



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A01060022

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On March 14, 2001, NSF received an allegation that a computer scientist¹ submitted an NSF proposal² containing material plagiarized from an article by another researcher. Our review of the article supported the allegation, and we opened the matter for inquiry on June 11, 2001.

We wrote the computer scientist, who stated that the technical portions of the proposal were written by an international collaborator (Subject³). We then informed the Subject of the allegation. He acknowledged copying the text without citation and distinction, but stated that his action was "Not on purpose. It was only a mistake."

In the further course of our inquiry, we found that the proposal was originally submitted by the Subject to an international program administered by an interagency board under the aegis of the U.S. Department of State⁴. When this program selected NSF as the appropriate agency to review the proposal, the U.S. collaborator was directed by NSF to reformat the proposal and submit it through FastLane. In mid-December we consulted Dept. of State OIG, who requested that we take the lead on this and another case involving the same program⁵.

The matter was opened for investigation on February 12, 2002. Because the Subject is employed by a foreign, non-awardee institution, we could not defer our independent investigation. In the course of our investigation, we analyzed the proposal and found additional sources of unattributed text. We concluded that the Subject, as the primary author of the original proposal, bore responsibility for these acts of plagiarism.

Because of the special circumstances in this case, we focused on preventive measures. We recommended to Dept. of State and NSF that the solicitation for this program be strengthened to include a statement on standards for research proposals, consistent with NSF's Grant Proposal Guide. Revised guidelines have now been issued which specifically address plagiarism.

We informed the Subject of our conclusions, noting that the results of our investigation could be used in a future case. We invited his comments or rebuttal concerning our analysis (any comments received will be added to the case file). We emphasized the consequences of research misconduct and advised him of the revised guidelines. Accordingly, this case is closed.

1 [REDACTED]
2 [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED]
5 [REDACTED]