NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A13020019

We received a complaint that one researcher (the subject[1]) had plagiarized from another researcher (the researcher[2]) into a paper (P2) that cited NSF support.[3] The complaint noted the researcher had written a paper (P3)[4] that accused the subject of plagiarism. The complaint also alleged NSF program officers acted inappropriately in allowing the subject to serve on a review panel after they were aware of the plagiarism allegation.

We learned the researcher had published a paper (P1) claiming proof of a result. The subject wrote a paper (P2) in which he proved the same result and said he did not follow the researcher's proof in P1. The researcher responded (P3) by stating the subject had (in P2) merely reproved the result of P1, using the same key ideas as P1, so P2 was essentially duplicative of P1. The subject and the researcher exchanged emails and each wrote additional papers discussing the adequacy of the researcher's proof. Ultimately, the researcher acknowledged the subject for providing him an opportunity to clarify his original proof.

While one could interpret the researcher's statements in P3 as an allegation of plagiarism, the continuing dialog between them suggests instead that they had a scientific disagreement about the validity and applicability of a proof. It appears they have come to an agreement about the researcher's proof, and the scientific community will ultimately judge whether the subject's proof offers any additional insight. We conclude there is insufficient substance to the allegation of plagiarism.

Regarding the subject's panel service, the program officers acted appropriately. The subject is innocent until proven guilty, so may serve on panels. Indeed, it would have been inappropriate for program managers to exclude the subject purely on the basis of an allegation. We conclude there is no substance to the allegation that the program officers acted inappropriately.

This case is ***closed*** with no further action taken.

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1 [redacted].

2 [redacted].

3 The subject's manuscript was uploaded to the arXiv [redacted], and acknowledged the work was partially supported by [redacted]. This is P2.

4 The researcher's manuscript was uploaded to the arXiv [redacted]. This is P3.