

International graduate students struggle amid COVID-19

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At a media briefing on 11 March, the director general of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. While governments rushed to draft contingency plans to contain the virus, universities in Europe and the US worked to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the higher education system. However, on 24 September, the Department of Homeland Security proposed limiting the duration of initial admissions for F and J visa holders and nonimmigrants to four years, which would have a huge negative impact on international students, especially international graduate students.

The more complex circumstances of graduate education and research have

left graduate students surrounded by uncertainty with little to no instruction for how to cope during the crisis. With professional reputations, future job prospects, and even next semester's funding on the line, should they continue to conduct research as usual? Or should they socially distance themselves, halting hands-on experiments while focusing more on simulations and writing papers?

The confusion and angst in the broader graduate student community has only been exacerbated for international students. Some of them are trapped in their home countries because of the necessary international travel restrictions, which has prevented many of them from sat-

isfying the enrollment criteria needed to maintain valid immigration status. Those away from home do not have family to care for them should they fall ill. What is clear is that their research is being affected in this global crisis, and the subtle dynamics between them and their advisers put them in a more vulnerable situation. They continue to struggle while their advisers expect progress.

With immigration policies that continue to aggravate the situation, the COVID-19 pandemic imposes unprecedented challenges for international graduate students. We hope academic authorities make extra efforts to create a more supportive environment so that international graduate students, especially during the pandemic, can manage with greater security and relief.

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On the stature of Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin

Having recently published a book¹ with a chapter on Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin, I read with interest David Weintraub's review of *What Stars Are Made Of: The Life of Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin*, Donovan Moore's new book on the prominent astrophysicist (PHYSICS TODAY, April 2020, page 46). Although I have not yet read Moore's book, aspects of Weintraub's review took me aback.

I concur with Weintraub's claim that Payne-Gaposchkin "should have been Harvard University's first female recipient of a PhD in astronomy." But that understates her importance: It was due to