

W. Z

This case was referred to OIG on November 20, 1989 by a program officer ([redacted], in [redacted] (ENG), who had received an anonymous allegation. The subject is [redacted] who is in the [redacted] Engineering Department at the [redacted]. He is accused of plagiarism, in that he allegedly copied substantial parts of an earlier published paper without acknowledgment in a paper he published himself. (Other vague allegations of plagiarism by the subject were raised, but none that appeared to involve NSF.)

From our examination we learned that the subject had apologized to the journal editor for the incident and that his institution had conducted an inquiry into the matter. OIG asked for and examined the documentation from this inquiry. The institution's inquiry committee found that the subject had committed some degree of plagiarism, that the ethical violation was not trivial, and that some degree of recognizable sanctions was appropriate. However, it did not recommend a formal investigation, as its own findings seemed to warrant. University officials then imposed a penalty on the subject that appeared to this office to be inadequate and to minimize the offense.

OIG decided not to devote more of its limited resources to pursuing this case, for several reasons. The original plagiarism is now an old issue, since it took place in 1982. The plagiarism does not directly involve NSF funding, since the subject had not yet received any NSF awards at that time. The only link with NSF was that the subject regularly listed the plagiarized paper in the resume that he submitted with his later proposals to NSF.

However, OIG did send a letter to the university officials who were in charge of the inquiry, with a copy to the subject, explaining deficiencies we found, both in the procedures used in the inquiry and in the subsequent use of its conclusions. We have now decided to close this case and take no further action.

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[redacted]

January 17, 1991

Concur:

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