>2</sup> and a Ph.D. Student<sup>3</sup> contained plagiarism. Our analysis identified allegedly copied verbatim text, that though lacking demarcation either with quotation marks or indentation, did include references to sources before or after the material.

We contacted the Student regarding the allegation. She said she was the Proposal's sole author and acknowledged having copied the material from the source documents albeit with references. The Student's response did not dispel the allegation and we concluded there was sufficient evidence to proceed with an investigation. We referred the matter to the University.<sup>4</sup>

The University's Investigation Report concluded, based on a preponderance of the evidence, that the Student carelessly committed plagiarism in her NSF proposal, which it deemed a significant departure from local accepted practices, but not from those with which the Co-PI was familiar based on her experience and background. The University did not make a determination of research misconduct, and did not take action against the Co-PI.

OIG concluded the University followed reasonable procedures and produced an accurate and complete body of evidence addressing the allegation. We accepted the Report in lieu of conducting our own investigation.

Based on the minimal amount of copied material lacking any form of citation and the University's conclusion that the act did not constitute research misconduct under the federal definition, we determined the matter is best resolved by sending the Student a letter reiterating the need to adequately cite material within NSF proposals, and by sending the University a reminder about its responsibilities under the America COMPETES Act. Accordingly, this case is closed with no further action taken.

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