

## CLOSEOUT FOR M97110040

On 3 November 1997, a program officer<sup>1</sup> informed OIG that he had received an allegation of violation of confidential peer review and intellectual theft from a scientist<sup>2</sup> he spoke with during a site visit. The scientist said while he was attending a recent professional meeting<sup>3</sup> he had been told by some colleagues that two researchers<sup>4</sup> (subjects 1 and 2) who collaborate together had begun a project on the idea described in his NSF proposals<sup>5</sup> and that one of subject 1's graduate students<sup>6</sup> had abruptly changed research projects to one that the scientist suspected was based on his idea. He thought that these researchers' interests were different from his own and that they had become interested in this area after receiving his NSF proposals for peer review. He believed the ideas had been taken from his proposals, but he had been unable to check the meeting abstracts to see if their work was related to his idea.

Consistent with NSF policy to keep the identity of reviewers confidential, OIG neither affirms nor denies that either subject, or their collaborators, were involved in the review of the scientist's proposal. OIG provided the scientist with copies of abstracts from the meeting that had been published by the two researchers<sup>7</sup> and asked for his assessment of the similarity of their content to his proposal idea. The scientist said he had carefully reviewed the pattern of subject 1's research, and had concluded that the subject was "already working along a convergent path" to the scientist's work. He believed it was possible that the subject could have come up with the same ideas before, or at the same time, he had. He also said that he had reviewed subject 2's work. He concluded that subject 2's work that was related to his was derived from subject 2's collaboration with subject 1.

OIG concluded that there was no substance to the allegation of violation of confidential peer review. This inquiry is closed and no further action will be taken in this case.

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

<sup>1</sup> The program officer is Dr. [REDACTED]. He is a program officer for sensory systems in the [REDACTED] program of the Division [REDACTED] in the Directorate [REDACTED].

<sup>2</sup> The scientist is Dr. [REDACTED], a faculty member in the Department of [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] University in [REDACTED].

<sup>3</sup> The meeting was the [REDACTED] annual meeting of the [REDACTED].

<sup>4</sup> The first researcher, subject 1, is [REDACTED], a faculty member in the Department of [REDACTED] at the University [REDACTED]. The second researcher, subject 2, is [REDACTED], a faculty member in the Department [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] University.

<sup>5</sup> The scientist had submitted three proposals to NSF, only two of which are relevant to this case. These are [REDACTED] and its revision, [REDACTED]. Proposal [REDACTED] is entitled [REDACTED]. Proposal [REDACTED] is entitled [REDACTED]. Both proposals were declined.

<sup>6</sup> The graduate student's identity is unknown.

<sup>7</sup> The abstracts are available on the internet at [http://www.\[REDACTED\]abstract.htm](http://www.[REDACTED]abstract.htm).