



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-05020011

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In July 2004, the Office of Inspector General initiated a proactive review of participant support funds allocated to NSF awards. Participant support costs are expended to or on the behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) for stipends, subsistence, travel and registration fees for conferences, symposiums and/or workshops. To that end, OIG randomly selected this award¹ for review.

Our initial review of the documentation submitted by the university² revealed a \$30,000.00 re-allocation that did not appear to be approved by the program office and a miscellaneous charge of \$150.00 from "Chico Hot Springs Lodge" which did not appear to be grant related. The preliminary inquiry was closed and an investigation was initiated in order to get further information from the university.

OIG contacted the university several times to ascertain if it had received permission from the program office to re-allocate participant support funds as required by the NSF regulations. The principal investigator (PI)³ on the grant contacted our office and asked if it would be helpful if he could come into our office and meet with staff.

On 28 April 2005, OIG interviewed the PI on the grant. The PI provided additional information as well as an in-depth explanation for the re-allocation and the miscellaneous charge.

The PI stated that he sent several messages to various program officers⁴ to get written permission to re-allocate the remaining funds. The PI provided the numerous emails he sent to the program office requesting permission to re-allocate the funds. The final email granted permission to re-allocate funds.

The PI provided further explanation for the \$150.00 charge. The PI stated that one of the conference days was spent touring Yellowstone and surrounding attractions. One of the attractions visited was the Chico Hot Springs. The package purchased included a soak in the Hot Springs and a barbeque dinner under their tents. The PI stated that the facility must have broken the charges out on the invoice. This explanation is satisfactory.

After reviewing the supplemental documentation and (both verbal and written) explanations of the miscellaneous expenditure, our office is satisfied that the University did not violate the participant support guidelines. Accordingly, this case is closed.

¹ footnote redacted

² footnote redacted

³ footnote redacted

⁴ footnote redacted