



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A14090043

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A University informed us it had conducted an inquiry into an allegation of data manipulation and concluded an investigation was warranted. The Subject, a former graduate student at the University, provided questionable experimental data, which appeared in two papers and his dissertation, all of which cited NSF support. After his colleagues were unable to duplicate his results or find evidence that his physical samples were as he had described them, the University conducted an inquiry and two investigations into two allegations of data falsification. One allegation was that the Subject falsified data presented in figures, and the other was that the Subject misrepresented the physical properties, *e.g.*, density, of his sample and the methodology of how he measured those properties.

The investigation committee (IC) concluded both allegations were substantiated with regard to the data in the two papers and recommended the Subject's dissertation committee (DC) conduct an investigation to determine if the Subject's dissertation contained falsified data and, if so, if his Ph.D. degree should be revoked. The DC confirmed the falsified data the IC found, along with additional falsified data. Both committees observed various anomalies existing in the Subject's data, which include, for allegation 1, the overlap of curves of different materials, including overlap of fluctuations; and, for allegation 2, a sample of questionable legitimacy and reported density values that are contrary to the published descriptions of how they were measured. Both committees concluded the Subject intentionally falsified data and thus committed research misconduct. Additionally, the DC recommended the Subject's dissertation be revoked with no possibility of submitting a revised dissertation, and his Ph.D. degree be rescinded.

The University accepted the committees' findings, notified the papers' co-authors of its finding, and requested the journal retract both papers; it directed the Subject's advisor and the PI of the NSF grant to immediately change several laboratory practices, including ensuring original data are retained; and rescinded the Subject's Ph.D. degree.

We concurred with the University and concluded the Subject committed research misconduct. We recommended NSF make a finding of research misconduct, send the Subject a letter of reprimand informing him of NSF's finding, require the Subject to take an interactive responsible conduct of research course within 1 year, debar the Subject for 1 year, and, for 2 years after the debarment, require the Subject a) to provide a certification to NSF that any document submitted to NSF does not contain plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication; b) to provide assurances from a responsible official of his employer to NSF that any document submitted to NSF does not contain plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication; and c) be prohibited from serving as a reviewer, advisor, or consultant.

NSF agreed with our recommendations and took the described actions. This case is closed with no further action taken.