

Closeout of M91020006

On February 20, 1991, an anonymous allegation was brought to our attention in a letter received by [REDACTED] AIG, in a green envelope, apparently from someone in NSF. The allegation concerned the proposal [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] which was received in NSF on [REDACTED]. This proposal was funded to the [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] by the Division [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] formerly known as [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] meeting agenda was also submitted by the anonymous informant along with the letter. This agenda included a presentation by an [REDACTED] Advisory Committee member, [REDACTED] (one of the subjects). The other subjects were the PI [REDACTED] the Co-PIs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] staff [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

The anonymous informant suggested that the proposal [REDACTED] (which had been submitted to OIG in 1990) be reviewed by OIG due to (1) "a number of suspicious aspects of the funding mechanism"; (2) "collusion between the funding division and the awarded institution to promote the interests of the funding division"; (3) "public presentations by [REDACTED] staff at national [REDACTED] meetings"; and (4) the attached "agenda item [involving [REDACTED] which] strongly suggests that [REDACTED] and the funding division are continuing to operate in collusion".

After careful review of the award jacket [REDACTED] OIG concluded that:

-- Regarding the first and second allegations, OIG found neither "suspicious aspects of the funding mechanism" nor "collusion between the funding division and awarded institution to promote the interests of the funding division" that have occurred in evaluating the proposal, awarding it or administering the award. An external review of the proposal by four university experts had resulted in an average E/VG rating. There was a thorough review analysis by the NSF cognizant program officer. None of the subjects took part in the review and/or evaluation of the proposal.

-- We found no evidence to support the third allegation that participation of [REDACTED] staff at national [REDACTED] meetings was wrongful. NSF's Conflict-of-Interests Rules and Standards of Conduct Regulations Manual 15, Section 683.35 specifies, in part, "Nor, ordinarily, should you chair a session or give a paper except to describe NSF programs or NSF needs". According to the documentation in the award jacket, the [REDACTED] staff participated in the conference and conveyed, in the pre-conference report, ideas to improve [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] contributions toward it.

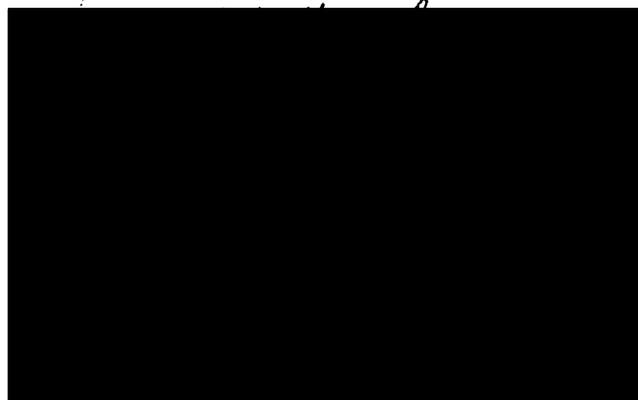
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-- Regarding the fourth allegation of continuous "collusion", it was apparent that the participation in the conference of one subject, the chairperson of [REDACTED] Committee [REDACTED] who was also a member of the [REDACTED] Advisory Committee involved merely given an informational report on the success of the conference.

The allegation provided no evidence, and OIG found none, that NSF acted improperly in evaluating the proposal and granting the award. Also, OIG found that, in executing the grant, the awardee did no wrongdoing and that NSF staff participation was in compliance with NSF regulations.

OIG found no basis for the anonymous allegations of wrongdoing and is closing this matter.

CC: Inspector General (IG)
Assistant IG for Oversight



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