

## Report on Research Compliance Volume 18, Number 1. January 02, 2021 RRC E-Alerts: December 10, 2020

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By Theresa Defino

### **ORI Finds U. of Miami Dean Fabricated Data in NIH Applications**

Charles A. Downs, who joined the University of Miami (UM) in August 2018 as an associate dean for research in the School of Nursing and Health Studies, submitted to NIH a half-dozen grant applications that contained 12 fabricated “figures and related text,” according to the HHS Office of Research Integrity (ORI). Downs’ misconduct consisted of “intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly falsifying and/or fabricating data” by “reusing and relabeling previously published figures to represent results from different experiments” when he submitted five applications to the National Institute of Nursing Research and one to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, ORI said. ORI gave no details about when the applications were submitted or whether they were funded, but said the misconduct occurred when Downs was an adjunct assistant professor at Arizona Health Sciences Center and was supported by an award from the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences. NIH’s database of awards lists one three-year award totaling approximately \$111,000 in 2008 and a two-year award of \$928,023 given in 2018, with half assigned to the University of Miami in 2019.

In its Dec. 8 announcement, the agency noted that Downs did not admit or deny ORI’s findings, and that both parties had accepted the settlement terms out of a “desire to close this matter without further expense of time and other resources.” Downs agreed to a four-year supervisory plan should he apply for Public Health Service (PHS) funds. Under the agreement, Downs would be supervised by a committee with expertise in his field that would also submit periodic reports to ORI. He also agreed to not advise PHS during the four-year period, which began Nov. 9. RRC’s request for comment to Downs was forwarded to UM. In a statement to RRC, UM officials said Downs had resigned the administrative position effective Dec. 4 and remains an associate professor in the School of Nursing and Health Studies. No “evidence of misconduct was found” following UM’s “comprehensive evaluation” of Downs’ time at UM, the statement said.

[Link to ORI announcement](#)

[Link to NIH awards database](#)

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