

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM FOR M99070036

On 6 July 1999, the complainant,¹ a graduate student at institution 1, brought allegations of misconduct to our attention. The complainant alleged that subject 1,² his graduate faculty advisor at institution 1, and institution 1 had dismissed him unfairly. The complainant said that he filed a grievance with institution 1 about the dismissal, but it failed to follow appropriate protocols when it evaluated the grievance. The complainant also alleged that subjects 1 and 2³ were misusing NSF funds they received from subject 2's institution (institution 2)⁴ to work on a project that benefited a small private company.⁵ Institution 2 was the lead for a consortium that was responsible for awarding the NSF funds it received to PIs to do specific research projects.

With respect to the alleged unfair treatment of the complainant, subject 1 provided copies of two letters: the complainant's letter to the Graduate School, which contained his allegations against subject 1 and institution 1, and the Graduate School representative's letter to the complainant in response to the allegations. The representative's response described the various steps that institution 1 took in its review of the complainant's alleged unfair treatment. The steps included multiple individual meetings with the various parties involved and a review of available relevant documentation. The representative concluded that subject 1's "Department's decision not to renew or continue [the complainant's] graduate assistantship was fair and appropriate."

With respect to the alleged misuse of NSF funds, subject 1 told us that he had received funding, a gift from the private company to institution 1, to do a study about which he and his colleagues, including subject 2, were interested. These funds were the source of the complainant's financial support. Subject 1 said that the results of the study might benefit the private company as well as other companies. The Graduate School representative's response included a discussion of the review of subject 1's alleged misuse of government funds, concluding that subject 1 had done nothing inappropriate with government funds. Additional documents provided by subject 1 showed that the gift was received by institution 1, not subject 1, and that the company waived any proprietary rights for results from the study. We could find no evidence that any NSF funds were used to support the complainant or either subject's study.

We concluded that there was no substance to either allegation.

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

cc: Integrity, IG

¹ At the time the allegation was brought to our attention, the complainant, [REDACTED] was a graduate student in [REDACTED] (the institution).

² Subject 1, [REDACTED] is a [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] at the institution.

³ Subject 2, [REDACTED] is a [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]

⁴ The other source is [REDACTED]

⁵ [REDACTED]