



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A14060032

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NSF OIG received allegations that an NSF-supported PI at an institution engaged in research misconduct. The convened institution investigation panel reviewed responses by the PI and laboratory members and reviewed limited data due to incomplete preservation of data records. The institution investigation panel concluded the PI falsified and/or fabricated three figures and a data summary statement in a grant proposal awarded by another federal agency and data in two nearly identical versions of an unpublished manuscript. The institution investigation panel also concluded the PI falsified and fabricated two figures in an awarded NSF proposal.

During the course of the institution's investigation, the PI was placed on administrative leave and an audit was conducted of grant expenditures on the NSF award, another federal agency award, and funding from a biotechnology company. Due to the determined unallowable costs resulting from this audit, the institution returned funds to the other federal agency and nearly \$108,000 of NSF funds were put to better use.

The institution made a research misconduct finding and dismissed the PI from the faculty position. In addition to its research misconduct findings, the institution investigation panel concluded the PI engaged in other acts of misconduct including failure to retain data, lack of proper award expenditure oversight, and violating terms of his administrative leave.

Our office reviewed the institution investigation panel's report and findings. We agree that a failure of the PI in the laboratory to maintain data and maintain proper award expenditure oversight are considered departures from accepted research and administrative laboratory practices. Based on a totality of the circumstances, including the other federal agency's stronger nexus to the identified misconduct, a lack of records, and the amount of time that has passed since the NSF proposal was submitted, we determined there was insufficient substance to warrant further investigation into the matter. The other agency's investigation into the misconduct is ongoing, and we concluded that actions taken by the institution were adequate to protect NSF's interests that NSF-funded research projects are conducted and administered properly. We sent the former PI a questionable research and administration practices letter regarding data management practices and award expenditure oversight.

Accordingly, this case is closed with no further action.