

CLOSEOUT OF M93030012

An allegation of intellectual theft was brought to the attention of OIG by [REDACTED], the [REDACTED]. On [REDACTED], the PD received a phone call from [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED] who alleged that [REDACTED], of the [REDACTED] University [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] had submitted a proposal to NSF that contained her work. The complainant, who had received the subject's proposal for review, alleged that the proposal contained material contributed by the complainant during a period in which they had agreed to collaborate on a proposal.

OIG learned from the complainant that the subject had the original idea for the proposal, and had proposed the collaboration. Copies of correspondence between the subject and complainant confirmed the existence of the collaboration, and detailed the dispute which led to its dissolution. The complainant alleged that the subject unilaterally decided to end the collaboration, and hoped that the complainant would pursue that part of the joint project that was in the area of her contributions and expertise. The complainant alleges that thereafter the subject submitted a proposal based upon the one prepared in collaboration. Moreover, despite the division of future research suggested by the subject, the subject's proposal utilized material related to the complainant's contributions and expertise.

OIG examined the material sent by the complainant, and compared the drafts prepared during the collaboration with the proposal submitted by the subject to NSF. All drafts of the proposal had been prepared by the subject, with suggestions for revision supplied by the complainant. The complainant could not identify specific portions that she had written or specific ideas that she had contributed. Moreover, the subject's proposal to NSF was in many ways different from the earlier collaborative effort.

OIG contacted the complainant and explained that an allegation of intellectual theft must rest on the subject's misappropriation of specific, nonpublic ideas. The complainant acknowledged that the subject had the primary grant-writing role during the collaboration, and that the subject could have written the proposal independently, from publicly available sources, including a paper jointly authored by subject and complainant. According to the complainant's explanation, the complainant contributed to the development of the proposal through extensive discussions and comments on the drafts. However, the complainant's main contribution to the project would have occurred after funding, when the complainant's past work and continuing interest in this area would result in a primary role in theoretical and methodological design, and other aspects of carrying out the project. The complainant did not think it would be possible to provide more specific information on her unique contributions to the proposal.

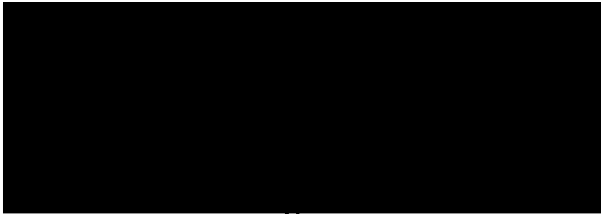
Since OIG received no more information on this matter even after another request, it could not substantiate the allegation of misconduct. Therefore, OIG determined that there was not enough evidence to warrant pursuing these allegations further.

This case is closed without a finding of misconduct.



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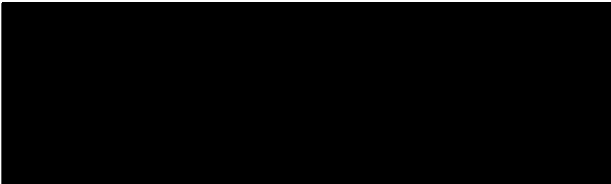
Concurrence:



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cc: Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Oversight  
Assistant Inspector General for Oversight  
Inspector General