



**Reimagining Doctoral Education (RiDE) Fellowship  
Nicholas School of the Environment  
Summary Report  
Summer 2020**

*Submitted by*  
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Summary Report, Summer 2020**

During the summer of 2020, I have had the honor of serving Duke as one of two Reimagining Doctoral Education (RiDE) Fellows through the Nicholas School of the Environment. Specifically, under the mentorship of Dr. Joel Meyer and assisted by the Summer 2020 RiDE Implementation team, my work began to investigate the mechanisms by which the Nicholas School and Duke protect and empower PhD students during their doctoral degree completion with respect toward harassment, bullying, discrimination, and mentor/mentee relationships.

As a fellow, I was tasked with:

- (I) defining the current standard for student, faculty, staff, and postdoctoral trainings;
- (II) clarifying and outlining mechanisms for reporting concerns and complaints to workplace liaisons;
- (III) providing guidance for closing gaps in policy implementation, including examples of training and workshops, and outlining necessary resources to make those actionable;
- (IV) making recommendations for student training around advising and mentoring that can be formalized through a recurring RCR event;
- (V) developing a formal statement about student advising and mentoring expectations;
- (VI) developing a cloud-based list of current and past students that prospective students may approach for questions regarding mentoring styles.

As of the first week of August 2020, Tasks I-IV have been completed or have substantially progressed. Task V remains in progress, and Task VI was determined to be beyond the scope of this summer fellowship (for reasons detailed in this report).

This report contains summaries of the findings and suggestions for each of the six tasks, as well as a seventh addressing the process and framing of implementation of these suggestions, that we decided was important during the summer. These recommendations have all been created in accordance with the [Six Principles of the Nicholas School 2017-2022 Strategic Plan](#). All recommendations are offered in the spirit of actively striving to dismantle negative power dynamics and to build inclusive, equity-driven, antiracist infrastructure for our learning and working environment. While I do not claim to be an expert in these matters, I am humbled to submit these recommendations based both on extensive research and on fruitful conversations with members of the Duke community. I thank the students, student groups, staff, faculty, and Duke officials who provided their time, their emotional labor, and their insight and on whose experiences these recommendations are based.

While we envision that implementations of these recommendations will be overseen by the Nicholas School administration, we also envision that a strategy can be crafted in which the Nicholas School Actionators and the Nicholas PhD Advocacy Council help to facilitate and carry out trainings and materials distributions. We hope that these recommendations serve as a guide for making our community stronger together. My heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to serve the Nicholas School and Duke this summer through this fellowship.

Respectfully submitted,

Kirsten E. Overdahl  
2020 RiDE Fellow  
14 August 2020

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Major Needs and Concerns

1. There are currently no required harassment and discrimination trainings for doctoral students, nor are there adequate available trainings that address doctoral student-specific scenarios.
2. There is currently inadequate (noncomprehensive and nonengaging) harassment and discrimination training for faculty, staff, and postdoctoral scholars.
3. Where workplace protections and reporting protections are concerned, there is little clarity on how doctoral students are protected from workplace harassment and, thus, how doctoral students can report these incidences. There is also a lack of clarity on how doctoral students are legally protected against race-based harassment.
4. Certain reporting mechanisms remain unclear, particularly in light of new Title IX requirements. There is still a lack of clarity on to what extent a record can be kept of toxic workplace behavior incidences that are not legally prohibited.
5. Doctoral students do not receive adequate training on how to maximize the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentors do not receive mentor training.

### Major Recommendations

1. Doctoral students should receive annual required harassment and discrimination, antiracism, and power dynamics training. All trainings should be tailored to the graduate student experience.
2. Faculty, staff, and postdoctoral scholars should receive required harassment and discrimination, antiracism, and power dynamics training. It is critical to encourage these trainings as a positive, forward-thinking system that benefits everyone involved.
3. The flowchart for reporting concerns and complaints should be disseminated to all students, faculty, staff, and post-docs. The DGS-to-Chair pipeline (internal Nic School conflict resolution) should be further elucidated. Workplace harassment protections for PhD students must be clarified.
4. Mentors should be encouraged to form mentor agreements to enhance a safe, healthy, and productive work environment for all. Mentees should be trained in how to maximize mentor-mentee relationships.
5. A cloud-based list of current and past students that prospective students may approach for questions regarding mentoring styles should be curated and made available, but only after current doctoral students better understand how they are protected and may retain anonymity.

### Timeline for Implementing Recommendations

*\*Color-coded in accordance with Major Recommendations above*

Semester	Trainings for PhD Students	Trainings for Faculty/Staff/Post-Docs	Reporting Mechanisms
Immediately	Communicate report results and next steps to all members of Nicholas School community		
Fall 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Task Force for Developing Training</li> <li>• Outline harassment, antiracism, and power dynamics trainings as suggested in this document</li> <li>• Outline mentor training for PhD students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beta-test EVERFI course as suggested in this document</li> <li>• Adopt or amend EVERFI training in conjunction w/ OIE and OSC</li> <li>• Adopt or amend "Vision 2023" model as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute reporting mechanisms flowchart</li> <li>• Elucidate workplace harassment protections for PhD students</li> </ul>
Spring 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot newly-created trainings according to suggested materials in this document</li> <li>• Create structured schedule for annual trainings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline possible models for amended faculty retreat to incorporate trainings</li> <li>• Plan and host mentor statement/agreement writing workshop, either in conjunction w/ retreat or separately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update reporting mechanisms flowchart to reflect new information and consolidated OIE procedures</li> <li>• Move flowchart to web-based format</li> <li>• Curate draft of cloud-based current/past student list</li> </ul>