

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
UNIVERSITY OMBUDS OFFICE
FOR THE PERIOD
JULY 1, 2000 TO JUNE 30, 2001

Presented at the
602nd Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
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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 and Kim Leighton is the graduate intern.

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. Mary Wardwell serves on the Affirmative action Advisory Board, Workplace Violence Management Team, Undergraduate Dean's Advisory Group, Advisory Board for the Program for students with 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.

Faculty should have received a guide to the Policy and Procedures Concerning Academic Honesty prepared by Kim Leighton, the current intern. Since the honesty policy was revised, effective September 1, 2000, it became clear that faculty were unsure about how to handle a case of academic honesty. To address and clarify some of the misconceptions about the current policy a guide has been developed to lead faculty through the process. We believe that there has been a heightened awareness of the policy since the introduction of the guide and will continue to work with faculty around the issues related to academic dishonesty.

SUMMARY OF CASES

Since September 1994 when a new database was instituted to record cases handled by the Ombuds Office, 3081 cases have been recorded. This year the staff handled 281 cases as compared to 250 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 (281)

Employees

Classified Employee	25
Faculty Member	28
Professional	<u>12</u>
Sub-Total	65

Students

<u>Graduate Students</u>	
Masters	17
Doctoral	13
Grad Other	<u>4</u>
Sub-Total	34

Others

Alumnus/a	6
Off-campus	3
Parent	5
Unknown	<u>22</u>
Sub-Total	36

Undergraduate Students

Freshman	16
Sophomore	33
Junior	39
Senior	<u>53</u>
Sub-Total	141

Other Students

C. Ed.	2
Inactive	<u>3</u>
Sub-Total	5

Types of Grievance

Academic

Admission to Program	5	Exam Policy	4
Admission to Course	12	Academic Discipline	4
Course Requirements	2	Late Drop/Retro "W"	7
Degree Requirements	7	Student/Professor	6
Program Requirements	5	Learning Disability	3
Grade Disputes	50	Continuation in Program	5
Grading Policy	10	Miscellaneous	<u>23</u>
Dishonesty Hearings	21	Sub-Total	164

Types of Grievance (cont.)

Diversity

Discrimination	3
Racial Harassment	1
Sexual Harassment	5
Interpersonal Conflict	8
ADA Non Compliance	1
Miscellaneous Civility	<u>3</u>
Sub-Total	21

Personnel

Termination	6
Appointment	3
Misuse of Authority	5
Student Employment	8
Payroll	3
Working Conditions	5
Supervisor/Employee	15
Employee/Employee	3
Promotion/Demotion	3
Insurance	1
Salary	1
Miscellaneous	<u>9</u>
Sub-Total	63

Administration

Health Fee/Coverage	3
Medical Judgment	1
Financial Aid	4
Housing Assignment	8
Admin. Discipline	2
Parking	8
Bursar	9
Delay in Service	1
Admin. "W"	3
Conflict of Interest	1
Housing Removal	1
Miscellaneous	<u>7</u>
Sub-Total	48

General Miscellaneous (11)

Sub-Total	<u>11</u>
	11

Actions Taken (309)

Advice Only	65
Information/Referral	33
Investigation/Information	126
Expedited	43
Informal Mediation	26
Negotiated Settlement	6
Formal Mediation	1
Other	<u>9</u>
Sub-Total*	309

Case Resolution (288)

Resolved	146
Unresolved	38
Formal Hearing	14
Withdrawn	2
In Process	24
No-Client Follow-Up	63
Other	<u>1</u>
Sub-Total*	288

*Some cases fall into more than one category

COMMENTS

The one notable activity in the Ombuds Office this year was the increase in cases of academic dishonesty. During this reporting period 48 charges of academic dishonesty were sent to the Academic Honesty Office which is located in the Ombuds Office. Fourteen of these cases went to a formal hearing. This would represent over a 25% increase in such cases compared to 1999/00 when 35 charges were received. Many of these cases involve plagiarism of materials received over the Internet. The Ombuds Office has been proactive in working with the Center for Teaching as well as the Writing Program in bringing constructive assistance to faculty and TA's.

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.