

CLOSEOUT FOR M93030014

On March 22, 1993, [REDACTED], a program officer in the [REDACTED] Program at NSF, informed OIG that he had received allegations of plagiarism and violation of the confidentiality of peer review from the complainant, [REDACTED], a faculty member at [REDACTED]. The complainant had reviewed a proposal submitted by the subject, [REDACTED], a faculty member at the [REDACTED]. The complainant thought that a figure in the subject's proposal looked similar to a figure in the complainant's previously submitted proposal and conveyed similar concepts. He thought that the subject might have reviewed his proposal and adapted a figure in that proposal for use in the subject's proposal.

OIG determined that the subject had reviewed the complainant's proposal prior to the submission of his own proposal but found that the figures in the two proposals were not identical. When OIG spoke with the complainant he said that it was quite possible that the subject, who is active in the same field of research as the complainant, could have independently developed the figure on the basis of the subject's knowledge of the literature. OIG reviewed both the original literature that developed the concepts contained in the allegedly plagiarized figure and the two proposals. OIG found that the original literature, as well as textbooks published prior to the submission of either proposal, contained schematics that were similar to those in the complainant's and subject's proposals.

OIG concluded that individuals who are experts in the same field are familiar with the same scientific literature. On the basis of their similar experiences they could independently develop similar figures to convey standard concepts by using slight variations on several commonly accepted schematics. The preexistence and common usage of the schematics to convey standard concepts renders the complainant's suspicions unsustainable. For this reason, OIG closed this case.

[REDACTED] 10/7/93

[REDACTED]
Staff Scientist, Oversight

Concurrence:

Donald E. Buzzelli 10/13/93
Donald E. Buzzelli
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for
Oversight

James J. Zwolenik 10/7/93
James J. Zwolenik
Assistant Inspector General for Oversight

L. Nancy Birnbaum
L. Nancy Birnbaum
Assistant Counsel to the Inspector General

cc: Signatories
Inspector General

93-14