

Report on Research Compliance Volume 21, Number 6. May 23, 2024 Fake Invoices, Real Award Accounts, Cashed Checks: August Trial of 10 Promises Answers

By Theresa Defino

Neither federal nor Tuskegee University officials are saying much about the upcoming trial of 10 Alabama residents—four of them accused of crimes committed while working in financial positions at Tuskegee—beyond what’s included in the indictment issued by the Middle District of Alabama.

But the Department of Justice (DOJ) has apparently collected *alot* of evidence.

A May 15 filing by Ashley Smith Nye, the attorney for the second youngest of the defendants, who range in age from 23 to 61, revealed that the government has “produced over 400,000 documents in discovery.” Smith Nye is seeking more time to review the documents, as is an attorney for the 23-year-old defendant.

A pretrial hearing in the case was scheduled for May 22. Trials for all 10 have been set for Aug. 12, although it is not clear if these are separate proceedings or whether they will be tried together. However, they are represented by different attorneys.

The indictment describes four Tuskegee employees conspiring to create false invoices for payment that were assigned real federal award numbers to generate checks. The other six individuals were issued, and cashed, the checks at local banks. The theft was of “federal program funds,” according to the DOJ announcement.^[1]

According to the indictment, the scheme itself was fairly simple and seemed to begin and end with Cassandra Parker, who at the time was the purchasing manager in Tuskegee’s Purchasing Department. Parker, DOJ said, “created purchase orders indicating money was owed” to the six non-university individuals.

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