



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-19-0045-O

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We reviewed an allegation that an NSF proposal plagiarized a dissertation and requested money for work that was already completed and described in that dissertation.

We compared the two documents and found the dissertation's author was a listed project collaborator for the proposed NSF project. We noted that the proposal described the dissertation's results as prior work. We also noted that the proposal described implementation of a device rather than designing it, the latter of which was the focus of the dissertation. However, the list of objectives for the proposal was identical to those of the dissertation and one of the proposed experiments appeared to have been completed for the dissertation.

We wrote to the PI, who confirmed that that proposal's goal was implementation. He stated that he used the term "objectives" to mean testing steps. He also stated that the proposed experiment was basically the same, except the team would use the new device, rather than the existing device used for the dissertation.

Because the dissertation's author was appropriately acknowledged, we concluded the plagiarism allegation was unsubstantiated. We accepted the PI's explanation for the apparently similar list of objectives and slightly different experiment but concluded that the NSF proposal lacked clear descriptions and terms, which led to confusion about what research had been accomplished. We sent the PI a warning letter, reminding him to take care to ensure any future NSF proposals clearly distinguish between accomplished and proposed research.

This case is closed with no further action taken.