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Georgia Tech professor sentenced for defrauding the National Science Foundation

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ATLANTA - Maysam Ghovanloo has been sentenced for violating the federal wire fraud statute in furtherance of a scheme to defraud the National Science Foundation. Ghovanloo was a tenured full professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

“Grant funding is limited, and the competition for those dollars is keen,” said U.S. Attorney Byung J. “BJay” Pak. “People awarded grants to do research and development vow that they will adhere to the rules governing it. Ghovanloo decided to sacrifice his reputation by dodging those rules and lying.”

“The National Science Foundation's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program provides small businesses with funding to conduct research and development work that will lead to the commercialization of innovative new products and services. This sentence serves as a reminder that fraud in the SBIR Program will not be tolerated. The NSF Office of Inspector General remains committed to ensuring the integrity of the SBIR program and will actively pursue oversight of these taxpayer funds. I commend the U.S. Attorney's Office and our investigative partners for their support in this effort.”

According to U.S. Attorney Pak, the charges and other information presented in court: Maysam Ghovanloo owned and operated a Georgia corporation called Bionic Sciences, Inc. (BSI). Ghovanloo and BSI received federal grants through Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programs sponsored by NSF. To be eligible for SBIR grant funds, Ghovanloo and BSI were required to meet program-eligibility requirements, adhere to award terms and conditions, and provide only truthful information in all documents submitted to NSF. However, Ghovanloo submitted certifications that contained materially false and fraudulent statements and omissions, followed by electronic payment requests to NSF.

Maysam Ghovanloo, 46, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced to eight months' home confinement, and ordered to pay \$40,000 in restitution. As part of his guilty plea and plea agreement, he resigned from his position at Georgia Tech, effective June 21, 2019. He was also barred from doing business with the federal government for a period of three years. Ghovanloo was convicted on these charges on August 21, 2019, after he pleaded guilty.

The National Science Foundation Office of Inspector General and the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General investigated this case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell Phillips prosecuted the case.

For further information, please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6016.

The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.