

CLOSEOUT FOR M93040026

This case was brought to OIG on April 16, 1993 by [REDACTED] an NSF program director. He had received a review of a proposal by [REDACTED] (Subject #1) and [REDACTED] (Subject #2) of the University [REDACTED] that raised allegations of misconduct. The proposal, [REDACTED] is entitled [REDACTED]

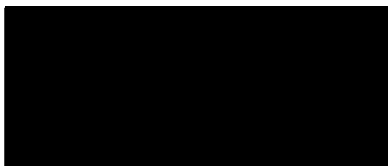
[REDACTED]. " The complainant, [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED] University [REDACTED] claimed that a photograph in the proposal, identified as produced by the subjects' own equipment, was in fact taken from a preprint of an article by other scientists. The complainant also raised questions about whether the subjects had misrepresented their research equipment in the proposal, noting that the manufacturer from whom the subjects allegedly obtained the equipment did not have such a system ready for sale.

When contacted, Subject #1 explained that the photograph did indeed come from the article by the other scientists and was not made on the subjects' own equipment. He told us that he "inadvertently used that photograph instead of one of my own in the haste of finishing the proposal in time for the submission deadline." The subject pointed out that his system is modelled on the one that actually made the photograph (a point that is explicit in the proposal) and that he distributes photostat copies of the article and of individual figures and photographs made on that system to students and colleagues "as a discussion item and as a system to emulate." The photograph in question was used to illustrate the capacities of the subject's system, and its specific content was not germane to the proposal or to an accurate assessment of its merit. OIG wrote to the subject requesting that, to correct the record, he send a photograph illustrating the capacities of his system that had in fact been produced on that system before he submitted his proposal. OIG further requested that the subject obtain a certification from another member of his research group confirming that the photograph had been available when the proposal was submitted. OIG also expressed concern about the record keeping and citation practices that made this mistake possible and asked the subject to devise practical and effective changes that will prevent future occurrences of this kind.

Subject #1 sent an appropriate photograph to us along with the certification we requested. We asked him to send a copy of the photograph to the program to correct his proposal, and he has complied with this request. He also sent us an explanation of the changes he has introduced in his laboratory procedures. He now requires that photostat copies of figures or photographs contain the original captions and that the source of the original document be clearly written on the copy.

Subject #1 provided us with extensive documentation substantiating the claim that he has access to the equipment described in his proposal. He sent us bids for the system and copies of the accompanying technical specifications, which match those described in his proposal. He also sent an abstract of a paper that reports data from the system and is co-authored by a scientist who works for the manufacturer from whom the subjects allegedly obtained the equipment. In addition, the subject sent us computer printouts of data produced by his system. The subject's account is fully consistent with the information we received from the complainant, who indicated only that no system was yet available for sale from the manufacturer. The subject's system was designed specifically for him following the model discussed in his proposal, and the copies of bids from the manufacturer's U.S. representative indicate that the system would not have been generally available for sale. We no longer have any reason to question the subject's claim that he had access to the equipment in question or to believe that this equipment was misrepresented in his proposal.

This case is closed and no further action will be taken.



11/1/93

Staff Scientist, Oversight

Concurrence:

Donald E. Buzzelli 11/1/93

Donald E. Buzzelli
Deputy Assistant Inspector General,
Oversight

noted James J. Zwolenik 11/2/93

James J. Zwolenik
Assistant Inspector General for Oversight



11/2/95

L. Nancy Birnbaum
Assistant Counsel to the Inspector General

cc: Signatories
Inspector General