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Ohio State University Pays Over \$875,000 to Resolve Allegations that It Failed to Disclose Professor's Foreign Government Support

The Ohio State University (OSU), a public university in Columbus, Ohio, has paid \$875,689 to resolve civil allegations that it failed to disclose an OSU professor's affiliations with and support from a foreign government in connection with federal research funding.

This settlement relates to Army, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and National Science Foundation (NSF) grants and research support agreements that provided funding to OSU from November 2012 to August 2020. In the funding application process, the Army, NASA the NSF require disclosures of, among other things, foreign government support received by any principal investigator (PI) or co-PI on the grant or agreement. The settlement resolves allegations that an OSU professor failed to disclose funding that he was receiving from a foreign government in connection with: (1) employment at a foreign public university; (2) participation in a foreign talent plan, a program established by the foreign government to recruit individuals with knowledge or access to foreign technology intellectual property; and (3) a grant from the foreign government's natural science foundation. As part of its settlement, OSU has agreed to cooperate with the United States government's investigation of others involved in the alleged violations of law.

"Universities, institutions and researchers are required to make certain disclosures when applying for federal grants so that the government can assess whether to fund their research and development," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Brian M. Boynton, head of the Justice Department's Civil Division. "The department will hold accountable applicants who undermine the integrity of the grant process by knowingly failing to submit complete and truthful applications."

"Failing to comply with federal disclosure obligations is not tolerable. Period," said U.S. Attorney Kenneth L. Parker for the Southern District of Ohio. "Institutions, agencies, and researchers who do so will be held accountable."

"The Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division uses all available resources to see that those who attempt to bypass full disclosure rules when working with foreign governments are held accountable," said Special Agent in Charge Scott Moreland of the Major Procurement Fraud Field Office.

"This settlement demonstrates NASA Office of Inspector General (OIG)'s commitment to identifying and holding accountable those who conceal affiliations with foreign entities to obtain research funding," said Assistant Inspector General Robert Steinau of Investigations for NASA-OIG. "I am proud of the exceptional teamwork of our law enforcement partners, the Civil Division's Commercial Litigation Branch, Fraud Section, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio, that resulted in securing this settlement and ensuring aggressive oversight of taxpayer funds awarded for academic research."

The settlement was the result of a coordinated effort between the Civil Division's Commercial Litigation Branch, Fraud Section and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio, with assistance from the FBI, Army, NASA-OIG and NSF.

This matter was handled by Senior Trial Counsel Christopher Terranova of the Civil Division's Commercial Litigation Branch (Fraud Section) and Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael J.T. Downey for the Southern District of Ohio.

The claims resolved by the settlement are allegations only, and there has been no determination of liability.

Topic(s):
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
Civil Division

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