

## Closeout for M99030011

On March 24, 1999, the complainant<sup>1</sup> alleged that her signature on the Certification Page of an NSF award was forged.<sup>2</sup> She said she had suggested to the PI, who was a colleague in the same department, that they should prepare a proposal to NSF requesting funding to host a conference. She said the PI wanted to write the proposal himself, and she did not want to submit competing proposals, so she did not prepare one. She said she spoke with their Department Head<sup>3</sup> about her suggestion and the PI's response. She said this was the last time she spoke of the proposal or anyone spoke to her about it. The proposal was awarded and she participated in the conference as she would have had she been co-PI. She was never told the PI had added her as co-PI, and she had not signed the Certification Page.

We spoke with several people at the University, including the Dean<sup>4</sup> who told us he had looked into the problem. We learned the PI and the Head had spoken about including the complainant (and others) as co-PIs. Apparently, there was some confusion between the PI and the Head about notifying the other co-PIs because each thought the other would take care of it, but, ultimately, neither told the complainant she had been added as a co-PI. An additional problem was that the person who signed the proposal (the signer)<sup>5</sup> was unaware of the correct procedure to sign for someone else and had not (a) obtained explicit permission from the complainant before signing her name, (b) told the complainant afterward that her name had been signed, and (c) made any indications, by initial or signature, that someone else had signed for the complainant. The Dean said the signer was uncertain if she had permission, but regardless, the signature without any indication that someone else had made it was a mistake. He said he notified the Department Heads that they were to inform their staffs that they should sign for someone only with explicit authorization to do so and to indicate that the signature was made by someone else. He said that should prevent the problem from happening again.

We sent the relevant parties letters indicating our support for the Dean's instructions to the Department Heads. We believe the Dean's instructions were appropriate and should prevent problems like this from occurring in the future.

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

cc: Integrity, IG

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

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

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

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

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