

## CLOSEOUT FOR M-95080036

On 23 August 1995, [REDACTED] program officer in the Division [REDACTED] in the Directorate [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Division Director for [REDACTED] brought an allegation of misconduct in science to OIG's attention. The complainant, [REDACTED] a faculty member in [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] was an *ad hoc* reviewer for proposals [REDACTED]<sup>1</sup> submitted by subject #1, [REDACTED]<sup>2</sup> and [REDACTED]<sup>3</sup> submitted by subject #2, [REDACTED]<sup>4</sup>. The two proposals described a joint project on which the subjects agreed to collaborate. In the review, the complainant alleged that subject #1 violated the confidentiality of peer review when she misappropriated ideas from the complainant's NSF proposal [REDACTED]<sup>5</sup> in her proposal. When OIG contacted the complainant, she said that she considered only subject #1 to be responsible for the misappropriation. However, because of the collaborative nature of the proposals, OIG considered both PIs as subjects in its inquiry. In addition, the complainant alleged that subject #1 violated the confidentiality of peer review when, as a reviewer of a [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] NSF proposal<sup>6</sup> submitted by [REDACTED] (other PI), subject #1 misappropriated an idea from the proposal and used it in her own research program.

The NSF computerized reviewer system database showed that subject #1 did not review the complainant's proposal, but that subject #2 did serve as a panelist for the evaluation of the complainant's proposal.

With the first allegation, the complainant described seven specific ideas that she said had been misappropriated from her proposal. The NSF program officer who brought the first allegation to OIG's attention said that, in his opinion, none of the ideas alleged to have been misappropriated were unique to the complainant. Six of the alleged misappropriated ideas involved experimental approaches described in the complainant's and the subjects' proposals. OIG determined that the six experimental approaches were not unique to the complainant, but

<sup>1</sup> NSF proposal [REDACTED] entitled "[REDACTED]" was submitted by subject #1 [REDACTED]

<sup>2</sup> [REDACTED] is a faculty member in [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]

<sup>3</sup> NSF proposal [REDACTED] entitled "[REDACTED]"

<sup>4</sup> [REDACTED] was submitted by subject #2, [REDACTED] is a faculty member in [REDACTED]

<sup>5</sup> The complainant's NSF proposal [REDACTED] entitled "[REDACTED]" was submitted with co-PI [REDACTED] a faculty member in [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]

<sup>6</sup> The complainant could not remember the title of the proposal submitted by [REDACTED], just that it was in the fall of [REDACTED] or spring of [REDACTED]

## **CLOSEOUT FOR M-95080036**

represented observational techniques commonly used by researchers in the field of study represented by the proposals. OIG observed that the seventh idea was contained in a reference used by the complainant and the subjects in their proposals and was not unique to the complainant.

OIG concluded that there was no substance to the allegation that either subject violated the confidentiality of peer review by misappropriating ideas from the complainant's NSF proposal because none of the ideas common to the complainant's and subjects' proposals were unique to the complainant.

With respect to the second allegation, OIG determined from the computerized reviewer system database that subject #1 never acted as a reviewer or panelist for any NSF proposal submitted by the other PI over the time period specified by the complainant. OIG concluded that there was no substance to the allegation that subject #1 violated the confidentiality of peer review by misappropriating an idea gained through the review of an NSF proposal submitted by the other PI.

This inquiry was closed and no further action will be taken.

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