

Closeout for M93110058

This case came to OIG via a November 16, 1993 telephone call and November 20, 1993 letter from [REDACTED] (the complainant), who has been a graduate student and postdoctoral fellow at the [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED]. The complainant was referred to OIG by [REDACTED] in NSF's Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (OEO), who had previously handled a variety of race and sex discrimination matters that the complainant had brought to him. The complainant alleged various kinds of misconduct by [REDACTED] (the subject) and others at the university, including harassment, threats, intimidation, misrepresentation, intellectual theft, theft of scientific data and equipment, and threats on her life.

OIG wrote to the complainant to get more specific information about her allegations and their connection to NSF. When she did not reply, we sent a second letter to her post office box, telling her that we could not proceed without more information from her. We set a deadline for her response, but offered to extend it if she needed more time to fashion an adequate reply. According to the Postal Inspector, the complainant received OIG's letter, opened it, and left it in her post office box; after several weeks, the Post Office then returned it to us marked "unclaimed." OIG's efforts to telephone the complainant have been similarly unavailing.

For most of the allegations, OIG's inquiry did not reveal any evidence that the alleged misconduct involved NSF proposals and awards. The subject has not been principal investigator on an NSF award since before the time when the alleged incidents of misconduct began. The research center with which the subject is affiliated is not sponsored by NSF. Although the complainant states that other investigators at the center or in the subject's department may have NSF awards, this would not normally give us jurisdiction over all alleged misconduct that was in any way connected to the center or department.

OIG also examined the complainant's OEO file for evidence bearing on her allegations of misconduct in science. The file included complaints about the university's unwillingness to permit the complainant to submit a proposal to NSF. In her correspondence

with OEO, the complainant had characterized this refusal as discriminatory. OIG concluded that universities have no obligation to permit postdoctoral fellows to submit proposals as principal investigators. Because such submissions imply a readiness to have a continuing relationship with the fellow in the event that the proposal is funded, they involve a commitment beyond the fellowship itself. It is reasonable for universities to exercise discretion in making such commitments, and it is not misconduct in science for them to refuse to do so in individual cases.

OIG lacks the information to pursue the other aspects of this case without the complainant's cooperation. Although the deadline we gave the complainant has passed, she has not replied to our request for further information. We therefore have no alternative but to close the case.

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

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