



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-20-0065-O

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We received an allegation that a proposal with a PI and four co-PIs was very similar to, and in places verbatim to, a previously funded NSF proposal. Our analysis identified substantial text copied from the previously funded proposal into the submitted proposal. Our inquiry found the PI was responsible for the copied text. The PI told us he unintentionally omitted the citations for the copied text but, in a separate explanation he provided to the co-PIs, stated that he had intended to reword the copied text. We referred an investigation to the university.

The university did not consider either of the PI's explanations – that he either forgot to cite or forgot to reword – as valid excuses for plagiarism, noting that another grant proposal would not be citable. The university found the PI committed research misconduct and required that for 3 years, the PI should assist the Research Integrity Officer in teaching the responsible conduct of research (RCR) class, and the PI's department head should certify that all the PI's publications and proposals do not contain plagiarism.

We concurred with the university. We recommended NSF make a finding of research misconduct; issue a letter of reprimand; require the PI to take an RCR course; and, for 2 years, require the PI to provide certifications and assurances with each document he submits to NSF and prohibit the PI from serving as a peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant for NSF. NSF concurred with our recommendations.

The PI appealed the imposition of certifications and assurances and the requirement to take RCR training because the actions were duplicative of actions he had already completed for the university. NSF noted the PI's rigorous compliance with the university's more stringent sanctions and the length of the matter's pendency at NSF. NSF upheld the finding of research misconduct but rescinded the requirements for certifications and assurances and RCR training and reduced the prohibition from serving as a peer reviewer, advisor, or consultant for NSF to 1 year.

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