



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-18-0010-O

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Our office received an allegation of plagiarism and fabrication in an NSF proposal. Specifically, a PI allegedly copied a figure from an advertisement without attribution and altered the figure's title and labels. We contacted the PI about the allegation, and his response did not dispel the allegation. Further, we identified plagiarism in a second NSF proposal the PI submitted. We referred the investigation to the PI's University.

The University convened a Committee, which determined the PI's use and altering of the figure did not constitute fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism. It also determined that the PI's use of copied text in the second proposal did not constitute plagiarism. The University required the PI complete training on appropriate citation, ethics, and proposal preparation.

We could not adopt the University's findings in lieu of conducting our own investigation. We determined, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the PI knowingly committed plagiarism and that the act was a significant departure from accepted practices. We also determined that the PI's altering of the first proposal's figure did not meet the definition of fabrication.

We recommended that NSF make a finding of research misconduct against the PI; send him a letter of reprimand; require he complete responsible conduct of research training; prohibit him from serving as an NSF peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant for one year; and require he submit certifications for one year.

NSF concurred with our recommendations and added the requirement that the PI submit assurances for one year.

Accordingly, this case is closed.