



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A10120091

Page 1 of 1

A university¹ notified us it was beginning an Investigation into an allegation of fabrication. Specifically, a post-doctoral researcher could not reproduce the subject's results and, when attempting to verify the data with the subject, they learned the underlying data for a Table in a graduate student's² (the subject's) dissertation thesis were missing from the lab.³

Regarding the replication effort that took place, the university's investigation committee noted it could not confirm now whether the post-doc conducted the experiment with the same standard (a different standard would yield different results). With respect to the documentation, some of the documentation for the data that may have originally existed no longer exists. For example, the lab lost the entirety of its hard-copy printouts of data collected on this equipment when it moved to a new location several years ago, and the subject's personal labbooks of his thesis research were destroyed by a flood several years ago.

Ultimately, the committee found the subject was credible, had lacked motivation to fabricate this data, and had reasonably addressed the missing data when it was originally brought to his attention. It concluded the preponderance of evidence was insufficient to overcome the presumption of innocence. We concurred with the university that there is insufficient evidence to support a finding of research misconduct.⁴ Accordingly, this case is closed with no further action taken.

¹ [REDACTED]
² [REDACTED] was a graduate student supported by [REDACTED] NSF grant [REDACTED].

³ The data were purportedly generated over a decade ago in 1999, and the replication experiments took place approximately 2 years later. The allegations were informally examined at that time, but ultimately were not pursued.

⁴ The university used the definition of misconduct applicable at the time. Likewise, we used our definition of misconduct in science applicable then.