

IRINA ARTEMIEVA

with the similar dismissal of another geologist three years ago from the same faculty, which geoscientists also protested about — threatens the reputation of the University of Copenhagen and the Danish university system, they say in a July letter sent to the university after it had told Artemieva that it was considering her dismissal.

In 2016, the faculty's management sacked Hans Thybo, a prominent geologist who was, at the time, president of the European Geosciences Union, over his use of a private e-mail account for work purposes. A group of geoscientists similarly criticized that sacking, and urged the university to reconsider its decision. Thybo, now a researcher at the University of Oslo, appealed against the sacking, and received a settlement of six months' salary after arbitration discussions between the university and a trade union representing academic employees — but he was not reinstated to his post.

PERSONAL DISAGREEMENTS

"Throughout most of the developed world, a tenured professor can only be dismissed for gross misconduct or criminal activity," the group of geoscientists wrote. "Professor Artemieva's dismissal appears to be based on personal disagreements between her and



Irina Artemieva is a specialist in lithospheric geophysics.

the management of the department," the scientists wrote. "At least on these occasions, the University of Copenhagen is not adhering to the international standards of academic freedom and the rights of its employees."

"This new dismissal will damage the reputation of the university system and the country's scientific community even more than the earlier case," they wrote.

"Irina is an outstanding researcher, adviser and geoscience community member," says Seth Stein, an Earth scientist at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, who organized the protest letter to the university. "Losing her would be a great loss to the geophysics programme at the University of Copenhagen."

The University of Copenhagen declined *Nature's* request for comment on the dismissal, saying that it does not discuss matters concerning individual employees. The Danish ministry for science and education also declined to comment on the case, or on the suggestion that the dismissal would harm Danish universities' reputations.

Artemieva says that her treatment has amounted to discrimination — complaints that the university says, in its letters to her, are unsubstantiated. The researcher, who is originally from Russia and was the only female professor in her department, says that she

was consistently made to feel unwelcome after gaining her tenured position through an open call for applications. "No matter what I would do, I was facing professional enmity here from the very start," she says.

In Artemieva's dismissal letter, the department's dean, John Renner Hansen, says that the faculty of science "does not recognize the picture of [Artemieva] having been exposed to 'harassment', 'bullying' and 'discrimination' since you were appointed professor". It adds: "Your actions have been confrontational and conflict-escalating... Rather than responding to the critique raised, you continue to make accusations against different management members." ■

FUNDING

Brazil budget cuts threaten 80,000 science scholarships

The country's main research-funding agency could stop payments as soon as September.

BY RODRIGO DE OLIVEIRA ANDRADE

Brazil's main science-funding agency will have to suspend more than 80,000 scholarships to postdoctoral researchers and graduate and undergraduate students starting in September unless it receives additional cash from the government.

The National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) announced the impending cancellations on 15 August. The CNPq also won't be offering new scholarships, according to the statement. Brazil's government hasn't released the 330 million reais (US\$89 million) that it froze in the CNPq's budget as part of broader spending cuts in March. If President Jair Bolsonaro's administration doesn't release some of the

money soon, the CNPq's scholarship fund will run out of cash by next month.

"Government is jeopardizing the future of a whole generation of Brazilian scientists," says Paulo Artaxo, a physicist at the University of São Paulo. Cancelling the scholarships will have a devastating impact on Brazilian science, which depends on these young researchers, he says.

Not supporting students in research programmes "is like shooting oneself in the foot", says Alexander Turra, an oceanographer at the Oceanographic Institute of the University of São Paulo.

A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

Biologist Nicole Malinconico is one of many graduate students who might have to leave

research if the CNPq scholarships fall through. She moved to São Paulo in January and has applied to the doctorate programme at the Oceanographic Institute.

"Now, even if I enter the doctorate [programme], without the scholarship I won't be able to keep myself in São Paulo," says Malinconico. She plans to apply for a scholarship offered by the São Paulo Research Foundation, a local science-funding agency. But the competition for alternative sources of money has grown stiff, she says. Malinconico fears that she will have to give up her research career to look for a job outside academia, as many of her friends are doing.

"For many students, a scholarship is much more than research support, it is a salary that they use to live, to eat and to pay their bills," ►



Students in Brazil's capital protested against cuts to education and science funding earlier this year.

► says Daniel Martins-de-Souza, a biochemist at the University of Campinas in Brazil. Without that support, lots of researchers will be out of work, which could shift Brazil's overall unemployment figures, he says.

The Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science, based in São Paulo, along with 97 other research and academic institutions in the country, launched an online petition on 13 August demanding that the

government help the CNPq meet its funding commitments. As of 27 August, it has more than 900,000 signatures.

GOING BACKWARDS

Researchers in Brazil have been working under a cloud of uncertainty since March, when Bolsonaro's administration announced that it would freeze 42% of the budget of the science and communications ministry

(MCTIC). This included the freeze in the budget of the CNPq, which is an agency within the MCTIC. Around that time, the government also announced that it would cut 30% of the funds that it gives to federal universities.

Many researchers left Brazil for better situations abroad, and those who stayed have struggled to keep their laboratories functioning.

"Science is walking backwards in Brazil," says Marcos Buckeridge, the director of the National Institute of Bioethanol Science and Technology.

The institute includes 31 laboratories in 5 Brazilian states that develop technology to produce biofuels using materials such as plants or animal waste. Buckeridge fears that if the CNPq stops funding student and post-doctoral scholarships, in the next few months the institute won't have enough researchers to run experiments.

The CNPq and the MCTIC are in negotiations with the Ministry of Economy for more money by the end of the year so that the agency can support scholarships, says CNPq spokesperson Mariana Galiza de Oliveira. But it's unclear whether the agency will receive the money in time to avoid an interruption to payments for current scholarship holders, she says. ■

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