



Tuesday Tips is a new outreach effort by OGCA. The idea behind *Tuesday Tips* is to convey tips, tricks and other helpful information around the area of research administration. Our goal is to post on (almost every) Tuesdays. If there is something you would like to see covered on *Tuesday Tips*, email: UAF-GCReATE@alaska.edu. For more Tips visit [OGCA website](#).

Case Study in Review Integrity: Embellished Credentials in a Grant Application

A series to raise awareness, encourage dialog and inspire creative problem solving of the challenges in maintaining integrity in peer review

Have you ever been tempted to embellish your credentials in a grant application? What about fabricating credentials? Would this be a case of research misconduct or a violation of review integrity?

These can be costly errors, as shown by the case described below (inspired by a true story; we've changed details and fictionalized names).

An NIH program official received a formal letter from the Chancellor of a prestigious health sciences center. Specifically, the letter stated that the university found that Dr. Edison, a Department Chair, had made the following false claims in his Curriculum Vitae for his job application and his biosketch in NIH grant applications:

- authorship of numerous publications,
- membership in a prestigious scientific professional society, and

- having earned the Ph.D. degree from a prestigious foreign institution.

The NIH program official notified an NIH Research Integrity Officer, who in turn contacted the DHHS Office of Research Integrity (ORI). ORI also knew about the allegations but was unable to pursue them because falsified credentials are not defined as research misconduct. As per 42 C.F.R. Part 93.103, research misconduct means fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. However, ORI found evidence of ~ 30 fake publications - publications that did not exist - in Dr. Edison's resume.

But the story doesn't end here. News media reported that Dr. Edison had resigned his position at the university for a position at another. And shortly thereafter, Dr. Edison left the second university after news reporters alerted that university to his background.

[Recent studies suggest](#) that “embellishing” credentials in job applications is widespread, and we have [reason to believe](#) this extends to biosketches in NIH grant applications as well. Although ORI may not pursue allegations of falsified credentials as possible research misconduct, the NIH may pursue such allegations in NIH grant applications as possible, deliberate attempts to [violate peer review integrity](#).

If the NIH determines that credentials in an NIH grant application are false, the NIH may take any number of actions, including removing the scientist from NIH peer review service, contacting the scientist's institution, withdrawing the scientist's NIH grant applications or discontinuing his/her funding, and/or referring the matter to the NIH Office of Management Assessment for possible referral to the Office of the Inspector General for consideration for suspension and debarment.

In the end, Dr. Edison's grants were discontinued, totaling over \$400,000 a year, and his applications were withdrawn. Dr. Edison's current whereabouts are unknown.

Want to read other peer review case studies in the series? Check [all of them out here](#).

Open Mike <https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2020/05/21/case-study-in-review-integrity-embellished-credentials-in-a-grant-application/>

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OGCA Website: <https://www.uaf.edu/ogca/index.php>