



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A15090052

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OIG received a complaint regarding two University faculty members (Subject 1<sup>1</sup> and Subject 2,<sup>2</sup> collectively the Subjects) who were being investigated for plagiarism and were directed to put their NSF sponsored<sup>3</sup> publication on hold pending a then-ongoing University investigation. The complaint concerned the University's conduct of its internal investigation. We determined that the matter was not appropriate for OIG investigative action.

The complaint, however, alerted us to the allegation of plagiarism relating to NSF-funded research. It was alleged that the Subjects removed the name of a former student (Student)<sup>4</sup> from a manuscript<sup>5</sup> she authored with them. They allegedly did so without her knowledge. Based on our review of the allegation, we referred the research misconduct allegation to the institution for a full investigation.

The University conducted an investigation and concluded that there was no evidence to substantiate allegations against Subject 1, who provided documentary evidence that the paper's ideas were her own, and that there was insufficient evidence to substantiate allegations against Subject 2, who felt he could not ethically include the Student's name on a paper to which she did not contribute. The University closed the matter and provided us a copy of its report.

We conducted an independent investigation and concluded that the first manuscript draft submitted for publication bore no similarity to the document the Student initially drafted, suggesting the Student made little to no contribution to the manuscript submitted. We further found that, despite being asked by the University and the Subjects, the Student never produced any documentary evidence to indicate she contributed to the manuscript submitted for publication. We therefore concluded that the Subjects did not commit RM when they removed the Student's name from a paper on which she had made minimal, if any, contribution.

During both the University investigation and our independent investigation, the Subjects alleged that the Student committed fabrication / falsification of data contained in her draft manuscript; committed plagiarism of content in the draft manuscript; and deleted NSF-funded data from the laboratory. Despite receiving documentary evidence from the Subjects, the University did not review these allegations against the Student.

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Our independent investigation determined that there was insufficient evidence to make a finding of research misconduct against the Student.

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