

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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May 9, 2007

Dr. Martin C. Jischke  
President, Purdue University  
Hovde Hall, Room 200  
610 Purdue Mall  
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907-2040

Dear Dr. Jischke:

Thank you for your cooperation with the Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight's request for information concerning allegations of research misconduct surrounding publication of research claiming independent confirmation of sonofusion, also known as "bubble fusion," by Dr. Rusi Taleyarkhan, a professor at Purdue University.

I am enclosing a copy of a memorandum by the subcommittee staff reviewing the information that you provided. I agree with the criticism in the memorandum of Purdue's conduct in this matter.

Dr. Taleyarkhan's claim to have achieved fusion on a tabletop in a laboratory, if true, would hold the prospect of limitless, cheap energy without environmental consequence. This would not simply be a significant scientific achievement, but a transformational event in human history. Dr. Taleyarkhan and Purdue University should expect unrelenting, intense scrutiny of such a claim. But the claim has not survived the scrutiny it has received.

Every university that receives federal research funding is required to have procedures to address evidence of research misconduct. Purdue University's Policy on Integrity in Research provides for a two-step process: an Inquiry Committee gathers information to determine whether allegations of misconduct warrant convening an Investigative Committee that would take testimony, allow cross-examination, and receive records, exhibits and written statements into evidence. Purdue convened an inquiry committee to consider the allegations of misconduct by Dr. Taleyarkhan. Under Purdue's policy, research misconduct includes "practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific and academic community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research."

The inquiry was not directed at the validity of Dr. Taleyarkhan's research, but to the publication of two papers by authors working under Dr. Taleyarkhan's direction that claimed "independent" confirmation of Dr. Taleyarkhan's research. One of the authors said he had

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nothing to do with the research and that he was credited as an author of the publication without his permission, and the other refused to say who had written the report. The Purdue Inquiry Committee concluded that Dr. Taleyarkhan had participated significantly in the writing of the publications, had placed the name of a student who had not participated in doing the research or preparing the papers as an author, had "abused his privilege as a senior scientist" with respect to those working in his laboratory and put junior scientists in "precarious positions," and that his claim of independent confirmation of his research from the two publications was "highly doubtful", "representative of poor judgment" and would not be accepted within the scientific community.

These findings under Purdue's own policy would seem to require a fuller investigation, but instead the Inquiry Committee concluded that Purdue should not convene an Investigative Committee, and stated publicly that there was no "likelihood" of misconduct requiring further action.

I now understand that there is a second inquiry underway concerning the underlying research. A credible inquiry will require participation by persons independent of the previous inquiry, examination and fact-finding committees. I was disappointed to learn that the three members selected for the new committee were all involved with previous committees. I was encouraged by our conversation recently in which you assured me that you would add one or two members to the committee who would be unaffiliated with the previous efforts. I sincerely hope that this will give the committee the independence it needs to go forward.

Purdue is a premier research and educational institution. One of its goals is to teach the importance of scientific integrity to its students and future scientists. I sincerely hope that the next inquiry will be conducted in a manner worthy of your great institution.

Please provide a copy of the report resulting from the work of the newly formed inquiry committee to our subcommittee staff. I understand that it will be completed in approximately three months. At that time, please contact Edith Holleman, Subcommittee staff counsel, at (202) 225-8459 to arrange for delivery.

Sincerely,



BRAD MILLER

Chairman

Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight

cc: F. James Sensenbrenner Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Investigations  
and Oversight