

## Report on Research Compliance Volume 20, Number 3. February 23, 2023

### Hunter Settlement Joins Other FCA Cases

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The recent settlement between Hunter College, one of its former professors and the Department of Justice (DOJ) for False Claims Act (FCA) violations related to research funds is among the latest but least pricey of such agreements. Hunter College and former professor Jeffrey T. Parsons-Hietikko agreed to pay the government \$200,000 and \$375,000, respectively, after admitting to unallowable retention bonuses and misuse of grant funds for Parsons-Hietikko's personal expenses, including travel.<sup>[1]</sup>

In a related development, Hunter and City University of New York instituted a new policy for reporting issues to the state's inspector general that is overseen by its vice chancellor for risk, audit and compliance, a newly created position.<sup>[2]</sup>

The settlement fits another pattern, and one that also should concern universities and other recipients of U.S. research funds—it was triggered by a whistleblower who worked under Parsons-Hietikko.

According to data DOJ released Feb. 7 for fiscal year 2022—which ended Sept. 30—FCA settlements and judgments exceeded \$2.2 billion.<sup>[3]</sup> The federal government and whistleblowers “were party to 351 settlements and judgments, the second-highest number of settlements and judgments in a single year,” DOJ said.

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