

CLOSEOUT FOR M96050012

On [REDACTED] 1996, Dr. [REDACTED] the program director for cross-disciplinary activities within the Division of [REDACTED] in the Directorate for [REDACTED] informed OIG that he had received an electronic mail message from Dr. [REDACTED] the complainant, that contained allegations of plagiarism and violation of confidential peer review. The complainant is a faculty member in the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In his message, the complainant said he had received a letter from another scientist in a foreign country, [REDACTED] who was seeking a postdoctoral position in a colleague's laboratory and that the scientist had "quoted verbatim the title and contents" of the colleague's pending proposal [REDACTED].¹

OIG found that the list of reviewers of the colleague's proposal did not include the scientist or anyone else from the foreign country. OIG found that the scientist's two-paragraph letter contained two sentences that appeared to be derived from the colleague's proposal. One sentence appeared to be derived from the title and the second from a sentence in the colleague's description of his research program. The letter did not contain an attribution to the colleague's proposal. OIG did not view the amount of apparent copying as serious, but did view it as evidence that the confidentiality of peer review might have been violated.

In response to OIG's inquiry the scientist said that he had copied the text in question from a publication by the author of the proposal. He provided a citation to the publication. The complainant explained that he had not thought of the publication as a source of the text because it was a regionally distributed pamphlet and he did not think someone in a foreign country would have access to it. The complainant provided OIG with a copy of the publication. OIG found that the colleague's proposal and the article had the same title and that one sentence of the article contained text similar to the sentence in the proposal that had been copied into the scientist's letter. OIG concluded that the scientist had copied the text in question from the article, which was available to him, and not from the colleague's pending NSF proposal, which was, as far as we could ascertain, not available to him.

OIG concluded that there was no substance to the allegations of plagiarism or violation of the integrity of the peer review process.

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

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

¹ Proposal [REDACTED] is entitled, "[REDACTED]" The complainant was the sole PI.