CLOSEOUT FOR M-94040012

On April 6, 1994, an allegation of misconduct in science was brought to OIG's attention by [redacted]. The complainant, [redacted] was a faculty member [redacted]. In his role as an ad hoc reviewer of NSF proposal [redacted] submitted by the subject, [redacted] the complainant alleged that the subject plagiarized his idea [redacted] by failing to cite a paper by the complainant in his NSF proposal.

OIG reviewed the subject's proposal, the complainant's paper, the complainant's remarks, and other relevant scientific papers. OIG contacted the complainant for additional information.

Specifically, the complainant alleged that the subject committed intellectual theft when he used one word from the complainant's original test title in his proposal without proper citation. OIG determined that the single word used by the subject in his proposal was employed as a general descriptive term and did not refer to the complainant's water test. OIG also determined that within the field of study represented by the subject's proposal there were a limited number of terms that could be used to describe the motion of the water. OIG concluded that the use of this particular word did not constitute theft of an idea.

OIG compared the complainant's published description of his water test with the subject's suggested approach in his proposal. We determined that, although the two ideas were in one respect similar, they were significantly different in overall design and purpose. The complainant's test was to measure a specific parameter; the subject's proposed approach was to mathematically derive similar parameters that would match observed results. Information provided by the complainant confirmed that the subject's mathematical model presented in the proposal was different from the complainant's published test.

OIG concluded that there was no substance to the allegation that the subject had plagiarized the complainant's idea in his proposal. This inquiry was closed and no further action will be taken on this case.

cc: Staff Scientist, Deputy AIG-Oversight, AIG-Oversight, IG