



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A12050036

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A University<sup>1</sup> notified us it had conducted an Inquiry and was proceeding to an Investigation. The allegations were that a faculty member (the subject<sup>2</sup>) had plagiarized from another faculty member (the colleague<sup>3</sup>) when the subject incorporated the colleague's words and ideas into the subject's NSF proposal<sup>4</sup>. The investigation Committee considered each element of the plagiarism allegations separately: one allegation of plagiarism of words and three allegations of plagiarism of ideas. A complicating factor in this case is that prior to the submission of the subject's proposal to NSF, the subject and the colleague briefly collaborated, which included preparing a joint, draft proposal. The collaboration ended without the joint proposal being submitted to NSF.

The questioned text in the subject's proposal was described by the Committee as paraphrased with only cosmetic changes to the original text. The subject began the questioned paragraph: "According to a survey by [the colleague]", and then listed several phrases and references that were in the colleague's proposal, but also in their joint draft proposal. The Committee concluded the subject's paraphrasing met the definition of plagiarism, but it did not significantly depart from accepted standards, so it did not rise to the level of research misconduct. Because the text appeared in their joint, draft proposal; it was paraphrased; and the subject cited the colleague by name, NSF OIG concludes it was not plagiarized. We concur with the University that the paraphrased text does not constitute research misconduct.

Regarding the allegations of intellectual theft, the Committee learned the subject had previously published papers on one of the topics, and thus concluded the subject was exonerated from this allegation. The Committee concluded the subject's approach to the second idea was substantially different from the colleague's and this was a natural problem for him to consider. Similarly, for the third idea, the Committee concluded that, although the original idea had been the colleague's, the subject made significant contributions to it, and, again, his approach differed from the colleague's. The University concluded the evidence did not support the allegations of intellectual theft, and we concur.

Thus, we concur with the University the evidence does not support the allegations

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**CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM**

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of plagiarism and no research misconduct occurred. Accordingly, this case is closed with no further action taken.