

Closeout of M91080033

OIG received this case on August 29, 1991 from [redacted] and [redacted] in the [redacted] program. They had received an allegation about [redacted] at the [redacted] University [redacted]. It concerned his proposal [redacted] which has been awarded. The complainant was [redacted] at [redacted] University, a panelist who had reviewed the proposal. She alleged that the proposal might be identical with, or strongly similar to, one that the subject had previously co-authored with [redacted] of [redacted] University, which was submitted to another agency but never funded. There was no acknowledgment of this in the NSF proposal so that, by implication, plagiarism was being alleged.

OIG examined the two proposals and interviewed the complainant and the co-author. We learned that the facts were as stated: The original proposal had been co-authored and the subject had prepared the NSF proposal by copying extensive passages from the previous proposal. The co-author had not been consulted about the preparation and submission of the NSF proposal. He had admitted these things to the co-author and had apologized and offered to collaborate on some aspects of the project. We also learned that the subject had written the first draft of the original proposal, was listed as the PI, and in general had contributed substantially to it. As a result, the co-author did not believe that her contribution could be separated from the subject's.

OIG has decided, on the basis of its acquaintance with similar cases, that this case is not worth pursuing further because there would be no way of identifying material in the original proposal that was written solely by the co-author and that the subject plagiarized. Hence it would not be possible to develop evidence of plagiarism. However, it appears that professional discourtesy did occur in this case. This should be remedied by encouraging collaboration between the subject and co-author, rather than by pursuing this case as a misconduct matter. Consequently, this case is being closed.

[redacted]

September 27, 1991

[redacted]