

Case Study #1

Professor X has been a member of your department for 15 years. She is an accomplished researcher, and has a reputation as an effective, if demanding, teacher and supervisor. She oversees a lab of about 15 students, fellows and other trainees.

One of Professor X's graduate students approaches you for a meeting, during which he tells you that, over the last 8 months or so, Professor X has begun requiring members of her lab to be "on call" during evenings and weekends. She also frequently demands that they be present in the lab at such times. The student further reports that Professor X has taken to swearing in the lab and berated two lab members publicly (a technician and research associate), referring to them in a recent meeting as "idiotic" and "completely stupid." At the same time, the student advises you that Professor X's physical presence in her lab has become rare, but she is an "omnipresent" communicator, sending up to a dozen emails or text messages daily to her team.

You are surprised by what the student recounts, since it seems out of character for Prof. X. You suspect that the report is inaccurate or something is troubling Professor X. You decide to speak with Professor X and write and call her several times, but receive no reply. You drop by her lab several times, but Prof. X is not present. However, these visits give you the chance to speak with her lab members casually, and a few disclose information that confirms the graduate student's report. Yesterday, on your way out of the office, you again stop by Professor X's lab on the off chance that she is there. You find Professor X in her office (within the lab) and begin to address your concerns with her. Professor X becomes irate and begins shouting at you. She is erratic but you can discern the following statements: "this is another McGill conspiracy," "you'll hear from my lawyer," and finally "I can't continue this way."

What do you do?

Case Study #2

Professor A, who is on tenure track at McGill, has the following record of service at McGill to-date:

2012-2013: Full year of service
2013-2014: 4 months of service, 8 months maternity and parental leave
2014-2015: 8 months of service, 4 months maternity and parental leave
2015-2016: Full year of service
2016-2017: Current year – slated for a full year of service

Professor A sees you to explain that one of her parents, who lives abroad, has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Professor A wants to be able to travel to be with her parent. She carries a full academic load and wants help identifying her options, since caring for her parent will require time away from Montreal and McGill, and it will not always be easy to predict when, or for how long, she'll need to travel. Professor A tells you that she wants to craft a solution that will not adversely impact: (a) her graduate students; (b) her financial situation; or (c) her path to tenure consideration. She says she trusts you to devise a proposal that meets these goals, noting your sensitivity to equity issues and the way that care responsibilities often fall on women, slowing their progress through academic ranks.

What do you do?