

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A01120047

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In July 2001, an NSF Program Officer¹ forwarded an allegation he received from a complainant concerning potential improprieties, on the part of the university, in managing an NSF instrumentation award². The NSF PO forwarded the allegation to our office for inquiry.

The complaint alleged the university was improperly managing the grant by canceling a purchase order for the equipment because the research requirements had changed. The complaint states that the research requirements had not changed and that, by canceling the order, the university was not acting in a financially prudent manner. The complaint further stated the proposed manager of the new instrumentation center should not have been removed from that position. Finally, the complaint stated that the PI was no longer in charge of the project and that the Vice Chancellor (VC) was selecting a new set of PI/Co-PI's to manage the project.

We reviewed all pertinent internal documents and documents provided to us. We talked with the PO about the issues that were raised by the complainant. We agreed it appeared the crux of the complaint was program management oriented. We were concerned about the long lag time between award and final equipment purchase. We were also concerned the university was possibly changing PIs without notifying the agency. A review of the MRI Program announcement 99-34 did not reveal any special rules regarding the role of the PI or the institution's right to request a change of PI. Therefore, we determined the issues raised by the complaint were primarily program management issues. We decided to work with the PO and have the PO question the university about the status of the grant and the PI/co-Pis.

We worked with the PO to draft a communication to university officials concerning the status of the award. The Vice Chancellor (VC) for Research responded with a detailed letter explaining that there had been some delay in finding the appropriate facility to locate the equipment (the original proposal indicated that a few options for locating the equipment were being considered). The VC also stated the original PI and co-PIs could not come to agreement on which equipment to purchase with the award. This stalemate resulted in a delaying of the equipment purchase. After extensive mediation, the VC decided it was in the best interest of the university to place a

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	Agent	Attorney	Supervisor	AIGI
Sign / date				

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new set of PI/co-PIs in charge of the award to “break the log jam” and attain consensus on the issue of purchasable equipment. Both the PO and this office believe the explanation provided by the VC is a reasonable explanation of the circumstances involved in this case. The PO has subsequently approved the change of PI along with an understanding from the institution that the equipment purchase will be completed before the end of this fiscal year.

Accordingly, this case is closed and we will take no further action.