



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-19-0066-O

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We investigated an allegation of plagiarism in a proposal and found text copied from another NSF proposal. The principal investigator (PI) of the new proposal served as a reviewer on the earlier proposal. In response to our inquiry, the PI acknowledged copying the material from the proposal he reviewed, and he withdrew two proposals after receiving our inquiry letter. We reviewed all three proposals for additional plagiarism and found text copied from journal articles and an online example proposal. We referred the investigation to the university. Based on our recommendation, NSF suspended the PI from participating as a peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant until the conclusion of the investigation.

The university concluded the PI violated reviewer confidentiality and recklessly plagiarized. The university required the PI to submit a plagiarism report to the university's Research Integrity Officer before every proposal or paper submission for 3 years. The university also required the PI to complete a three-part Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training that included an in-person course.

We concurred with the university in part, but concluded the plagiarism was committed intentionally. Although the PI stated he accepted responsibility and acknowledged he copied and pasted text from other documents into drafts of the proposals, he claimed his collaborators' actions resulted in the submission of plagiarized text to NSF. We found no evidence to corroborate this claim. We concluded the PI intentionally plagiarized text in three NSF proposals and violated confidentiality when he copied from an NSF proposal he reviewed.

We recommended that NSF make a finding of research misconduct, issue a letter of reprimand, and require the PI to complete interactive RCR training. We also recommended that NSF debar the PI for 2 years. In addition, we recommended that for 5 years NSF require the PI to submit certifications and assurances and prohibit the PI from participating as a peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant for NSF.

NSF concurred with our recommendations and, in addition, returned a proposal without review and prohibited the PI from serving as a rotator under an Interagency Personnel Agreement for a period of 5 years. Although the PI appealed NSF's decision, NSF upheld its finding of research misconduct and imposed actions, including debarment.

This case is **closed** with no further action taken.