

**ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OMBUDS OFFICE  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JULY 1, 2003 TO JUNE 30, 2004**

**Presented at the  
637<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate  
February 10, 2005**

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December 1, 2004**

## **OVERVIEW**

The Ombuds Office was established by the Board of Trustees (Trustee Document T70-025, Fall, 1969) as a neutral, confidential agency available to assist any member of the larger University community with a University-related problem--generally problems that had not been resolved through normal channels, or for which there are no well-defined normal channels. It can provide information and advice at any stage of a problem. When someone does not know how to handle a situation, he/she can survey the resources that are available in the University, and explore possible options for action under existing policies and procedures. The cases the office deals with run the gamut from academic problems to personnel issues to administrative problems to complaint of harassment and discrimination. Initial discussions in the Ombuds Office are treated as confidential to the extent that the law allows and decisions about what to do are made by the person (or persons) who contacted the office, in consultation with office staff. In addition to offering advice, the Ombuds Office can investigate a situation, make recommendations, and negotiate resolutions, mediate conflicts and issue reports, depending on what seems appropriate in a given situation. Often clients who approach the office decide that they do not want any active involvement by the Ombuds Office, but simply want advice and help in exploring strategies for handling their problems by themselves. At times, such exploration results in a decision to drop issues after discussion has clarified the situation and their options. The Ombuds Office provides staff for any department or work group of the University that wishes to undertake a group discussion of issues that are dealt with by the Ombuds Office.

With respect to the issue of sexual harassment, confidential discussion is available in the Ombuds Office as to the nature of sexual harassment and the University policy that addresses it. After an informal discussion, an individual who concludes that he/she has been subjected to sexual harassment would be referred to an appropriate University reporting point to place the University on notice.

The Faculty Senate and the Trustees are to be commended for the extraordinary job they have done in preserving the structural integrity and autonomy of the office. The Ombuds Office could not function without the assurance from the upper administration that such autonomy would be the policy. Ombuds staff, as well as clients, respect the hands-off policy as it leads to a dimension of trust that could not otherwise be developed.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

The Ombuds Office is open from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. In addition, the staff is very willing to attend meetings with faculty, staff, and students in dorms, classrooms, or other locations convenient to our clients. When possible, walk-ins are seen but most clients call ahead for an appointment. Communication with some clients may take place entirely through e-mail or telephone discussions. Although a personal meeting is the preferred method, some clients are unable to come to the campus for such a meeting and are accommodated accordingly.

## **STAFFING**

The permanent staff of the Ombuds Office consists of the University Ombudsperson, Assistant Ombudsperson, a full-time secretary, one graduate intern, and one part-time student receptionist. Catharine Porter currently serves as Ombudsperson and Mary Wardwell is the Assistant Ombudsperson. Kay Politella is the secretary.

Both the Ombudsperson and Assistant Ombudsperson serve on various standing committees as well as temporary committees, depending upon the needs of the campus. Catharine Porter serves on SAJIC (Student Affairs Judicial Issues Committee) as well as the Affirmative Action Advisory Board and the

Students First Committee in Student Affairs. Mary Wardwell serves on the Affirmative action Advisory Board, Workplace Violence Management Team, Undergraduate Dean's Advisory Group, Psychological/Medical Disabilities Advisory Board, and the Chancellor's Area CDSJ Team.

The Ombuds Office continues to promote its services to the campus community and raise the awareness of students, staff, and faculty that there is a place for them to come for advice and counsel. Additionally, student viewers of the closed circuit cable channel will see an advertisement for the Ombuds Office, giving information about the location of the office and examples of the types of student-oriented issues that the staff handles. Staff are always on hand at various information fairs for students and employees, providing information about the services available and will continue to work on outreach to the campus.

## SUMMARY OF CASES

Since September 1994 when a new database was instituted to record cases handled by the Ombuds Office, 4185 cases have been recorded as of June 30, 2004. This year, the staff handled 400 cases as compared to 396 for the previous year. As routine business, the staff handled several hundred calls and e-mails requesting general information and advice. Those contacts were not included in the client base.

### Clients Served (339)

<u>Employees</u>		<u>Students</u>	
Classified	25	<u>Graduate Students</u>	
O3 Employee	2	Masters	23
Faculty Member	30	Doctoral	14
Professional	13	Other	2
Undergrad employee	<u>1</u>	Unknown	1
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>71</b>	Non-Degree	<u>1</u>
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>(Clients Continued)</b>			
<u>Others</u>		<u>Undergraduate Students</u>	
Alumnus/a	7	Freshman	21
Off-campus	6	Sophomore	14
Parent	19	Junior	50
Unknown	<u>32</u>	Senior	<u>70</u>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>155</b>
		<u>Other Students</u>	
		Special	2
		Inactive	5
		C.Ed.	<u>1</u>
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>8</b>

*Types of Grievance (400)*

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**Academic**

Admission to Program	2	Exam Policy	11
Admission to Course	5	Academic Discipline	2
Course Requirements	16	Late Drop/Retro "W"	9
Degree Requirements	13	Student/Professor	17
Program Requirements	8	Learning Disability	2
Grade Disputes	51	Continuation in Program	7
Grading Policy	13	Miscellaneous	<u>30</u>
Dishonesty	49	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>235</b>

**Diversity**

Discrimination	4
Racial Harassment	1
Sexual Harassment	4
General Harassment	8
Interpersonal Conflict	8
ADA Non Compliance	2
Conflict of Interest	1
Miscellaneous Civility	<u>5</u>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>33</b>

**Administration**

Health Fee Coverage	5
Financial Aid	9
Housing Assignment	10
Admin. Discipline	2
Parking	7
Bursar	13
Meal Plan	1
Delay in Service	2
Housing Removal	2
Miscellaneous	<u>19</u>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>70</b>

**Personnel**

Termination	3
Layoff	3
Appointment/Reapp.	1
Misuse of Authority	3
Student Employment	1
Payroll	3
Working Conditions	8
Supervisor/Employee	16
Assessment/Evaluation	1
Employee/Employee	5
Promotion/Demotion	3
Salary	2
Miscellaneous	<u>11</u>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>60</b>

**General Miscellaneous**

**Sub-Total 2**

***Actions Taken (365)***

***Case Resolution (349)***

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Advice Only	89	Resolved	201
Information/Re ferral	44	Unresolved	37
Investigation/Information	91	Formal Hearing	11
Expedited	83	Withdrawn	2
Informal Mediation	46	Unknown	16
Negotiated Settlement	5	In Process	26
Other	<u>7</u>	No Client Follow-Up	53
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>365</b>	Other	<u>3</u>
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>349</b>

\*Some cases fall into more than one category

**COMMENTS**

The Ombuds staff wishes to extend its appreciation and thanks to every individual on this campus who has participated in a resolution to a problem that has come to our attention. It is only with the patience and understanding of those participants that we can assist our clients.