

Closeout for M98030008

On March 3, 1998, OIG received a letter from the Director of the Institute¹ regarding a "preliminary inquiry" conducted by the subject's department. The subject² was alleged to have listed manuscripts as "submitted" when either they had not been submitted, or did not exist. NSF was informed because three of these suspect manuscripts were cited in a proposal the subject submitted to NSF.³ The subject admitted that these listings were erroneous, and said that he listed those manuscripts as submitted because he wanted to "force himself to write these papers by the end of the month in question."

During the inquiry, the subject told the Committee that he had not intended to mislead anyone. The subject had previously spoken with his department Chairperson and another faculty member about his citations and the status of the manuscripts cited. He apparently misinterpreted their comments to mean that his listings were okay. The Committee concluded his listings were "evidence of a careless attitude and poor judgement," but there was not "a deliberate attempt to deceive." The Director concluded that the incorrect listings did not rise to the level of misconduct, but wrote the subject a letter of reprimand and placed a copy in the subject's faculty file. The subject signed a statement that the listings were erroneous and acknowledged receipt of the letter of reprimand.

The subject's previous NSF proposals⁴ did not contain any references to "submitted" manuscripts, so there is no evidence of a pattern in proposals submitted to NSF. The subject did not claim that the papers had been through a review process or accepted, merely that they had been submitted. Typically, the submission of a manuscript to a journal indicates that the work is substantially complete. The manuscripts cited by the subject as "submitted" represented work that was substantially complete, although they had not been submitted. This claim carries less weight than claims that the manuscript has been accepted, is in press, or has been published. However, "NSF expects strict adherence to the rules of proper scholarship and attribution. The responsibility for proper attribution and citation rests with the authors of a research proposal; all parts of the proposal should be prepared with equal care for this concern. Serious failure to adhere to such standards can result in findings of misconduct in science."⁵ In closing this case, OIG reminded the subject of his responsibility to ensure that his proposals meet NSF expectations for accuracy and proper scholarship.

¹ (footnote redacted).

² (footnote redacted).

³ (footnote redacted).

⁴ (footnote redacted).

⁵ (footnote redacted).

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Because there was no evidence of a pattern and the subject's misrepresentation of his publication record was not serious, we agreed with his departmental Committee's conclusion that his actions did not rise to the level of misconduct. This inquiry is closed and no further action will be taken on this case.

cc: Legal, AIG-Oversight, IG