

## CLOSEOUT FOR M92010001

This case was brought to the attention of OIG by [REDACTED], a program director in the [REDACTED], on December 31, 1991. The program director had been informed anonymously that the subject, [REDACTED], a [REDACTED] student at the University [REDACTED], had fraudulently indicated on his successful NSF Graduate Fellowship application that he was in an [REDACTED] program, when he was actually in a [REDACTED] program. The NSF program announcement specifically precludes applications from [REDACTED] fields; [REDACTED] is cited as "not eligible" in the fields of specialization list that accompanies the announcement. Because the program was in the midst of awarding the next year's funding for the subject's fellowship they contacted the institution and the subject to determine the subject's exact field of study. The program subsequently decided that the subject's field of study mixed both [REDACTED] work and determined that he could receive support in those years he was solely engaged in [REDACTED] course work and research.

After reviewing the relevant program and application materials OIG determined that the subject had not fraudulently presented his intended course of study. He had clearly stated his desire to pursue training in both [REDACTED] areas, emphasizing his desire to teach and do research. OIG found that applicants for NSF fellowships submit their application materials to a contractor, the National Research Council (NRC). The NRC convenes panels that evaluate and rank the applications. Prior to their review of the applications, the panelists are given a briefing and written documents describing the evaluation criteria; it is specifically noted in these documents that [REDACTED] fields are NOT supported. A rank ordered list of applications and the applications are then forwarded to the NSF program for award or declination action. The NSF program does not reevaluate the applications. As a result of the program's concerns stemming from this case, the NSF staff have requested that the NRC place greater emphasis in the instruction to the panelists on, and the panelists pay more attention to, the assessment of eligibility.

OIG contacted the institution's [REDACTED] department and asked how the courses required and expected career paths differed for [REDACTED] students in its and other institutions' programs so that its students were qualified for NSF Graduate Fellowships whereas [REDACTED] students at other institutions were not qualified.

The institution responded that, as of last year, there were no differences between its curriculum and that at peer institutions. Prior to that time the institution's students were, unlike students at other institutions, required to take [REDACTED] courses. That requirement is no longer in effect.

OIG determined that the subject had not falsified information on his application, that the NSF program had strengthened the review of applications, and the remaining issue, the eligibility of future applicants from this institution, was program-related. The information OIG received from the department chairman was forwarded to the NSF program.

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OIG found that there was no substance to the allegation of falsification and closed this case without a finding of misconduct.

 9/17/93  
Staff Scientist, Oversight

Concurrence:

Donald E. Buzzelli 9/17/93  
Donald E. Buzzelli  
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for  
Oversight

James J. Zwolenik 9/17/93  
James J. Zwolenik  
Assistant Inspector General for Oversight

Montgomery K. Fisher 9/17/93  
Montgomery K. Fisher  
Counsel to the Inspector General

cc: Signatories  
Inspector General