



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A01060018

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We received notification in June 2001 from a University¹ that one of its graduate students (the subject)² had allegedly falsified data. The University had conducted an Inquiry, concluded an Investigation was warranted, and notified us because NSF had supported the student.³ The allegation to be investigated was that the subject falsified a figure representing experimental data. The subject gave the figure to her advisor⁴ who incorporated it into a manuscript submitted for publication and talks she presented on the topic. The subject also presented the figure at a professional society meeting.

We deferred our investigation until the University completed its own. The University's Investigation showed the subject's figure contained 25 out of 46 data points that did not agree with the subject's raw, experimental data. Although the subject claimed all of those discrepancies were mistakes, the University's investigation panel concluded the subject intentionally falsified the data so that it would show agreement with theoretical predications. The Chancellor concluded the subject falsified data and publicly presented it, and decided the misconduct warranted dismissal. A student discipline committee agreed with the recommended finding, and the student was dismissed from the University. We concluded the University's investigation was accurate and complete regarding the subject's actions, and we could accept it in lieu of conducting our own investigation.

We likewise concluded the subject falsified data, and we forwarded our Report of Investigation to the subject for her response. In addition to her response on the substance of the allegation, the subject asked about the basis for our jurisdiction. In reviewing our jurisdiction, we learned that although NSF supported the subject during 2 years of her early graduate career, another federal agency⁵ supported the subject during the time in which the falsification took place. We subsequently referred the matter to that agency. Accordingly, this case is closed.

¹ (footnote redacted).

² (footnote redacted).

³ (footnote redacted).

⁴ (footnote redacted).

⁵ The Office of Naval Research.