

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM FOR M 99120055

An NSF program director¹ brought an allegation of misconduct in science to our attention. The complainant² who received the subject's NSF proposal³ to review, alleged that the subject used some of the complainant's ideas in the proposal without appropriately citing the complainant as the source of the ideas (intellectual theft).

After the subject presented a paper at a workshop,⁴ the complainant said he initiated a discussion with the subject about their mutual research interests. According to the complainant, he shared some of his ideas about how the subject's research could be enhance and changed. He also suggested to the subject that they collaborate in the future and, at the subject's request, the complainant provided the subject with copies of his relevant publications. The subject's proposal, submitted to NSF about 1½ years after their discussion, cited the complainant's publications that, according to the complainant, contained the ideas they had discussed. Furthermore, the complainant said that all the work presented in the proposal was the subject's. The complainant claimed that only the ideas about enhancements and changes were used by the subject without citation or permission.

We confirmed that the subject had cited the complainant's papers⁵ in the proposal five times. Scientists attend meetings and workshops chiefly to share ideas. These discussions are fundamental to how science works. In this case, it would be difficult to establish, exactly which, if any, ideas were shared in a discussion between the subject and the complainant and whether any of these ideas were (1) unique to either individual, and did not appear in the cited publications, or (2) could have been derived from the cited publications. We concluded that there was no substance to the allegation of intellectual theft.

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

cc: Integrity, IG

¹ [REDACTED] is a program director for [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED]
² [REDACTED] is a [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]
³ NSF proposal [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED] was submitted
by the subject [REDACTED] and received by NSF on [REDACTED]
⁴ An NSF workshop in [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]
⁵ [REDACTED] by the
complainant, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
complainant, [REDACTED]