

# The “Dispossessed”? Foreign Students in American Graduate Schools

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# Our Main Claim:

Individuals affiliated with many universities are not informed enough about the situation of foreign students. Ignorance hurts both the foreign students AND the schools.

# Aim of This Study:

To raise awareness of the situation of foreign graduate students.

To challenge some of the basic assumptions individuals affiliated with universities make about foreign students, for example:

- Foreign students do not pay taxes
- Foreign students have the same financial opportunities as other students or at least the same academic opportunities!

# General Restrictions:

1. Financial
2. Academic
3. Visa/Documentation related
4. Psychological

## Note:

We will focus mostly on the situation of students with F1 student visa (Non-Resident Alien Student Visa).

### J1 Visa:

- Require return to home country after completion of studies.
- For every year spent in the US the J1 visa student has to work 2 in the home country.
- Visa includes home-country sponsorship/stipend while in the US.

# Financial Restrictions

## Foreign students:

- Do not ever become residents.
- Forced to pay taxes at the highest tax level (4)
- Cannot take student loans (at all) or any kind of major loans without an American citizen co-signing.
- Do not qualify for work-study. As a result, stipend for one foreign student = stipend for three American students.

# Financial Restrictions (cont.)

- Cannot work outside the university (with the exception of extraordinary circumstances for which very few foreigners ever qualify).
- Cannot work more than part-time even if offered to do research or teach an extra class in the same university, same department.
- Are usually not funded over the summer.

# Academic Limitations

- Beyond the part-time Teaching Assistantship, foreign students do not qualify for fellowships or any other kind of academic assistance sponsored by the American government (and many private American funding sources).
- Do not qualify for most Fulbright fellowships, especially if already in the US (b/c they are not US citizens AND, most of the time, they do not reside in their home countries).
- Do not qualify for many fellowships sponsored by own government, especially if already in the US.
- Getting a dissertation fellowship is almost an impossibility.

# On the Job Market

- Visa rules make it imperative to go on the job market while ABD!
- Inability to apply for fellowships etc. makes for a thinner CV.
- Departments have to sponsor the work visa! Many are unable/unwilling to add the extra hassle and costs.
- Departments have to prove that no other, American candidate was willing and qualified to take the job.

# Bad for Students, Bad for Schools

- Schools pay a lot more for a non-resident graduate student. They pay non-resident tuition for 5-6 years instead of 1.
- The hiring process is much more frustrating for both parties.
- Bad investment? Foreign students get higher education degrees in the US, but are effectively encouraged to return to their home country after.

# What Is the General Problem?

- Foreign students, in reality, are NOT the equals of their American counterparts.
- Individuals in the university administration, advisers, and faculty generally have good intentions, but lack the necessary information to make informed decisions that impact foreign students.
- Chairs ask for department funding, professors are on committees that award assistantships and summer funding, and secretaries are involved in the execution of all these matters. They all operate under the assumption that all students are the same, and they deem a decision just and fair based on this criterion.

# Based on This Assumption...

Departments spend their money on attracting new foreign students, but hardly anything on supporting them while they're in the country!

Little effort is put into improving the condition of foreign students (it has not essentially changed in the past few decades).

# Implication

The situation of foreign students would be improved if professors and administrative staff would make informed decisions!

## How can that be achieved?

Mandatory workshop for faculty members and administrative staff.

Graduate student organizations should be encouraged to take on foreign student issues and lobby for them.

The Foreign Student and Scholar services at any university should not be just a bureaucratic fixture but a also a lobby for the rights of foreign students.