

Ombudsperson Annual Report, 1 July 2015 -30 June 2016

General

This year brings to a close my third year as University Ombudsperson. In addition to attending to individual cases as they arose, I continued sit on the Academic Standing and Admissions Policy Committee (ASAP) as an invited, non-voting observer for all monthly meetings. At the behest of the Registrar, this arrangement was regularized by a Senate-approved motion to modify the committee's composition to include the Ombudsperson as a regular member. To avoid potential conflicts of interest, the Ombudsperson remains a non-voting member. As in the past, I was privy to all information and communications and actively participated in discussions leading to decisions. I am satisfied that the committee performed its work with fairness and due diligence.

I maintained wider professional contacts with the national and provincial umbrella organizations Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons and Association des Ombudsmans des Universités du Québec. I am a voting member in good standing with both groups.

A significant Ombuds-related matter this year was the drafting of a new Harassment Policy by Secretary General Victoria Meikle and Legal Council and Governance Officer Marie-Josée Defour. The new language has clarified the scope and investigatory powers of the Harassment Committee and has relieved some of the jurisdictional confusion with respect to the Code of Student Conduct. Information about what constitutes harassment has been clarified and the procedures for filing complaints streamlined. Particularly useful are the provisions for disseminating information within the university community about the nature of harassment, the means by which complaints are entertained by the university officers tasked with implementing the policy, and how everyone in the university community can assist victims of harassment. Also valuable is the attention directed towards training the committee members. The new policy will help contribute to a more proactive rather than reactive response to a pernicious problem that is affecting the quality of university education and campus life across North America.

Other Ombuds activities included being interviewed by a representative of the Acadia University student newspaper about the role an Ombudsperson could play at their institution. At the moment they have only a part time 'equity officer,' an arrangement their SRC is finding unsatisfactory.

On one occasion I was asked to attend as an observer a meeting of the Review Committee for Education. I also participated in a harassment information workshop organized by Dean Michele Murray.

Case Statistics

Academic (total 47)

- Dishonesty: 1 Soc Sci, 1 Hum, 1 Bus, 1 Edu
- Grades: 6 Soc Sci, 4 Sci, 4 Hum, 6 Bus, 3 Ed
- Fees/Scholarships: 1 Sci, 1 Hum
- Must Withdraw: 2 Hum, 2 Edu
- Medical/Compassion: 2 Sci, 5 Hum, 1 Bus
- Program Issues: 2 Sci, 1 Hum, 2 Bus, 1 Edu

Professor Student Relations (total 3): 2 Soc Sci, 1 Edu

Harassment (total 3): 1 Soc Sci, 1 Hum, 1 Bus

University Life (total 1)

Other (total 2)

Total: 56 Cases

Recommendations

Having spoken with several members of the University community regarding potential sexual violence and/or harassment associated directly or indirectly with highly visible misogynist off-campus rituals and activities during Orientation Week, I would urge the disciplinary officers of the university to enforce the terms of the Code of Student Conduct and consider widening the scope of the Harassment Policy to include prevention and education of – as well as possible disciplinary measures for – parties involved in such activities.

I will continue to occupy the position for the 2016/2017 academic year and look forward to serving the University in this capacity to the best of my ability.

Submitted respectfully to Principal Michael Goldbloom,
15 August 2016

Shawn Malley, Professor
Department of English