



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A13020031

Page 1 of 2

NSF OIG conducted an inquiry into an allegation that a Subject¹ copied text without adequate attribution in two NSF proposals,² one of which was awarded, in violation of NSF's Research Misconduct regulation, 45 C.F.R. §689.³ We identified plagiarism in both proposals and sent the Subject a letter seeking explanation. In her response, she acknowledged that she was responsible for portions of the inadequately cited text and attributed authorship of other copied portions to a hired grant writer. The Subject's response, however, did not dispel the allegation because she herself did commit some of the plagiarism and because she could provide no documentary evidence supporting her assertion that another individual was responsible for other portions of the copied text. We therefore referred⁴ the matter to the University.⁵ Additionally, we contacted the awarded proposal's program officer, who determined the plagiarized text was material to the funding decision. We recommended NSF suspend the award, and NSF accepted our recommendation.⁶

The University's investigation concluded that the Subject committed research misconduct, classifying individual sections as having been plagiarized knowingly, recklessly, or carelessly. The University sent the Subject a letter of reprimand and required that her writing be monitored for three years; that she successfully complete a University course regarding proper citation practices within one year; and that she complete a refresher workshop the following year.

We reviewed the University's report and did not find the Report to be either fully accurate or complete. We therefore could not accept it in its totality in lieu of conducting our own investigation. Our independent investigation focused on the Subject's level of intent, examined other materials the Subject authored to assess pattern, determined the Committee's standard of proof and identified the standards of the Subject's research community. We

¹ [REDACTED]

² E [REDACTED]

³ A finding of research misconduct by NSF requires (1) there be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community, (2) the research misconduct be committed intentionally, or knowingly, or recklessly, and (3) the allegation be proved by a preponderance of the evidence. 45 C.F.R. §689.2(c).

⁴ See 45 C.F.R. §689.5(d)(2).

⁵ [REDACTED]

⁶ The award closed while suspended and during the course of our investigation, resulting in [REDACTED] of funds put to better use.



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Page 2 of 2

concluded, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the Subject knowingly committed plagiarism, which we deemed a significant departure from accepted practice of the Subject's research community.

We recommended the agency make a finding of research misconduct; send the Subject a letter of reprimand⁷; require the Subject certify compliance with her University's imposed requirements; and submit certifications⁸ and assurances⁹ to NSF for three years. The NSF Chief Operating Officer concurred with our recommendations.

Accordingly, this case is *closed*.

⁷ A Group I action 45 C.F.R. 689.3(a)(1)(i).

⁸ This action is similar to 45 C.F.R. 689.3(a)(1)(iii).

⁹ A Group I action 45 C.F.R. 689.3(a)(1)(iii).