

CLOSEOUT FOR M-91040020

On 16 April 1991 OIG received a letter from the complainant, [REDACTED] a professor [REDACTED]. In his letter, the complainant explained that an ad hoc reviewer had received NSF proposal [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED] submitted by subject #1, [REDACTED] a faculty member (the institution), with co-PIs, subject #2, [REDACTED] an associate director [REDACTED] the institution, and subject #3, [REDACTED] a faculty member [REDACTED] at the institution. The complainant alleged that the subjects committed intellectual theft when they misappropriated ideas into their NSF proposal from the ad hoc reviewer's NSF proposals [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED] submitted with co-PI [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED] submitted with co-PIs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both in [REDACTED]

Further, the complainant alleged that the subjects violated the confidentiality of peer review when, as reviewers of one or both of the ad hoc reviewer's proposals, they used some of his ideas. In addition, the complainant alleged that subject #1 violated the confidentiality of peer review when he told the ad hoc reviewer that he had been an NSF panelist and had reviewed one of his proposals.

The ad hoc reviewer provided OIG with copies of the two proposals that contained the ideas allegedly plagiarized by the subjects. The NSF computerized reviewer system showed that none of the subjects was a reviewer or panelist for either of the ad hoc reviewer's proposals. OIG concluded that there was no substance to the allegation that the subjects had violated the confidentiality of peer review by misappropriating ideas from the ad hoc reviewer's NSF proposals.

We also concluded that the subjects, who had been independently involved in research that overlapped with the ad hoc reviewer's field of study, could have developed ideas that were similar to those of the ad hoc reviewer, especially considering the six years that had elapsed between the complainant's and the subjects' submissions.

The second allegation involved a possible violation of the confidentiality of peer review that occurred when subject #1 allegedly told the ad hoc reviewer that, as an NSF panelist, he had reviewed one of his proposals. According to the ad hoc reviewer, subject #1 did not reveal the specific proposal he reviewed and he did not disclose any panel information related to the proposal's review. OIG concluded that the information allegedly shared by subject #1 with the ad hoc reviewer did not violate the confidentiality of peer review. Hence, there was no substance to this allegation.

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This inquiry should be closed and no further action will be taken.

cc: Staff Scientist, Deputy AIG-Oversight, AIG-Oversight, IG