NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A12090066

A complainant[1] raised several concerns, which included programmatic concerns and an apparent allegation of intellectual theft (plagiarism). We contacted the complainant for clarification of his allegation, and he told us he was reluctant to classify his concern as an allegation. He had found an error in a proof published[2] by a NSF-supported researcher (the subject[3]) and had attempted to discuss the error with the subject, but the subject dismissed his efforts to discuss the matter, telling the complainant that he would only communicate with him through published papers. The complainant subsequently submitted a Comment on the subject's paper that was provided to the subject for a response, but the journal decided not to publish the complainant's Comment or the subject's response to it. Subsequent to the Comment, a paper[4] containing a corrected version of the subject's proof was published that did not acknowledge the complainant.

The complainant alleged the subject used information presented in his Comment to publish a corrected version of his results without giving appropriate credit to the complainant for finding the error. The complainant acknowledged the subject's proof was his own, but said the subject's failure to acknowledge him deprived him of credit for the intellectual work required to locate the error in the proof. The complainant also alleged the subject's failure to acknowledge his intellectual effort was a violation of the ethical standards of the professional society that published the paper.

We consulted with experts to determine the community standard regarding general acknowledgment of pointing out errors in proofs. Based on their responses, we concluded, in general, the lack of acknowledgment was a departure from community standards, but would be better addressed by the journal editor. Since the complainant alleged the subject allegedly violated the journal's ethical standards, and the complainant had not discussed the subject's action with the journal, we recommended to the complainant that the professional society and journal editor would more likely provide a more suitable resolution of this matter. Accordingly, this case is ***closed*** with no further action taken.

1 [redacted].
2 [redacted].
3 [redacted].
4 [redacted].