



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-20-0064-O

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A University received an allegation that a Professor and a Graduate Student misrepresented data included in a publication acknowledging NSF support and deposited the data in a genetic sequence database. The University conducted separate investigations into the two Subjects. We discuss the Professor in a separate closeout.

The Investigation Committee (IC) determined the Graduate Student committed research misconduct and engaged in reckless acts of data falsification, which it deemed a significant departure from accepted practices of the research community. It also found the Graduate Student in violation of the University's code of student conduct. The IC recommended that the Graduate Student retract the publication, remove the falsified data from the genetic sequence database, complete an online responsible conduct of research training, be suspended for 2 academic semesters, and have his doctoral degree eligibility delayed until the suspension period ended. The University upheld and implemented the recommendations. The Graduate Student complied with the University recommendations, except the Professor blocked retraction of the publication.

We accepted the IC findings but concluded the Graduate Student acted with a knowing degree of intent. We concluded, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the Graduate Student committed research misconduct by falsifying data in the research record and that his actions were a significant departure from accepted practices in the research community. Based on the evidence, we recommend that NSF:

- Issue a letter of reprimand reflecting a finding of research misconduct;
- Require compliance with the requirements imposed by the University, including correction of the research record by retracting the publication;
- Require completion of interactive responsible conduct of research training; and
- For 3 years:
  - Require Certifications and Assurances,
  - Prohibit the Graduate Student from participation as an NSF peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant,
  - Require a data management plan with annual certifications, and
  - Require a mentoring plan with annual certifications.

NSF concurred and implemented our recommendations. This case is closed with no further action.