



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A14090052

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NSF OIG was informed that a University¹ received an allegation that a Ph.D. student (Student)² fabricated a figure in a published article,³ on which she was lead author and which acknowledged NSF support.⁴ Specifically, it was alleged that black dots in the figures were not scientifically generated, but were drawn onto the image to make the findings appear highly successful. The University informed us that the Student admitted fabricating the figure; she said she had done so in order to finish the project her advisor required her to complete before allowing her to move on to something of greater scientific interest to her. The University dismissed the Student from her program. The University also informed the journal about Subject's misconduct and the journal formally retracted the article. We referred the investigation to the Student's University.

The University conducted an investigation. The Student chose not to participate in the University's investigation. The University concluded, based on a preponderance of the evidence, that the Subject intentionally and knowingly fabricated a figure in a published article, which it deemed a significant departure from accepted practices. The University took no further action against the Subject, whom it had already dismissed from the University.

We reviewed the University's report and adopted its findings in lieu of conducting our own investigation. We recommended that NSF make a finding of research misconduct against the Student; send her a letter of reprimand; debar her for three years; require she submit certifications and assurances for three years following the end of debarment; and require she receive certification of attending a comprehensive responsible conduct of research training class within one year.

NSF concurred with our recommendations. Accordingly, this case is closed.

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