

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM FOR M98050015

On 11 May 1998, an NSF program officer¹ brought an allegation of misconduct in science he had received from the complainant² to OIG's attention. The complainant alleged that, while browsing award abstracts on NSF's External Internet Home Page, he found an abstract for an award³ that contained text copied from a proposal abstract he had written and submitted to his Institution.² The complainant explained that the proposal submission was a requirement at the Institution for any research work that might have future commercial value. The proposal requested no funds from the Institution for the work. The complainant said that he had never met the PI listed for the NSF award, subject 1,⁴ who was employed by the grantee organization.⁴ OIG identified two additional subjects in this inquiry during its initial review of the NSF award file. Subject 2³ was the original sole PI on the NSF award, whom subject 1, a participant on the NSF award, officially replaced when subject 2 resigned from the grantee organization. Consequently, subject 2 was listed as the PI on the NSF Home Page award abstract, which is what the complainant read. Subject 3⁵ was a participant on the NSF award who worked at the complainant's Institution.

The complainant provided OIG with a copy of his proposal.⁶ OIG noted that subject 3 was a fellow investigator on the proposal. Therefore, subject 3 had been associated with both the proposal to the Institution and the award at the grantee organization. OIG informed the complainant that a) subject 2 was the original PI on the NSF award, b) subject 1 was named as the replacement PI after subject 2 left the grantee organization, and c) subject 3 was a participant on the NSF award. The complainant said that, because he and subject 3 jointly developed the proposal, subject 3 could use the text from their joint proposal without permission. OIG concurred with the complainant and concluded that there was no substance to the allegation of plagiarism.

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

cc: Staff Scientist, Investigations, Attorney, AIG Oversight, IG

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Footnotes Redacted