



Go Ask Rog—Sexual Harassment Advice for Graduate Students

(The following situation is fictitious and utilized solely for educational purposes. Any similarity to actual persons or circumstances is coincidental and unintentional.)

Dear Rog:

I am not getting along with the other grad students in my lab. They think that I am not pulling my weight because they do not often see me there. The reason we don't work the same hours is because I have a child who I pick up from daycare at 4:00 pm. I am in the lab doing research early in the morning, long before they have had their coffee. Honestly, I don't need to spend as many hours there because I am efficient and don't waste time socializing like they do. Their judgmental comments are starting to feel like harassment. What should I do?

Dear Grad:

You raise an important issue about work life balance. Many graduate students face this issue, though it is especially challenging for those who must juggle parenting or other family commitments on top of their graduate studies. People who do not have similar family commitments may not understand your position. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers for graduate student parents.

A recent UC Berkeley study found some disheartening facts about parenthood and the academy. Women with children younger than age six were the least likely to secure a ladder-rank faculty position; married men with children younger than age six were the most likely to secure a ladder-rank faculty position; and single women without children younger than six were slightly more likely than single men without children younger than six to enter the ladder ranks. The study also found that women reported more tension, stress and difficulty balancing professional and parenting demands than men. "Marriage and Baby Blues: Redefining Gender Equity in the Academy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 596, No. 1, 86-103 (Nov. 2004).

Though the research indicates it might be tougher for parents, it is not impossible. Look for a mentor who might have juggled similar demands. Your

P.I. could be an ally in resolving this situation; therefore, communication is key. Find out how important “face time” in the lab is to him/her. Some faculty do not care about seeing their researchers so long as the work gets done. Keep your P.I. regularly updated on your progress and contributions to the research project.

If your P.I. expects everyone to spend long evening hours in the lab, you will have to be strategic in your interactions. Perhaps you can negotiate working extra hours during a peak period in exchange for a more standard work schedule the rest of the quarter.

Seek support from other graduate students who are grappling with the same issue. Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), Women in Computing (WIC) and the UCSD Women’s Center have discussion groups that address career and family issues. When the stress of competing commitments feels overwhelming, you may want to talk with Psychological and Counseling Services.

Sexist remarks, judgmental comments and other behaviors that are gender biased or based on sexual stereotypes might be sexual harassment if they are unwelcome, pervasive, offensive to a reasonable person and unreasonably interfere with your education. Contact OSHPP at 534-8298 or email oshpp@ucsd.edu for advice.

Grad, balancing the equally demanding roles of student and parent is one of life’s biggest challenges and it can be done with assistance. Everyone needs help from time to time. Take advantage of the UCSD resources available to you.