

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM FOR M97110046

On 27 November 1997, an NSF program officer¹ brought allegations of misconduct in science to our attention. An *ad-hoc* reviewer² (complainant 1) of the subject's³ NSF proposal⁴ alleged that the proposal contained text copied from a published paper (the paper), which had not been cited appropriately.⁵ A second complainant⁶ (complainant 2) alleged that the subject's proposal to do research as a faculty member at his institution contained text copied from the subject's former post-doctoral advisor's⁷ NSF proposal,⁸ submitted at the same time as the subject's proposal. In addition, complainant 2 alleged that the subject's proposal contained several research projects that were essentially the same as those in the advisor's proposal and that neither proposal disclosed that both requested support for the subject. Consequently, it appeared that the subject was seeking duplicate funding for essentially similar research projects.

With respect to the alleged copied text from the advisor's NSF proposal, the subject stated that he was the primary author of the text. He said he prepared much of the information when he was a post-doctoral researcher in his advisor's laboratory. At the subject's request, the advisor wrote to us explaining that the subject had been the primary author of the common text. We determined that there was no substance to the allegation that the subject had copied text from his advisor's proposal.

With respect to the allegedly similar research projects, the subject explained that both proposals addressed similar questions, but that his proposal used an entirely different technique and emphasized different questions than those in his advisor's proposal. The written comments by a panelist⁹ who reviewed both the subject's and the advisor's proposals, described the research proposed in the two proposals as different in the proposed techniques and anticipated results. We determined that there was no substance to the allegation that the subject sought duplicate funding for the same research projects.

With respect to the duplicate requests for support for the subject's post-doctoral position in the two proposals, the subject explained that he had discussed this issue with the program officer, who told him that this was all right to do given the circumstances. The program officer said that he remembered having several conversations with the subject. However, the program officer explained that he did not make diary notes of conversations that did not require any specific action on his part and he characterized such a conversation with the subject about this matter as one that would not have resulted in a diary note. The program officer said that the conversation could have occurred, but he could not recall any details. There is no substance to

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Footnotes Redacted

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the allegation that the subject inappropriately sought duplicate funding for the post-doctoral position if both were funded.

The allegedly copied text from the paper consisted of about two paragraphs and included a mathematical formula, its derivation and its description. In his response, the subject characterized this as paraphrased text and that he had cited the source document twice within the copied text. We confirmed that he had cited the source document, but disagreed with the subject's characterization of this copied text as paraphrased; the subject had transcribed text verbatim from the paper. The subject deviated from accepted practice when he copied, verbatim, about a paragraph of text from the paper in his proposal. However, we determined, in this case, that the deviation was not sufficiently serious to proceed to an investigation.

We were concerned that the subject may not have understood the difference between verbatim plagiarism and paraphrasing of text. We requested that the subject review the difference between paraphrasing and verbatim copying and correct the proposal to accurately identify and attribute text or ideas that were either copied or paraphrased from others' work. The subject sent a corrected copy of the relevant pages of the proposal to the program officer. We verified that the subject had adequately addressed all the issues related to the copied text and that the corrected pages had been placed in the program jacket.

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

cc: Investigative Scientist, Investigations, Attorney, IG