

Auditors: National Science Foundation suspends UConn grants

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The National Science Foundation has frozen more than \$2 million in grants to the University of Connecticut after a foundation investigation found two professors used grant money to buy products from their own company, Connecticut state auditors disclosed Friday.

Auditors John Geragosian and Robert Ward also said UConn officials failed to inform auditors about the suspended grants and the professors' actions as required by law—claims disputed by UConn officials. The auditors notified Gov. Dannel P. Malloy about the frozen grants in a letter Friday.

Geragosian and Ward said two professors, whose names weren't released, initiated \$253,500 in purchases in 2013 using foundation grant money to buy 15 acoustic modems from their company, Aquatic Sensor Network Technology.

The professors signed purchase orders that included statements certifying they had no financial or other beneficial interest in Aquatic Sensor Network Technology, the auditors said. The professors later said they didn't read the portions of the orders that included those statements and submitted amended forms disclosing their conflicts of interest, the auditors said.

The National Science Foundation notified UConn in December that it was suspending seven grants to the school pending its investigation. The grants originally totaled about \$4.6 million, and about \$2.3 million that

remains unspent was frozen.

UConn released a statement saying school officials would have blocked the purchases if the professors had disclosed their conflicts of interest as principals of Aquatic Sensor Network Technology, which is near the UConn campus in Storrs.

The school said it launched its own investigation, and three professors are under review. UConn also said it has implemented a series of strict control measures on faculty members' research expenses and activities.

Officials at Aquatic Sensor Network Technology did not return a message seeking comment Friday.

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