



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-20-0038-O

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We sent inquiry letters to a PI and co-PI about a plagiarism allegation in a proposal submitted to NSF. Their joint response did not dispel the allegation, so we referred the investigation to their university. During the investigation, the PI altered a draft of the proposal and provided it to the university as if it was original. The PI suggested that graduate research assistants might be responsible for the plagiarism. Based on the evidence, the university found that the PI was responsible for the plagiarism, and it identified a pattern of plagiarism.

The university made a finding of research misconduct and required the PI to complete responsible conduct of research training, recertify all internal training requirements before resuming research activities, and consent to unannounced spontaneous classroom observations. The university also imposed the following sanctions: the PI cannot submit internal or external funding proposals for 2 years, receive merit salary increases for 5 years, mentor students for 5 years, teach extra-contractually for 5 years, or receive emeritus status upon retirement.

We concurred with the university that the PI intentionally plagiarized into the proposal. We also found that the PI's manipulation of records was a serious aggravating factor, which we referred to DOJ. DOJ declined prosecution in lieu of administrative action. We recommended that NSF make a finding of research misconduct, issue a letter of reprimand, and require the PI to complete interactive responsible conduct of research training. We also recommended that NSF require compliance with the requirements imposed by the university and debar the PI for 2 years. In addition, we recommended that for 3 years, NSF require the PI to submit certifications and assurances, and prohibit the PI from participation as an NSF peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant.

NSF concurred that the PI committed research misconduct and implemented most of our recommendations, though it implemented a 1-year debarment instead of 2 years. It also prohibited the PI from serving as a rotator under an Interagency Personnel Agreement for 1 year. NSF recognized the PI's completed responsible conduct of research training and did not require additional training.

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