

## CLOSEOUT of CASE M 97070021

We discovered that an NSF funded PI<sup>1</sup> (the "subject") submitted duplicate publications to two major journals<sup>2</sup> and subsequently published apologies in both journals. During our inquiry, we determined that he published at least five sets of essentially duplicative research papers in different journals.

After identifying the instances of duplicate publications, we deferred the investigation to the university. In its investigation, the university's committee categorized the subject's questioned publications into two groups: (1) republishing in a conference proceedings, material that had previously been published in a refereed, archival journal; and (2) publishing the same material in two separate, first-tier, archival, peer-reviewed journals. The committee determined that the first activity is fairly common and falls within "the fringe area of acceptable practice." They found that the second activity "goes beyond the acceptable standards of scientific practice within [the subject's] field." Despite this determination, the committee did not find that the actions rose the level of misconduct in science. They interpreted the word "serious," in the phrase "other serious deviations from acceptable practices" of NSF's definition, to mean "having significant negative consequences" rather than "extreme." They reasoned that the effects of duplicate publication are not "on a par with" fabrication, falsification or plagiarism.

We asked the committee to clarify its interpretation of NSF's definition of misconduct in science, in particular, its incorporation of an element of harm. The committee reasoned that, even without considering an element of harm, the subject's actions did not rise to the level of misconduct in science. They viewed his actions regarding the second group of publications as "an isolated lapse in judgement versus a persistent or premeditated attempt to enhance one's apparent scientific achievements." They also found that the inclusion of these two duplicate publications would "have no impact on the perception of [the subject's] productivity."

Although we are concerned about the cumulative effect of duplicate publications on the scientific record and proper reporting of credentials, we conclude that the committee provided a thoughtful assessment of the allegation that reflects the views of the subject's scientific community. From our review of the literature conducted during the inquiry, we note that certain scientific fields, such as biomedicine, have taken a more active role in implementing policies against this practice.

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<sup>1</sup> [redacted material] is a faculty member at in the Department of [redacted material] at [redacted material].

<sup>2</sup> [redacted material].

## **CLOSEOUT of CASE M 97070021**

This investigation is closed, and no further action will be taken.

CC: IG, Integrity