

## Closeout for M98090026

In October 1998, a Program Officer<sup>1</sup> told us a reviewer<sup>2</sup> had made an allegation of plagiarism regarding the subjects' NSF proposal.<sup>3</sup> The reviewer believed subject 1<sup>4</sup>—the PI—and subject 2<sup>5</sup>—the co-author—presented ideas in the proposal as theirs that were developed by a scientist<sup>6</sup> and were not properly attributed to the scientist.

We reviewed the proposal and the scientist's papers the reviewer alleged contained the original development of the ideas and text. Because the allegation of intellectual theft involved the evaluation of technical material, we consulted a Program Director<sup>7</sup> (PD) who had expertise in the field. The PD thought there was a possibility that the subjects had not only used the scientist's ideas, but also proposed research the scientist had already, essentially completed.

The subjects told us they used the scientist's research as the starting point of their methodology, but they believed they had given a sufficient citation to the scientist. They told us they did not have access to one of the papers that the complainant thought they had made use of, and that the proposal was based on research that they had developed from their earlier collaboration.

Because the subjects failed to satisfactorily explain the overlap of material, we deferred further investigation to Subject 1's university (SU1) and asked it to coordinate with Subject 2's university as needed.<sup>8</sup> SU1's policy required it to conduct an inquiry before an investigation would be initiated.

The inquiry committee could not ascertain the subjects' access to the scientist's papers during the preparation of the proposal. It concluded that Subject 1's proposal contained an adequate citation to the scientist's research. However, it also felt that Subject 1's use of the ideas and text should have been more carefully acknowledged and that his failure to do so was inappropriate scholarly conduct, but did not rise to the level of misconduct in science. The inquiry committee concluded that there was insufficient substance to proceed with an investigation. The adjudicator at SU1 concurred.

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<sup>1</sup> (redacted).

<sup>2</sup> (redacted).

<sup>3</sup> (redacted).

<sup>4</sup> (redacted).

<sup>5</sup> (redacted).

<sup>6</sup> (redacted).

<sup>7</sup> (redacted).

<sup>8</sup> Subject 2 had told us Subject 1 had been responsible for the preparation of the proposal and its submission, so we deferred to subject 1's university, and considered Subject 1 to be the main subject.

After reviewing the University's report and supplementary material from Subject 1, we agree there is insufficient substance to proceed with an investigation, and this inquiry is closed. No further action will be taken on this case.

cc: Investigations, IG