

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM FOR A-01090029

In September 2001, our office received an allegation that two PIs (subjects 1 and 2)¹ each submitted virtually identical NSF proposals (proposals 1 and 2)² to different programs. Subject 1, an established researcher, submitted proposal 1 to a standard NSF research program. About 2½ months later, subject 2, a post-doctoral researcher (post doc) in subject 1's laboratory, submitted proposal 2 to a new NSF program specifically intended to fund post docs.³

Our review showed that, although some differences existed between the proposals, the main proposals' text, tables and figures were identical. Both proposals requested funds to support subject 2 as a post-doc. Likewise, the "Current and Pending Support" (CPS) forms for both proposals listed the submission of proposal 1 as pending. Subject 1 clearly indicated in his proposal that the project was to support subject 2. Finally, in their respective CPS forms, subject 1 indicated that he would commit no significant time to the project while subject 2 stated that she would commit full-time to the project.

It is not uncommon for PIs to submit proposals that request support for their post docs. Further, because subject 1's proposal described subject 2's research effort, subject 2 reasonably provided significant input into the development of proposal 1 which she later submitted as proposal 2. Finally, the public announcement for the new NSF program initiative came less than 2 months before subject 1 submitted proposal 1,⁴ so it is plausible that subject 2 did not learn about the new program until after subject 1 submitted proposal 1.⁵ Nevertheless, subject 2 clearly indicated in proposal 2 the submission of subject 1's proposal. Subject 2 fulfilled her basic responsibility to inform the NSF program officer about the submission of the similar earlier proposal 1 by including this information in her proposal's CPS form.

This inquiry is closed and no further action will be taken.

cc: Investigations, IG.

¹ [REDACTED] (subject 1) is a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (subject 2) [REDACTED]

² NSF proposal [REDACTED] (proposal 1), entitled [REDACTED] was submitted by subject 1 as the sole PI on [REDACTED] Proposal 1 was declined. NSF proposal [REDACTED] (proposal 2), entitled [REDACTED] was submitted by subject 2 on [REDACTED] Proposal 2 is still pending.

³ Proposal 1 was submitted to the [REDACTED] Proposal 2 was submitted to the [REDACTED]

⁴ Announcement appeared in April 2001.

⁵ Proposal 1 was received on [REDACTED]