



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A02080041

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On August 6, 2002, a California university¹ notified us that they had initiated a misconduct inquiry in response to a complaint by a faculty member². Specifically, Complainant alleged that Subject³ fabricated an image while a post-doctoral fellow under NIH support in Complainant's lab. This image was subsequently included by Complainant in a successful NSF proposal⁴ as an example of his lab's research. We consulted with Office of Research Integrity and agreed that ORI should take the lead. On August 29, the university notified ORI of the conclusion of their inquiry and the initiation of an investigation. The inquiry report included a letter in which Subject admitted to fabricating the image and apologized.

We conducted a records review and analysis to determine NSF's interests in this matter. With respect to Complainant's involvement, we concluded that his inclusion of a fabricated image in his NSF proposal was inadvertent. We then consulted the cognizant program officer to determine what role, if any, the image played in the funding process. The program officer analyzed the review materials and informed us that the image was not a factor in the merit review process or the award recommendation. We conclude that no harm was done to NSF and that this matter does not rise to a level that would merit further investigation on our part.

With respect to Subject's involvement, we note that Subject was not supported by NSF when he allegedly fabricated the image, and he appears to have played no role in the preparation of Complainant's NSF proposal. We therefore conclude that we lack jurisdiction over the alleged act of fabrication. Nevertheless, to protect NSF's interests we diligently examined the proposal database and found that Subject subsequently submitted two successful NSF proposals. We examined these proposals and determined that they make no reference to the image in question or to the underlying research.

We have coordinated with ORI and requested notification of the final disposition of this matter. Accordingly, this case is closed.

¹ [redacted]

² [redacted]

³ [redacted]

⁴ [redacted]

	Agent	Attorney	Supervisor	AIGI
Sign / date				