



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A15060038

Page 1 of 1

We received an allegation that a PI and two co-PIs submitted a proposal to NSF that included plagiarized text. We conducted an inquiry and learned the PI was responsible for the majority of the copied text, and one co-PI was responsible for a small amount of copied text. We referred an investigation to the grantee, which concluded the PI plagiarized with a culpable intent, the plagiarism was a significant departure, and the act constituted research misconduct. The investigation committee similarly concluded the PI was not responsible for the entirety of the plagiarized text, with a small amount being the responsibility of one co-PI.

The investigation committee (IC) was limited in its recommendations because of inadequacies of the grantee's research misconduct policy. The IC recommended training and supervision as corrective actions. The adjudicator concurred with the IC's recommendations and made a finding of research misconduct against the PI. The adjudicator decided that the grantee would: 1) within 6 months, require the PI to complete training in research ethics, to include proper citation and referencing; 2) require for 1 year that the PI run his documents through plagiarism detection software and submit the reports to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research; and 3) require for 1 year that the PI be prohibited from serving on advisory and peer review committees. The adjudicator also took action to address the shortcomings of the grantee's policies and ethical training. He directed several offices to develop a revised policy on misconduct in research; directed one of those offices to provide Responsible Conduct of Research training for all new faculty; and imposed a requirement that all students conducting research complete appropriate RCR training.

We concur with the grantee that the PI committed research misconduct. Accordingly, we recommended NSF send the PI a letter of reprimand notifying him that NSF has made a finding of research misconduct, and require the PI certify to NSF his completion of a responsible conduct of research training program and provide documentation of the program's content within 1 year of NSF's finding. Additionally, we recommended that for 2 years as of the date of NSF's finding it should: bar the PI from participating as a peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant for NSF, and require that for each document (proposal, report, *etc.*) to which the PI contributes for submission to NSF (directly or through his institution), the PI submit a contemporaneous certification to NSF that the document does not contain plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication. NSF concurred with our recommendations.

Regarding the text copied by the co-PI, we concluded that while it does not rise to the level of research misconduct, it nevertheless warrants a questionable practice letter warning the co-PI to better acknowledge his text. This case is closed with no further action taken.