



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A15030019

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About 3 years after publication, an anonymous source alleged that several figures in two papers by a former graduate student had been manipulated. The former graduate student's university initiated an inquiry into 28 allegations of fabrication and falsification and determined an investigation was warranted. We concurred and referred the investigation to the university.

During the university's investigation, the former graduate student was unable to provide original data supporting his research or identify the original data from the research materials archived by the university. Ultimately, the university found that the former graduate student committed research misconduct in 26 of the 28 allegations, and the university revoked his Ph.D.

We concurred with the university's findings. Because of the lapse of time between the misconduct and the investigation findings, indications of acceptance of responsibility by the former graduate student, and his current non-academic employment, we recommended that NSF debar the former graduate student for 1 year. We further recommended that for 3 years after the debarment period, NSF require certifications and assurances; require submission of a detailed data management plan with annual certifications of adherence for any new awards; and bar him from participating as a peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant for NSF. NSF concurred with and acted upon our recommendations.

The former graduate student's advisor had concerns about the validity of the published data even before the former graduate student graduated but did not move to retract or correct the two papers until the anonymous source noted the manipulations of the figures. Therefore, we sent the advisor a questionable research practice letter.

This case is closed with no further action taken.