

CLOSEOUT FOR M93090049

This case was brought to OIG on September 29, 1993 [REDACTED], a program director in the [REDACTED] Program in the Division of Molecular and Cellular Biosciences. He had received a [REDACTED] electronic mail message from [REDACTED] of the University [REDACTED] (the complainant) concerning a proposal submitted by [REDACTED] of the University [REDACTED] (the subject). The proposal was [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED]

The complainant alleged that the proposal contained ideas and material from an earlier proposal to another government agency that the subject prepared in collaboration with [REDACTED], a colleague in the complainant's department with whom the complainant had discussed the content of the proposal. The complainant alleged that his colleague was not acknowledged for his contributions to the subject's proposal.

OIG contacted the colleague to get a more specific description of his contribution to his collaboration with the subject. The colleague had not seen the actual NSF proposal, but noted that the alleged overlap between the two proposals appeared to be entirely in areas that fell within the subject's primary area of expertise and outside his own. The colleague explained that his main contributions to the collaboration had been the selection [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] OIG determined that neither of these was included as part of the NSF proposal.

Because the colleague declined to supply us with a copy of the collaborative proposal, OIG wrote to the subject informing her of the allegation and requesting a copy of the proposal. Along with the requested proposal, the subject sent a response to the allegation of misconduct. She explained that the two proposals were substantially different, that none of her collaborator's work appeared in her NSF proposal, and that insofar as the two proposals overlapped, this was because both drew on her continuing program of research that predated her collaboration with the colleague. The subject also sent a copy of her NSF proposal to the colleague, who sent OIG a note stating that, having now read the proposal, he did not believe that the subject had misappropriated his ideas.

OIG examined the subject's proposal and determined that the subject was essentially accurate in her characterization of the relationship between the two proposals. OIG also concluded that the subject had not seriously deviated from accepted practice in the way she referenced the colleague's contributions.

OIG informed the complainant that we were closing the case without a finding of misconduct. We discussed with him the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of proposals sent to

him for peer review and explained that suspicions of misconduct should be reported directly to NSF, rather than informally explored in conversations that violated the reviewer's responsibility to keep the contents of proposals confidential.

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

*Robert Bell 1/31/94*

Robert Bell  
Staff Scientist, Oversight

Concurrence:

*Peggy L. Fischer 1/31/94*

Peggy L. Fischer  
Acting Deputy Assistant Inspector General,  
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*Donald E. Buzzelli 2/10/94*

*Dep. Asst. IG - C*

*noted*

*James J. Zwolenik 2/9/94*

James J. Zwolenik  
Assistant Inspector General for Oversight

*LNB for LNB*

L. Nancy Birnbaum  
Assistant Counsel to the Inspector General

cc: Signatories  
Inspector General