



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-18-0022-O

Page 1 of 1

We received a report of investigation from a university that made a finding of research misconduct against a former graduate student (the Subject) who was working on an NSF grant. Specifically, the university concluded the Subject plagiarized when he published articles based on his dissertation work without including his advisors as co-authors. During the inquiry, the Subject submitted corrigenda to the journals, which they accepted.

We reviewed more than 100 emails between the Subject and his primary advisor (Advisor) over a 2-year period. The emails reflect the Subject's diligence in attempting to work with his Advisor to get the research from his dissertation published. The Advisor responded sporadically, saying he would submit the manuscript to the journal that day or week, but he did not. The Subject exchanged several emails with the department chair as well, who said he would intervene, with no evident results. The Subject provided emails from potential employers to confirm that he lost several job opportunities because he had no publication record.

We found that the Subject was in an unusual situation if he wanted to publish his research in an effort to improve his employment opportunities. He could add the advisors as co-authors without their consent, or submit the manuscripts listing the advisors in the acknowledgements section, as he did. Both choices are a departure from accepted practices of the research community. We concluded his act met the definition of plagiarism, but under these unusual circumstances, together with the fact that the Subject gave some credit to his advisors through his acknowledgments, the act was not a *significant* departure from accepted practices, and therefore not research misconduct.

This case is **closed** with no further action taken.