

## CLOSEOUT FOR M98090023

On September 18, 1997, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an allegation of misconduct in science involving plagiarism. According to this allegation, the subject<sup>1</sup> submitted an NSF pre-proposal and published a book chapter which exploited the ideas of another scientist<sup>2</sup> without permission or attribution.

After several discussions with the scientist, OIG learned that she attended a conference in early September 1997. At this conference, she listened to a speech delivered by the subject and received a preliminary draft of a book chapter sole-authored by the subject. At the end of the conference, the scientist approached the subject to discuss her ideas about a different approach to the problem discussed in the subject's speech. Although the scientist did not imply the subject could share her ideas with the scientific community, she did not indicate that her ideas were confidential. In late February 1998, the scientist learned that a pre-proposal containing her ideas was submitted by the subject to the National Science Foundation.<sup>3</sup> At another conference in late July 1998, the scientist received a copy of a recently published book which contained a chapter written by the subject.<sup>4</sup> According to the scientist, this book chapter was essentially the same manuscript she received in September 1997, but contained significant revisions based on her ideas. Although the subject acknowledged several editors and colleagues at the end of the chapter, the subject did not acknowledge intellectual contributions from the scientist. After learning of her concerns, the subject sent an apologetic email message to the scientist, acknowledging her intellectual contributions which permitted the subject to consider the problem from a different perspective. The subject concluded the email message by stating that any failure to acknowledge the scientist's ideas was not intentional.

OIG obtained copies of a set of slides which documented the scientist's original ideas and compared these slides to the subject's original draft, final book chapter and NSF pre-proposal. Our comparison revealed possible similarities between the research project described in the subject's pre-proposal and book chapter, and those described by the scientist. Accordingly, OIG requested a formal assessment of the misconduct in science allegation by an expert.<sup>5</sup>

After considering the information supplied by OIG, the expert concluded that "these research projects are different and their solutions, while sharing a common core, are different. The common core is present in most other work in this area." In particular, although the scientist claimed the subject incorporated her ideas into the final draft of the book chapter, the expert concluded the subject's approach as presented in the final draft was an obvious elaboration of the approach presented in the original draft, which existed before the scientist communicated her ideas to the subject.

---

<sup>1</sup> The subject is [redacted].

<sup>2</sup> The scientist is [redacted]. At the time she shared her ideas with the subject, [redacted].

<sup>3</sup> This pre-proposal is entitled [redacted] with the subject listed as Program Director. The Principal Investigators on this proposed project are [redacted].

<sup>4</sup> The book chapter is entitled [redacted].

<sup>5</sup> [footnote redacted].

## **CLOSEOUT FOR M98090023**

OIG concluded that any allegations of plagiarism by the subject were not supported by the evidence. Although the subject could have acknowledged the scientist's intellectual contributions as a matter of professional courtesy, the final draft of the book chapter and NSF pre-proposal contained a different approach and a completely different scope compared to the scientist's project. Accordingly, OIG does not believe the subject committed misconduct in science.

OIG closed this inquiry and will take no further action.

cc: Scientific Attorney, Integrity, IG