



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A01110044

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The complainant¹—the president of a small business that conducts materials research—emailed us in Nov 2001 to relate his concerns about NSF-funded researchers who, he believed, might be stealing his ideas. The complainant believes he has developed a potentially unique technique useful to the materials research community. He was unaware of which research groups, if any, were conducting closely related research. He wrote to several researchers in the field (including R1,² and R2³) to ask about their research and if they could identify which other groups, if any, were working on that technology.

He ostensibly sent R1 and R2 a proposal for research with unpublished data after they agreed to sign a confidentiality agreement. After receiving the complainant's proposals, neither R1 nor R2 agreed to collaborate with him, and he requested the return of his proposals. R1 did not return his proposal, claiming he lost it. R2 purportedly returned her proposal unopened (although the complainant believes she may have read his proposal), claiming she was independently working on that topic and did not want to have a potential conflict of interests. Because of the actions of R1 and R2, the complainant became suspicious that they may be planning to use his research ideas as their own; however, he has no indication that they have done so yet. As suspicious as the complainant may view R1's and R2's actions, without evidence of intellectual theft, this case is closed, and no further action will be taken.

¹ (footnote redacted).

² (footnote redacted).

³ (footnote redacted).

	Agent	Attorney	Supervisor	AIGI
Sign / date				