



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A10020012

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NSF received a proposal¹ describing work requiring numerous collaborative associations with researchers around the world. The PI² included numerous letters from the purported colleagues to support his asserted collaborative efforts. The panelists and program officer specifically reviewed these letters favorably with regard to both scientific merit and broader impacts. It was subsequently alleged that the ongoing nature of at least one of the collaborations had been falsified.

Our inquiry identified 10 letters in the proposal which had been recycled from 3 previous proposals (2 awarded)³ with dates either removed or altered to be contemporaneous with the proposal.⁴ When contacted, the PI admitted that 2 of the collaborations were not in fact ongoing, but that he failed to adequately review the proposal before submission. He indicated that his student⁵ had prepared the electronic files for proposal submission via FastLane. Further investigation was necessary in order to determine whether a finding of research misconduct for falsifying his ability to carry out the proposed research was warranted.⁶

We referred an investigation to the university⁷. The university conducted an inquiry and concluded that the act was honest error, noting that the PI would be retiring shortly and such an event was unlikely to happen again. Based on the evidence in the university inquiry report, we conclude that the PI's actions were egregiously sloppy with respect to his preparation of the proposal and also call into question the training of his students in the responsible conduct of research.

Accordingly, this case is closed.

1 [REDACTED]
2 [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED]

4 Several of the recycled letters also failed to reflect promotions along the tenure track for several of the purported collaborators.

5 [REDACTED]

6 Consistent with the guidance in Office of Science and Technology Programs preamble to the Federal Research Misconduct Policy (65 FR 76261).

7 [REDACTED]