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By Theresa Defino

◆ NIH should “update its guidance on vetting peer reviewer nominees to identify potential foreign threats to research integrity” and “develop a risk-based approach for identifying those peer reviewer nominees who warrant additional vetting,” the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) said in the report, the third in a recent series. NIH’s Center for Scientific Review (CSR) manages more than 27,000 peer reviewers who are often familiar, having been awardees. “CSR verifies nominees’ scientific expertise using multiple sources such as their publication and grant histories...assesses nominees’ communication skills and their ability to leverage those skills in a peer review setting,” and verifies they have not committed research misconduct, OIG said. (10/17/19)

◆ Drexel University has agreed to pay the federal government nearly \$190,000 to settle allegations that, for 10 years, one of its researchers spent U.S. awards on “gentlemen’s clubs and sports bars in the Philadelphia area,” according to an Oct. 7 announcement by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, part of the Department of Justice.^[1] Chikaodinaka Nwankpa, who formerly headed Drexel’s Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, is accused of submitting “improper charges against the federal grants for items such as personal iTunes purchases and for ‘goods and services’ provided by Cheerleaders, Club Risque, and Tacony Club” from 2010 to 2017. (10/10/19)

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