



Annual USDA Scientific Integrity Allegations Summary Report May 2016 – April 2017

Pursuant to USDA DR 1074-001, a summary of the scientific integrity cases from May 1, 2016, through April 30, 2017, involving formal allegations referred for an inquiry or investigation that were closed follows:

- An allegation of plagiarism involving USDA extramural research reported in a manuscript submitted for publication in a journal, and potentially in a second draft manuscript. A USDA panel reviewed the university's policies and procedures (P&Ps), and determined that the P&Ps were consistent with the Federal Policy on Research Misconduct and that the university should be able to review and resolve the allegation. The university conducted an inquiry and determined that an investigation was warranted. The university's investigation resulted in a determination that research misconduct (plagiarism) occurred. The USDA Agency Research Integrity Officer (ARIO) accepted the university's findings and corrective actions and closed out the case.
- One (1) allegation of plagiarism involving an extramural research grant proposal. The allegation pertained to the inclusion of allegedly plagiarized content into an extramural research grant proposal. The university considered the case closed after an initial inquiry and no investigation was deemed necessary. The university found an honest error in not citing content in the proposal.
- One (1) allegation of plagiarism involving an extramural research grant proposal. The allegation pertained to the inclusion of allegedly plagiarized content into an extramural research grant proposal. The USDA ARIO accepted the Investigative University's Committee's Report and the identified findings.
- Alleged research misconduct/violation of the USDA Scientific Integrity Policy with regard to certification/reporting of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval of research in scientific publications. The USDA OIG audit division referred a complaint asserting that in light of identified inadequacies in the operations of a USDA agency's IACUC, the certification/reporting of said IACUC's approval in past scientific publications may have violated USDA scientific integrity and research misconduct policies. The USDA ARIO conducted an inquiry into the complaint and determined that there was not sufficient evidence of research misconduct or a violation of the USDA Scientific Integrity Policy to warrant further action and the matter was closed.
- One (1) allegation that a USDA agency employee committed plagiarism by including verbatim text, which had been previously published by another (non-USDA affiliated) individual, in a research book chapter without any acknowledgement of/credit to the original source. An agency Committee on Ethics in Science (CEIS) Panel convened and returned a finding that ethics misconduct was confirmed. Disciplinary actions were taken and paragraphs in question in the chapter were re-written.

- One (1) allegation of falsification of research in a scientific report published by an advisory committee appointed by USDA and another Federal agency, which served as the lead agency for the advisory committee's activities. The lead Department reviewed the allegation and made a determination that the allegation pertained to a scientific difference of opinion, and that no additional action was warranted. The USDA Agency Scientific Integrity Officer (ASIO) and ARIO also conducted an initial assessment of the allegation and made a determination that the allegation, on its face, pertained to a difference of opinion, which is specifically excluded as constituting research misconduct under the Federal Policy on Research Misconduct and USDA's policies on research misconduct. The USDA ASIO and ARIO also determined that no further action was warranted with regard to the allegation.
- An allegation that USDA scientists were being restrained from being able to communicate/report their scientific findings. The allegation was submitted based on media reports of an email issued by a USDA agency indicating that the agency would not be releasing any "public-facing documents." The USDA agency subsequently issued a statement clarifying that the internal email was inconsistent with Departmental guidance, and that the agency would provide updated direction to its staff. It was further ascertained that the Departmental guidance did not, and was never intended to, cover scientific publications released through peer-reviewed professional journals. Based on the clarification issued by the agency and confirmation received from the Department (with regard to the intent of the Departmental guidance), an initial assessment of the allegation determined that referral of the allegation for an inquiry was not warranted.
- One (1) allegation of plagiarism by a USDA agency-funded intern that incorporated information into outreach/programmatic material without attribution or permission. An inquiry determined that the allegation pertained to the alleged plagiarism of material that: (1) constituted a synthesis of general scientific information, not original research ideas, data, or unpublished findings, and therefore was not covered by the USDA Code of Scientific Ethics; and (2) was prepared by a non-USDA Federal entity for public outreach purposes. It was determined that the presentation of another entity's outreach material without appropriate attribution would be considered inappropriate; correspondingly, the matter was referred to employee relations. A decision was made by not to pursue the matter any further as the respondent had separated from the agency-funded internship and was no longer being funded by the agency. The appropriated material was not used by USDA in its outreach efforts.