



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A15070041

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The complainant made allegations of plagiarism, and intimidation, threats, and retaliation related to his disclosure of the plagiarism allegation to OIG. The complainant and his colleague collaborated on a manuscript (MS1) involving NSF-funded research that was submitted to a journal (the Journal) for publication. The Journal, via one of its editors (Subject1), rejected MS1. After the rejection, the complainant submitted MS1 to another journal (Journal2). Journal2 selected Subject1's collaborator (Subject2) to be one of the referees of MS1. After acceptance by Journal2, the complainant uploaded MS1 to the arXiv; about 1 week later, Subject1 uploaded a new paper (MS2) that appeared to have substantial overlap with MS1. The complainant suspected Subject1 and Subject2 used their privileged access to take ideas from MS1 and incorporate them into MS2.

The complainant informed the president of the society that runs the Journal of his concerns, and the president named two investigators to address those concerns. The investigators found no evidence of plagiarism or conflict of interests. After the finding, the complainant informed University officials of the alleged plagiarism.

The complainant alleged the University used allegations of misconduct made against him by one of his graduate students as a pretext to retaliate against him for disclosing the plagiarism. Under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, which funded the NSF award, our office investigated the allegation and submitted a Report of Investigation to NSF. NSF reviewed the Report and supporting documentation and determined no prohibited retaliation occurred.

Regarding the alleged plagiarism, the complainant spoke to an expert in the field (Expert1) who concluded the equivalence of the results and the multiple points of contact between the proofs suggested MS2 was written with a knowledge of the contents of MS1. Subject1 told OIG the history of working on this problem and said some overlap was expected because of common features of the problem they were solving and use of similar mathematical tools. We asked another expert (Expert2) for his evaluation. Expert2 concluded there was no substance to the allegation of plagiarism. He concurred with Subject1 that the overlap was incidental. Moreover, he disagreed with the contention that the results of the two manuscripts were equivalent because he found the results of MS1 to be stronger and apply to more general settings, but MS2 was more elegantly derived.

The two allegations the complainant made with OIG that have an NSF nexus have been evaluated. The retaliation allegation has been formally addressed and dismissed by NSF. We have likewise found insufficient evidence to support the plagiarism allegation.

Accordingly, this case is closed with no further action taken.