

CLOSEOUT FOR M9802000

On 1 February 1998, an NSF division director¹ brought OIG an allegation of plagiarism concerning a proposal² submitted by the subject³. The division director received the allegation from a proposal reviewer.⁴ The reviewer alleged that some passages in the proposal were copied nearly verbatim from a scientific research plan⁵ posted on the Internet.

We determined that 11 lines near the beginning of the *Introduction* are substantially similar to those in the plan, and 17 lines near the end of the *Introduction* appear nearly identical to text in the *Introduction* section of the plan. The copied material is background material, explaining previous studies in this field. The subject did not enclose the identical text in quotation marks, cite the plan in the proposal, or list it among the proposal references. Aside from these lines, there was no other inadequately attributed copying from the plan.

In responding to our request for information, the subject said that he was solely responsible for assembling and submitting the proposal, and that in the early stages of preparing the proposal he had downloaded the *Introduction* of the plan from the Internet with the intent of using it to formulate questions in the proposal. He stated that he did not ask for permission to use the text, enclose it in quotation marks, or cite it because he never intended to incorporate it into the proposal. He further explained that the inclusion of text from the plan was a "grave error," resulting from the combination of many files and repeated revision of the text. As evidence that he did not intend to incorporate text from the plan, and that he was unaware that he had in fact incorporated it, the subject pointed out that in his cover letter to NSF, his first suggested reviewer was the author of the plan; he also suggested as

¹ [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED], of the [REDACTED]

² [REDACTED] received [REDACTED]

³ [REDACTED]

⁴ [REDACTED]

⁵ [REDACTED] posted

at [REDACTED]

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reviewers two other individuals who had contributed to the development of the plan.

We informed the subject that his actions were careless and did not conform with NSF expectations for "strict adherence to the rules of proper scholarship and attribution."⁶ We discussed with him how he could have complied with those rules in this instance. We noted that NSF has made findings of misconduct in science against scientists who have copied more extensive amounts of verbatim text from the work of others, and we urged him to familiarize himself with the standards of proper scholarly attribution. We suggested that the subject resolve this matter by sending the program officer (with a copy to us) a substitute proposal with the copied portions of the plan enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited.

The subject sent a properly corrected proposal to the program officer and a copy to us. Accordingly, this inquiry is closed and no further action will be taken.

cc: Integrity, IG

⁶ Grant Proposal Guide, NSF 99-2, at 1.