CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM FOR M 99040020

On 2 April 1999, we received a copy of an e-mail letter from the complainant[1] that contained an allegation of misconduct in science. He alleged that the subject[2] plagiarized (intellectual theft) two of the complainant's ideas, which he used in a paper[3] presented at a conference, and, which he later published without appropriately citing the complainant as the source of these ideas. The complainant said that he had published these ideas in an electronic journal[4] several months prior to the conference. In this same e-mail, the complainant also discussed how his ideas were "essentially identical" to the subject's, but that he "prefer[ed]" his approach to that of the subject's. The subject's work reported at the conference was supported, in part, by NSF.[5]

In our review of the allegation, we observed that the subject, in an earlier co-authored paper,[6] acknowledged the complainant and explained in a short note that their approaches differed. We asked an outside expert to evaluate the allegation.[7] The expert concluded that the ideas in question were the same in the two papers. However, the ideas were not unique to either the complainant or the subject, but were general ideas discussed by many scientists in this field. The expert provided us with a partial list of publications by other scientists concerning these same ideas. He also noted that the complainant acknowledged in his e-mail that there were differences between the complainant's and the subject's approach. We concluded that this allegation had no substance because the ideas were not unique to the complainant and the approaches used by the complainant and the subject were different.

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

cc: Integrity, IG

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[1] [redacted] the complainant, is affiliated with the [redacted]

[2] [redacted] the subject, is a faculty member in [redacted]

[3] The subject's paper, entitled [redacted] was presented at the [redacted] and published [redacted]

[4] The complainant's ideas were published [redacted]

[5] NSF award [redacted] entitled [redacted] was submitted by [redacted] the subject and [redacted]

[6] [redacted] authored by [redacted] and the subject, appeared in [redacted] The acknowledgment to the complainant appeared [redacted]

[7] We asked [redacted] to assist us in our understanding of this allegation.