

Cindy Bower, Ph.D.
USDA Agricultural Research Service

Discrimination in Allocation of Technical Resources

Co-worker (Peter Bechtel) retained both of his trained, Ph.D.-level laboratory personnel, whereas all of my trained technical assistance was withdrawn on June 4th 2010. Dr. Bechtel was allowed to "bend the rules" and extend his post-doc (Ted Wu) for six months beyond the maximum 4-year appointment to continue writing research results and to assist with equipment set-up in Kodiak. Dr. Bechtel's other Ph.D. employee was hired as a post-doc in Kodiak, to ensure research continuity in his laboratory's new location. However, despite my numerous requests to Dr. Pantoja, (asking if my technician would be allowed to continue working for my program in Fairbanks through August 2010), my trained technical assistance was reassigned to Dr. Pantoja's program in June. His suggestion was that I hire temporary (untrained) technical help when I arrived in Kodiak.

Career Impacted – Due to this discrimination, I lost four months of research, which is sufficient to damage my ARS career irreparably. Meanwhile, Dr. Bechtel's laboratory has been set up, his research papers are being written by his Fairbanks post-doc, and new data is being produced by his Kodiak post-doc. My new technician will not be hired until the next fiscal year, and then that technician will need to be trained. I CANNOT RECOVER FROM THIS ASSAULT ON MY CAREER.

Stress Incurred – The ARS has irreparably damaged my career in science and now I face the future possibility of poverty in my retirement

Retaliation by Withholding Important Program Information

Dr. Pantoja organized a technology transfer meeting (April 27-28, 2010 in Juneau, Alaska) for the ARS Aquaculture Program without informing me. Three ARS men were invited from Albany, California. I was not informed of the meeting, nor invited to it by Dr. Pantoja, nor did he share any information after he had met the aquaculture stakeholders on my behalf.

Career Impacted – This form of (ongoing) retaliation damages my career. A supervisor should not hide relevant opportunities from scientists. I CANNOT RECOVER FROM THIS TYPE OF ASSAULT ON MY CAREER.

Stress Incurred – When my supervisor excludes me from project meetings and treats me as an inferior in the presence of stakeholders and ARS co-workers, my reputation and status are damaged. I did not deserve to be mistreated by ARS personnel.

Harassment and Retaliation through Denial of Technician Co-Authorship

On November 12th 2009, I sent an email to Dr. Pantoja requesting pre-approval of co-authorship for Katie Hietala on two research projects. I provided appropriate justification for my request as required by P&P 152.2-ARS Section 5 (Summary of Responsibilities). However, in December, three meeting abstracts containing Ms. Hietala as co-author were rejected by Dr. Pantoja, despite proper justifications provided and ARS policy requirements fulfilled. Consequently, I was denied access to three important scientific meetings and risked failing my 2010 Performance Plan (through failure to present my research at conferences).

Career Impacted – (Due to this form of retaliation, I missed several important scientific meetings, thereby losing the opportunity to network with colleagues, meet with current collaborators, and set up future collaborations)

Time Lost - (while I carefully read ARS requirements, provided proper justifications, and responded to questions concerning technician co-authorship)

Stress Incurred – (the situation was harassing [i.e. Death of 1,000 cuts], since I had already met all of ARS's policies on technician co-authorship)

Harassment through Denial of Legitimate Administrative Leave

On May 18th, my request for Administrative Leave was approved by Dr. Pantoja, so that I could supervise the packing and shipping of my household goods (June 2nd) for my Kodiak relocation. On June 7th 2010, I was challenged by Juli Philibert (Dr. Pantoja's secretary) to explain my use of "Administrative Leave" on June 2nd. I complied, but the debate continued, including a June 18th email from Janis Contento forwarded the phrase (highlighted in yellow): "Packing and unpacking is not covered". At that time I was informed by Ms. Contento that I should update my T&A as appropriate. In response, I noted that ARS information about packing and unpacking household goods had been taken out of context from P&P 402.4 (Administrative Leave and Excused Absence). On June 21st, I was allowed to correct my timesheet back to admin leave.

Time Lost - (while I performed their jobs by researching the question of administrative time and providing them with the correct information)

Stress Incurred – (the situation felt like harassment, since the answer was obvious, but they were unwilling to look into the topic or even admit they were wrong after I sent them the applicable regulations)

Harassment through Delay of IDP-Approved Training Request (so that important Leadership classes would fill up and become unavailable to me)

Harassment through Edited KSAs for Kodiak Technician (so that half the island would qualify)

Harassment when editing my RPES (promotion) packet, (a situation that became so untenable that I was reassigned to work with someone from the PWA, instead of working with Dr. Pantoja)

Harassment through the continual conflict that results when EEO Respondents are allowed to retain supervisory power over Complainants (e.g. every annual appraisal, every mid-year review, every performance plan, etc...)

Retaliation and Harassment by denying me an independent laboratory, such as I had in Fairbanks, and instead assigning me to share space with my GS 15 co-worker (i.e. my final allocation of lab space is not adequate to successfully continue my research.

SUMMARY

THE RESOURCES THAT I NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL AS AN ARS SCIENTIST HAVE BEEN DECREASED, DELAYED, OR DENIED BY ARS SUPERVISORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL. ADDITIONALLY, I HAVE BEEN DEVALUED AND MY CAREER STATUS HAS BEEN DAMAGED.