

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM FOR M-98070017

On 7 July 1998, an NSF program director¹ brought an allegation of misconduct in science to our attention. We were informed that an NSF proposal, submitted by subjects 1 and 2 with subjects 3 and 4 as paid "Faculty Associates,"² was essentially the same as another agency³ proposal submitted by subjects 3 and 4 that named subjects 1 and 2 as paid "Faculty Associates."⁴ It was alleged that the subjects sought duplicate funding to do the same research.

Neither of the declined proposals contained any information about the coincident submission of the other proposal: the subjects answered "no" to the question about submission of the same proposal to another agency on the cover pages of both proposals,⁵ and they included no information in the Current and Pending Support sections of the proposals about the other submission.

When we asked the subjects for an explanation, they said that the two proposals represented a collaborative effort. They claimed that the cover pages had been prepared for them by support staff and they had signed them without properly reviewing the information; they asserted that, if either proposal had been funded, they would have notified the other agency.

In the absence of any other evidence that the subjects intended to obtain duplicative funding, we concluded that their explanations established nothing worse than ineptitude in proposal preparation and submission—clearly a deviation from acceptable behavior, but not amounting to a serious deviation from accepted practices. Although this sloppy administrative behavior is not misconduct in science, it does not absolve the subjects of their responsibility to provide federal funding agencies with accurate and complete information. We wrote to the subjects explaining that carelessness in providing administrative detail is unacceptable and admonished them to be more careful in the future to avoid allegations of misconduct in science against them.

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

cc: Integrity, IG

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FOOTNOTES REDACTED