



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A-03060037

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On 25 June 2003, we received an allegation that the subject,<sup>1</sup> an NSF *ad hoc* reviewer and panelist for an NSF proposal,<sup>2</sup> breached the confidentiality of the review process. Specifically, as a panelist, the subject heard a brief discussion about the PI on the NSF proposal. The discussion concerned the PI's alleged prior unethical behavior, which was unrelated to the NSF proposal. The program officer appropriately halted the discussion. We confirmed that additional steps taken by the program officer and the Division Director ensured the fairness of the merit review process. After the subject returned home, however, he emailed several people about the discussion at the panel meeting. He sent an email to the PI on the proposal and other emails to several individuals who were not involved in the NSF review of the proposal.

The subject explained that his actions were guided by his belief that the accused PI had the right to defend himself. The subject's admission that he had breached the confidentiality of the review process is contrary to the policies of the National Science Board (NSB) and NSF. None of the information shared by the subject involved the contents of the PI's proposal. We wrote to the subject explaining that it was the NSB's policy that allegations of unethical behavior be taken to the OIG to ensure appropriate rules and regulations are followed. We stated that if he served as an NSF panelist or acted as an NSF *ad hoc* reviewer in the future, he must take seriously the confidentiality he agrees to abide by with respect to information learned in the process. We encouraged the subject to contact our office in the future if he had any questions about what to do or how to deal with confidential information he learned in the review process.

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

<sup>1</sup> [REDACTED] (the subject) served on [REDACTED] on [REDACTED].  
<sup>2</sup> NSF proposal [REDACTED], entitled "[REDACTED]" was submitted by [REDACTED].