

CLOSE OUT MEMORANDUM
M91090037

[REDACTED] program director for [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], brought to our attention a letter from [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (complainant) of [REDACTED]. The letter
transmits proposal [REDACTED], suggests a number of possible
reviewers for [REDACTED] proposal, and includes the following
paragraph.

" There is also a situation which we feel you should be aware of.
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are planning a program similar to
ours on [REDACTED] membranes. We know this because [REDACTED] was here
several months ago and asked many questions about our programs.
[REDACTED] is a PI on our [REDACTED] proposal, and he recently received
for review a proposal that [REDACTED] submitted to NSF.
[REDACTED] can see that some of what [REDACTED] learned here was
incorporated into this proposal, although not in a way that
should necessarily be considered imprudent. Thus, we feel that
there is potential for conflict of interest if [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
were used as a reviewers."

The program referred this matter to OIG because of sentence five
in the above paragraph as it seemed broad enough to include an
allegation of misconduct concerning [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (subjects)
of the [REDACTED]

OIG agreed that the meaning of the fifth sentence seems to cover
a range of possible disclosures going from a caution about
possible biases in using competing investigators as reviewers to
possible intellectual theft. In conducting its own inquiry, OIG
determined that there is no allegation of any misconduct in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] letter. The letter means only to convey information
about the identities of active research competitors and alerts
the program officer to possible competitors' biases should the
subjects be selected as reviewers.

We are closing this as a misconduct case for lack of substance.

[REDACTED]
26 September 1991

cc: Inspector General

MS 9/26/91