

### **Student Advisor Case Summaries: 2004-2008**

*To:*

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*CC:*

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### **Introduction**

The Student Advisors have been writing annual term reports and fall/winter/summer term reports since the program started documentation in 2004. We have made many recommendations to the School of Graduate Studies over the course of the program after dealing with student problems “on the ground”. Many of these recommendations have equity components to them especially since many of the cases seen by the Advisors involve international students, students of color, and female students. Some of the problems and recommendations are discussed in this report. The areas in which Advisors have dealt with equity issues are:

- Lack of academic support for international students
- Lack of funding for international students including access to funding beyond eligibility years
- Lack of TA/TF/RA protection
- Lack of strict guidelines around intellectual property
- Little or no access to child care support

### **Problems**

#### **I. Lack of academic support for international students**

International students coming to the Student Advisors have brought up issues such as:

The student is provided with no time to work on her own thesis/research because her supervisor requires that she constantly be working on his projects/papers.

The student researches and writes papers in their entirety (with minimal or no input from the supervisor), and then is either denied or given only limited authorship credit.

The student is generally ignored by the supervisor, who refuses to provide the level of guidance requested by the student and avoids the student's requests for contact. The student observes that other (often non-international) students under the same supervisor are provided with more attention and support.

The supervisor regularly speaks to the student in an abusive or threatening manner (either privately or publicly). This may or may not involve obviously discriminatory remarks, such as: “We don't know how things were done in

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around authorship that recognizes that students may not be able to discuss authorship with their supervisor on an equal level.

**V. Little or no access to child care support**

The SGPS Exec and SGPS International Students Coordinator have both noted the lack of support from SGS for families of graduate students. This is problematic as Jennifer Massey indicated that a survey of graduate students in 2008 showed that 17% of PhD students have families/children. This is quite a large percentage of the graduate student body.

There are three distinct concerns for graduate students: spousal support, child support, and financial support for maternity leave families as both partners are graduate students at Queen's or employed at Queen's.

student families, the partner at home may not have a chance to connect with community or build social networks as there are little to no resources for them. They may also require support in learning English or in learning to live in Canada but, again, there is a lack of resources for them on campus. While some community organizations do exist such as Immigration Services Kingston, their services are catered more towards permanent immigrants to Canada as opposed to temporary students.

abhorrent lack of daycare in Kingston leaving many full-time graduate students to juggle their lives between work, child care, and other aspects of home/work life. This not only affects the work ethic of graduate students but also potential graduate students at Queen's.

While Queen's does provide leaves of absence to graduate students for maternity purposes, financial support during leave is suspended. This obviously affects the ability of both parents (or the single parent) to take off from their studies. There are no maternity bursaries offered to parents leaving school temporarily for maternity purposes.

## **Recommendations**

### **I. Publicize the experiences of international students**

Given the level of fear in the international student community with respect to raising concerns or seeking assistance, we think it is reasonable to suspect that the inappropriate treatment experienced by these students in our university is more extensive than even we realize. The question of how to effectively address and remedy this systemic problem is ultimately one for the graduate school and the university administration. Given the university's recent decision to increase the number of both graduate and international students, if these systemic abuses are not properly addressed and eliminated, we will be headed for a crisis. While any public acknowledgment of existing systemic abuses may be temporarily embarrassing for the university, the failure to acknowledge and denounce such practices enables them to continue and will ultimately lead to greater embarrassment when others drag them into the light. It is also important to consider the extent to which the international reputation that Queen's would seek to further develop, is impacted by the actual experiences and stories of international students. We recommend the university make public the negative (and positive) experiences of international students at Queen's University.

### **II. Provide rights knowledge to international students**

It would really help to educate new students on their rights at Queen's University, especially international students. It's not uncommon to have international students fall

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issues, it is our belief that the SGS develop, endorse and enforce policies and procedures that will protect the interests of both student and supervisor. A two-pronged approach of a) requiring faculty training for supervision and b) maintaining departmental records about supervision that would promote an expectation of accountability for supervisors is recommended. Policies regarding this training should be developed in close consultation with both faculty and graduate student members who are familiar with the common conflicts and potential pitfalls of graduate supervision.