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Hunter College, Former Psychology Professor Pay \$575,000 After Admitting FCA Violations

Hunter College and former professor Jeffrey T. Parsons-Hietikko agreed to pay the government \$200,000 and \$375,000, respectively, after both admitted to violating the False Claims Act (FCA), the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced Jan. 30. Parsons-Hietikko was a psychology professor and director of Hunter's Center for HIV Educational Studies (CHEST). From Jan. 1, 2010, through May 17, 2018, Parsons-Hietikko spent NIH award funds for "expenses related to scuba diving trips, international flights for his family, a tropical birthday celebration, and travel for his work as a private consultant," according to Damian Williams, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. NIH funds were also used to pay for "alcohol at CHEST-related events."

Hunter College admitted it used NIH funds to pay Parsons-Hietikko \$90,000 "in retention bonuses without disclosing these payments to NIH as required" and "submitted false timekeeping records that misrepresented the time that CHEST staff spent working on NIH grant-related projects, resulting in the use of NIH grant funds to compensate CHEST staff for work performed for private clients," Williams' office said. The settlement is the result of a whistleblower suit filed by a former coworker of Parsons-Hietikko's. *The Washington Post* reported that Parsons-Hietikko resigned in 2019 after an investigation found he violated Hunter's sexual misconduct and drug-and-alcohol policy. Parsons-Hietikko's attorney told *the Post*, "there was never any intent [by him] to defraud the federal government—which is why he was never charged with a crime. He's settled this civil matter now and put it behind him."

[Link to DOJ announcement](#)

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