



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A11030021

Page 1 of 1

We reviewed an allegation of falsification and fabrication of data by a former graduate student (Student)¹ whose work was supported in part by an NSF award² to PI³ at another U.S. federal agency (Agency).⁴ The data, which others in the same lab have been unable to reproduce, appear in the Student's dissertation and resulting publications. At the time of the alleged acts, the Student was enrolled in a graduate program at a foreign university (University)⁵ with the PI at the Agency serving as one of his dissertation advisors. The published results acknowledged NSF support as well as a grant from the foreign government.⁶

We referred the allegation to the Agency requesting an inquiry and learned that its PI had not retained any of the underlying data for the allegedly falsified or fabricated work. The allegation arose after the record retention requirements in the award agreement had expired. The Agency took steps to obtain the data from the University, which declined to provide the data and asked that a formal allegation of research misconduct be submitted with supporting documentation. The Agency ultimately received only a summary spreadsheet from the Student, now on the faculty at another institution.⁷ The Agency found there was insufficient evidence to move forward given its inability to review the raw data. The raw data were necessary to enable it either to proceed with its inquiry or to submit a formal allegation to the University with the level of detail the University required. Furthermore, it was unclear whether the privacy laws applicable to the University would prevent it from sharing the results of any investigation it conducted.

We reviewed the information the Agency obtained and concurred with its assessment that absent the raw data, there is insufficient evidence to warrant further investigation.

Accordingly, this case is closed.

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