



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A09070061

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OIG received an allegation that a PI¹ and his co-PI² had submitted a proposal³ containing plagiarized text. In response to OIG's letters of inquiry, both the PI and co-PI independently said that the co-PI had written the proposal. The co-PI explained that the individual listed as PI was so listed because university policy precluded the co-PI, because of his appointed position, from directly submitting proposals. Based on the statements of the two individuals we concluded that the co-PI was the subject of this allegation. We did not consider the PI as a subject of this matter. The subject admitted that he had copied the text without attribution. His rationale for doing so did not dispel the allegation and OIG referred the matter to his employing institution.⁴

In response to the referral, the institution conducted an investigation, and then supplemented that investigation with additional information at OIG's request. The institution concluded that the PI had poor language skills and had used others, whom he provided second authorship, to edit and correct his mistakes. The PI had not had any responsible conduct of research (RCR) training, nor had he taught any RCR classes where he would have learned the expectations for integrity in the US academic enterprise.

OIG concurred with the institution's assessment and concluded that although the PI's plagiarism exceeded NSF's normal threshold for a finding of research misconduct, the PI neither exhibited the requisite level of intent for such a finding, nor the knowledge necessary to conclude that he would have known that his actions significantly deviated from accepted practices. Since the conclusion of the institution's investigation the PI has participated in training sessions and workshops to improve his writing skills and has completed the institution's course in RCR. OIG sent the PI a strongly worded letter of warning and closed this case with no further action.

¹ The PI is Dr. [REDACTED], Associate Professor and Chair of the [REDACTED]

² The co-PI is Dr. [REDACTED], Assistant Professor in the [REDACTED]

³ [REDACTED]

⁴ [REDACTED]