



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A13010005

Page 1 of 1

A university¹ notified us that it had investigated a graduate student² for an allegation of data falsification related to a published paper acknowledging NSF funding.³ During the initial phase of the university process the student left the country and refused to participate further in the investigative process. The university subsequently made a finding of research misconduct and the paper was retracted.

We reviewed the university investigation findings and concluded that there was sufficient evidence to warrant a finding of research misconduct. The student bore the primary responsibility for collecting and fitting together the data that he and his advisor published. Over the course of the research, the advisor asked the student to collect additional data and repeat the fitting processes several times. The student instead falsified the data rather than do additional experiments. Only after publication did a member of the outside research community raise concern with the advisor about the integrity of the data. The advisor asked the student to explain how he had fit the data, at which point the student misled the advisor again.

Early in the university process, the student was assigned a faculty advocate with a similar cultural background to assist him. Not long into the process, the student returned to his home county without informing the faculty advocate and refused to participate any further with the investigation. The university concluded that the student had committed research misconduct and imposed a ban on his future readmission to the university.

We concurred with the university investigation. After several attempts to contact the student and having received no direct responses, we recommended NSF: make a finding of research misconduct, debar the student for 3 years; require RCR training; and require certifications and assurances until 3 years after the end of the debarment. NSF accepted our recommendations.

Accordingly, this case is *closed*.

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[Redacted text]