

CLOSEOUT FOR M92110045

On November 24, 1992, Dr. [REDACTED] an NSF program officer for the [REDACTED] Division of the Directorate for [REDACTED] informed OIG of an allegation that an unnamed faculty member at an NSF Center was abusing the mentor-student relationship. The program officer said she had been contacted by a graduate student, [REDACTED] in the Department [REDACTED] at the University [REDACTED] (the institution). The graduate student alleged that her faculty mentor sexually harassed women students, and that she had been retaliated against for reporting this harassment to university administrators. The student eventually left the institution and pursued a Ph.D. degree in a different sub-specialty at a new institution. The program officer informed OIG that she thought the allegation might have substance and might be part of a broader harassment allegation, encompassing the nonsexual harassment of male graduate students. Although the student did not provide the name of her mentor, the program officer said that the subject of this case was probably Dr. [REDACTED] a professor in the Department and a member of the NSF-supported [REDACTED] Center (the Center), both which are located at the institution. The program officer said that although this department was powerful in both academic and professional communities, there was a bad professional atmosphere in it, it had a reputation for being tough on graduate students, and that there were "blood feuds" among several of the department faculty members.

When OIG contacted the complainant she refused to provide any information to support her allegation, even as a confidential source. Without this information, OIG would normally close a case such as this; however, because the allegation involved a member of an NSF-supported Center, and because the program officer provided a tentative identification, OIG interviewed current and former graduate students of a number of the department's faculty. OIG learned that some students thought that certain faculty behaved in what could be described as an unprofessional manner, but concluded that none of the incidents reported to us could be considered a serious deviation from accepted practices and thus did not rise to the level of misconduct in science.

We made several more attempts to communicate with the student to get a clearer statement of her complaint, but she refused to cooperate. Therefore, OIG closed this inquiry and concluded it would take no further action in this case.

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