



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-20-0020-O

Page 1 of 1

We were informed of an allegation of fabrication by a staff member at an NSF-funded center managed by the grantee. The center itself solicits proposals from the community, provides them to reviewers, and evaluates the reviews to determine who gets priority use of center facilities. The center has a designated staff member (the Subject) that handles the evaluations, effectively serving as an internal program officer. Instead of evaluating proposals and ranking them by merit, which is what is supposed to happen, the Subject instead made up reviews and rankings. Thus, center resources were not awarded based on merit. When the center discovered the fabricated reviews, it informed both NSF and the grantee. The grantee immediately revoked the Subject's access to the center and placed the Subject on administrative leave.

The grantee conducted an inquiry under its research misconduct policy, which is broader than NSF's. The Subject confessed to fabricating proposal reviews and entering them into the database as if they had been submitted by actual reviewers. The grantee concluded the Subject's actions constituted research misconduct and recommended termination of her position at the grantee. It enacted a corrective plan, which was vetted through the NSF program officer.

While the grantee concluded the Subject's actions were research conduct under its policy, NSF has a narrower definition, under which the Subject's actions would not be considered research misconduct. Since the program is aware of the matter, including the resolution, there is no further action necessary by OIG. Accordingly, this case is closed.