

CLOSEOUT FOR M93100055

The allegations in this case were separately brought to the attention of OIG on [REDACTED] by [REDACTED] the first program officer, who is in the Division of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] the second program officer, who is in the Division of [REDACTED]. Both program officers work within the Directorate for [REDACTED].

The first program officer had received proposal [REDACTED] entitled, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] from Dr. [REDACTED] the first PI, a faculty member in the [REDACTED]. In his cover letter [REDACTED] named one individual, [REDACTED] the second PI, as a "reviewer to avoid." By way of explanation, the first PI said, "This individual has been represented to me as one who may incorporate ideas presented in the proposal into his own research I must ask that he not review this proposal."

The second program officer had received proposal [REDACTED] entitled, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] from the second PI. The second PI sent a cover letter with the proposal in which he requested that a number of scientists affiliated with a particular scientist's research group not be used as reviewers. The first PI was not named in that letter and does not appear to be affiliated with this research group. The second PI said there was a "campaign launched in 1983 by [the group] to rob me of credit for my work. . . ." He alleged that unnamed members of this group were "reluctant to acknowledge clearly in print their mistakes, and their indebttness [sic] to other's ideas, I made a point of doing that. This does not disturb them from writing reviews alleging the opposite. . . ."

NSF returned this proposal to the second PI for administrative reasons. The second PI corrected the administrative problems and resubmitted the proposal. The second proposal, [REDACTED] had the same title as the first. A copy of the cover letter containing the second PI's allegations which accompanied the first proposal was attached to the second proposal.

OIG reviewed the materials supplied by the program officers and determined that the first and second PIs had made vague allegations of intellectual theft and failure to cite. OIG contacted each PI and requested additional information. The first PI said that he had not personally had ideas stolen by the second PI but had heard stories about incidents which had caused him to request that the second PI not review his proposal. He could not provide any specific information to support his concerns or that would allow OIG to pursue an allegation of misconduct in science. He referred OIG to another scientist who provided OIG with information that scientist characterized as mostly "hearsay" and without substantiation. An NSF program

CLOSEOUT FOR M93100055

officer told OIG that the second PI was generally known in the community as one who rapidly jumps on the ideas of others and who publishes abstracts describing his incomplete proofs related to those ideas. OIG was told that scientists in the relevant community have reacted to the second PI's practice by not discussing their newest ideas with him. Although OIG was informed of the second PI's allegedly bad practice, no one could provide specific information about this practice so that an allegation of intellectual theft or failure to cite could be pursued.

When contacted, the second PI said that, about 5 years ago, members of the group had failed to give him appropriate credit for some of his work. He would not provide any details which would allow OIG to pursue the matter because he believed any action by OIG would damage his current relationship with the group. With regard to his statement that he had been accused of failing to cite others for their ideas he said that, while his work, as is others', is based on ideas circulating in the field, his development of any particular idea is his own work and he provides attribution to the correct sources.

OIG determined that the two PIs' allegations were reflective of professional disputes in this discipline but were so vague that they could not be pursued. None of the individuals OIG contacted provided OIG with sufficient information to inquire further into these allegations.

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

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