NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-20-0029-O

Our office contacted a University following the retraction of a paper that acknowledged NSF support. The retraction notice stated the research could not be reproduced and an author's lab notebook was missing key experimental data records. The University was already conducting a research misconduct inquiry and notified us when its inquiry determined an investigation was warranted. We concurred and referred the investigation to the University.

The University concluded, by a preponderance of the evidence, that most or all of the paper's data had been intentionally falsified and fabricated by a graduate student (Subject) and that this behavior was a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community. Specifically, Subject "cherry-picked" data for publication, backdated lab notebook entries, and falsified data by manipulating a sample. Subject cooperated with the investigation and admitted to falsifying data. The University decided Subject should be withdrawn from the Ph.D. program without receiving a Master's or Ph.D. degree.

The University also made a finding of reckless research misconduct regarding a co-author , a postdoctoral researcher whose conduct we addressed as a separate matter.

We reviewed the University's investigation report and supporting appendices and accepted the report's conclusions. We concurred with the University that Subject intentionally committed research misconduct by falsifying and fabricating data in the published paper and that the act was a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community.

We recommended that NSF make a research misconduct finding and debar Subject for 1 year. We also recommended that NSF require completion of interactive responsible conduct of research training and, for 3 years (concurrent with the debarment and for 2 years thereafter): prohibit Subject from participating as a peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant for NSF; require Subject to submit detailed data management plans to NSF with any NSF proposal; and require Subject to submit certifications and assurances that any proposals or reports submitted to NSF do not contain plagiarized, falsified, or fabricated material.

NSF accepted our recommendations and took the corresponding actions.

Accordingly, this case is ***closed*** with no further action taken.