

January 2016 Letter to Graduate Students

January 21, 2016

Dear CU-Boulder Graduate Students:

A little over a year ago we conducted the first ever graduate student-specific campus climate survey at CU-Boulder. More than 1,600 graduate students responded, a 38% response rate, which gives us solid data as our baseline in moving ahead on climate improvement for graduate students.

The survey was a joint effort by the Office of Planning, Budget and Analysis, the Graduate School, and the United Government of Graduate Students (UGGS). In analyzing the results and determining next steps, we created a broadly representative Graduate Student Climate Task Force last year, made up of graduate students (from UGGS and from across campus), faculty, and representatives from the Ombuds office, Housing and Dining Services, the Office of Planning, Budget, and Analysis, and the Graduate School. The task force has been meeting regularly and has been engaged in focused discussions in response to the results of the survey.

Among the most important of the data revealed in the survey are that 10 percent of respondents reported experiencing some form of **harassment** based upon a nine-point definition of harassment that included such behaviors as verbal hostility (shouting, profanity, excessive criticism), hostile electronic communication, unwanted or threatened physical contact, and unwanted romantic/sexual comments.

Approximately 8% of survey respondents experienced some form of harassment that was perpetrated by either a non-advisor faculty (4.6%) or a fellow graduate student (4.0%). Between 1-2% of the survey respondents indicated that harassment was perpetrated by their advisor.

Additionally, a key concern identified in the survey was the lack of clarity of graduate student admission/offer letters.

Our ultimate goal is to reduce and eliminate any harassment of graduate students, regardless of the source, and to make our graduate student experience as positive as possible. To do so, some of the actions we are taking include:

- adoption of a more uniform and transparent offer letter format so that incoming students receive the most accurate and clear information regarding their program acceptance, as well as their levels of support.
- the Graduate School and UGGS will work with every graduate program to create faculty liaisons for graduate students:
- beginning in the summer of 2016, the Graduate School will, in collaboration with the Office of Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Teaching Excellence Program, offer workshops focusing on mentorship and department climate best practices;
- the Office of Faculty Affairs has agreed to include a department climate survey as part of the self-study that every department must prepare as part of periodic program review;
- this semester, faculty in each department will meet to discuss the survey results and identify ways to more consistently follow the processes outlined in both the [Professional Rights & Duties of Faculty Members](#) and the [Graduate Student Bill of Rights](#).

In closing, we look forward to working with all of you to promote a more welcoming and productive environment in which you can conduct your graduate work. We encourage you to maintain the strong commitment you have shown to reporting harassment of any kind. The resources available to you include:

- Contact John Stevenson, Dean of the Graduate School with ideas, suggestions, or complaints: John.Stevenson@colorado.edu (303-492-2890)
- To file a grievance, contact your department Chair's office for the grievance process.
- And here are some resources for you if you are personally dealing with any form of harassment and want some support beyond what we can give you:
 - [Report it website](#) – Includes confidential resources
 - [Compliance website](#) – Anonymous reporting

Thank you for your patience, commitment and dedication as CU-Boulder graduate students. Working together, we can improve the climate for your important scholarship and teaching, improve graduate student success, and continue to build an environment of excellence and achievement.

Sincerely,
John A. Stevenson, Dean
Russell L. Moore, Provost