

**ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
OMBUDS OFFICE  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JULY 1, 2006 TO JUNE 30, 2007**

**Presented at the  
670<sup>th</sup> 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 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 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.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY OFFICE**

The Ombuds Office has also been designated as the Academic Honesty Office. As such, we process all formal charges of academic dishonesty and offer advice to both students and faculty about the Academic Honesty Policy and the procedures related to a formal charge of dishonesty. Faculty are encouraged to contact the office whenever a case of dishonesty is discovered and a staff member will review the policy and outline the procedures. Faculty should note that all charges of dishonesty and recommended sanctions must follow the official Academic Honesty Policy as it is the only policy that is recognized on this campus.

## **STAFFING**

The permanent staff of the Ombuds Office consists of the University Ombudsperson, Assistant Ombudsperson, a full-time secretary and one graduate intern. Catharine Porter currently serves as Ombudsperson and Mary Wardwell is the Assistant Ombudsperson. Kay Politella is the secretary. The Ombuds Office continues to promote its service 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. Staff is 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**

This year the staff assisted 456 clients. As routine business, staff members respond to several hundred telephone calls and e-mails requesting general information and advice. These contacts were not included in the client base count.

**Clients Served (456)**

<u>Employees</u>		<u>Students</u>	
		<b>Graduate Students</b>	
Classified	38	Masters	20
03 Employee	01	Doctoral	20
Faculty	39	Unknown class	02
Professional	24	Non-degree	03
Grad. Student Employee	01	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>103</b>		
		<b>Undergraduate Students</b>	
<i>Others</i>		Freshman	37
Alumnus/a	10	Sophomore	28
Off-campus	08	Junior	56
Parent	37	Senior	69
Unknown	56	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>111</b>		
		<b>Other Students</b>	
		Continuing Ed	01
		Inactive	06
		<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>07</b>

**Types of Grievance (506)**

<u>Academic</u>			
Admission to Program	11	Admission to Course	16
Course Requirements	07	Degree Requirements	21
Program Requirements	09	Grade Disputes	49
Grading Policy & Practice	23	Academic Dishonesty	21
Exam Policy	13	Academic Discipline	06
Late Drop/Retro Withdrawal	05	Student/Teacher	34
Learning Disability	04	Continuation in Program	11
Miscellaneous Academic	43	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>Diversity</b>		<b>Administration</b>	
Discrimination	02	Health Fee/Coverage	05
Harassment	03	Financial Aid	15
Sexual Harassment	05	Housing Assignment	08
Racial Harassment	02	Administrative Discip.	07
Interpersonal Conflict	06	Parking	05
Miscellaneous Civility	08	Bursar	16
ADA non compliance	02	Meal Plan	02
Conflict of Interest	01	Delay in Service	01
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>29</b>	Admin. Withdrawal	02
		Miscellaneous	22
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>General Miscellaneous</b>	<b>36</b>		

	<b>Personnel</b>		
Termination	04	Supervisor/Employee	42
Employee/Employee	04	Appointment/Reap.	02
Insurance	01	Misuse of Authority	05
Salary	01	Student Employ.	04
Miscellaneous	10	Payroll	05
Working Conditions	08	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>85</b>

<b>Action Taken (504)</b>		<b>Disposition (469)</b>	
Advice Only	132	Resolved	288
Information/Referral	79	Unresolved	46
Investigation	178	Unknown	25
Expedited	65	Formal Hearing	07
Mediated (Informal)	30	Withdrawn	03
Negotiated Settlement	03	In Process	11
Other	17	Other	05
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>504</b>	No Client Follow-Up	84
		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>469</b>