



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A13080079

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We received an allegation that the Subject, who had served as sole PI for three NSF grants, was inappropriately charging his awards for research salary while he was teaching. Our review found no evidence that the Subject had mischarged any NSF award for his time and effort.

While reviewing annual reports for reported effort, we found that the Subject was as much as 3.5 years overdue on his final report from one award. Further, he had not turned in any of his three annual reports or the final report from another award, which was also 3.5 years overdue. Because there was little record of what the Subject claimed to accomplish during those periods for those two grants, we reviewed the award ledgers from his university. While most of the charges to the two awards were appropriate, we found he had used funds from two awards to purchase basic office supplies. The university determined that it would pay back the inappropriate charges and the associated indirect costs totaling \$11,202.

For the reports the Subject had turned in, we found that he was not only reporting new research, but also reporting publications seemingly unrelated to the grant or completed before the grant began, resulting in a very large number of reported work products. We referred to his university an investigation into research misconduct. The university did not make a finding, noting that the Subject's practices were not necessarily compliant, but the NSF program officer (PO) did not say anything to the Subject. Further, researchers in the Subject's specific field are not necessarily expected to stay within the scope of the approved project as long as they are being productive.

The cognizant NSF PO did not approve of some of the practices, but stated they were either common in their field or that he had not enforced them. He also agreed that scope in their field is difficult to define. This perspective on scope was also shared by the NSF Division Management, but it did not agree that the timely filing and content of annual reports was flexible, and it considered talking to all POs about timely and relevant reports.

When we informed the Subject of the outcome, we stressed the importance of accurate and timely annual reports.

This case is closed with no further action taken.