



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON ANNUAL REPORT

August 2009 – July 2010

Submitted to: David Marshall, President
Submitted by: Judy Collins, Ombudsperson
August, 2010

ANNUALREPORT 2009-2010

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON

OMBUDSPERSON

Business Focus Statement: To facilitate/provide informal, impartial, confidential assistance and referrals for individuals regarding complaints, conflicts, issues and processes at Mount Royal and to support human relationship concerns.

The Office of the Ombudsperson is an independent resource for all members of the university community. It is located in the Y-Wing, Room # Y320G. This concludes the first year of the role as a stand-alone office. The role of the Ombudsperson at Mount Royal University has existed for three years and was established in order to provide a continuum of support to ensure that all members of the campus community are treated fairly and in promoting the resolution of problems and concerns at the early and informal stages.

This year has seen a continuation of the Office's commitment to raise awareness and to maintain standards of confidentiality, impartiality, independence and informality. The Ombudsperson serves as a facilitator and resource for communication, problem solving, dispute resolution, mediation and referral. The Ombudsperson may make recommendations in individual cases or for the improvement of policy or practice.



The contents of this report cover the activities of the Office of the Ombudsperson during the year, from August, 2009 through July 2010. Included are: statistics, distribution of cases by subject matter, samples of cases and outcomes and a summary of activities.

The role of the Ombudsperson aligns with the University Priority Three: Supporting People.

The Office of the Ombudsperson is staffed by one Ombudsperson, working 20 hours per week, and the President's administrative support. The Ombudsperson reports to the President.

Thank you to the many students, staff, faculty and administrators who worked collaboratively with the Ombudsperson this year. I look forward to questions or comment at mtroyal.ca/ombuds.ca.

KEY DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Goals:

a. Promote communication to continue to increase profile through:

- Attending and/or presenting at all student, staff and faculty orientations to promote the Office of the Ombudsperson. **Accomplished**
- Consulting with External Relations regarding signage and promotion and the development of new signage, brochures, flyers and cards. **Accomplished**
- Promoting the Office of the Ombudsperson to the University community through signage, handouts, print media, presentations and activities. **Accomplished**
- Presentations regarding role of the Ombudsperson to the Mount Royal University Board of Governors, and to the Deans' and Chairs' Councils, Faculty of Nursing and Institute for Non-Profit Studies. **Accomplished**
- Continuing a data base for tracking statistics and for enhanced file maintenance to assist with Evaluation/Assessment of the Ombudsperson. **Accomplished**
- Updating web site for "Office of the Ombudsperson" and subsequently track hits to the web site as ongoing assessment of use and effectiveness of promotional activities. **Accomplished**
- Informal recommendations to academic leaders regarding changes in policy and procedure that would have the effect of making the University fairer in its operations. **Accomplished**

b. Build relationships with groups and individuals through:



- Successful resolution of client concerns, issues and conflicts at an informal, supportive and conciliatory level. **Accomplished**
- Support of consultations and requests from all university constituent groups as well as external agencies. **Accomplished**
- Personal Harassment Policy – continue to support procedures and clients in accessing this policy. **Accomplished**
- Public education, guest speaking and interviews on request about the Ombuds Office and by the Ombudsperson on relevant topics. **Accomplished**
- Workshops and/or information sessions offered by the Ombudsperson. **Accomplished – three workshops presented and five departments visited**
- Nurturing links to stakeholders and decision makers of the institution. **Accomplished**
- Collaborate with Crisis Communication Plan Development Team as the “Family Liaison” in an effort to link closely with the Crisis Communication Team and families of those involved in a crisis. **Training and Plan initiation pending**

c. Conferences and Professional Activities

- Continued commitment to ongoing professional development. **Accomplished** – completed Advanced Alternate Dispute Resolution Certificate (ADR), offered through the Stitt, Feld and Handy Group, through the Faculty of Law at the University of Windsor, Toronto, March, 2010
- Attended at a major conference 2009/10. **Accomplished** – Participated in the International Conference of the International Ombudsperson Organization (IOU) and the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) conference in Vienna, Austria, Spring, 2010

- Participated as a member in the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons, (ACCUO). **Accomplished** – Member at Large on the Executive of ACCUO, 2010-2011
- Attended a variety of presentations, workshops, symposiums and continuing education opportunities: **Accomplished**

d. Community Involvement

- Zone Captain for Alberta Heart and Stroke Foundation
- President of the Board for New Discovery Homeowners' Association
- Board member of the ALS Society of Alberta
- Member and event planner for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Grandmothers for Grandmothers' Campaign, UJAMMA Grandma's

110 clients utilized the Office of the Ombudsperson during the year. Most contacts were in person. These statistics represent approximately 1 percent of the campus population which is consistent with statistics from other universities across Canada.

	Male		Female		Consult		Investigation		Other	
	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10
Student	9	12	21	37						
Faculty	13	10	19	16						
Support Staff	4	7	12	13						
Administration	4	4	8	5						
Management	2	2	7	4						
External Requests	4		6	3						
Totals	36	35	73	78	81	85	18	13	10	15

Total Clients: 2008/09 – 109
2009/10 – 113

a) Examples of student advice sought/concerns/issues:

- Putting a decision in perspective/identifying options/referral and resource
- Conflicts with faculty, staff and students
- Feedback and coaching
- Work placements
- Registration/withdrawals
- Requests to present at Orientations/Meetings

b) Examples of staff advice sought/concerns/issues:

- Conflicts with Supervisors
- Management and leadership concerns
- Difficulty with team work
- Bullying/mobbing
- Feedback and coaching
- Referral and resource
- Request to act as a “Judge” for student projects
- Requests to present at Orientations
- Bullying by customer

c) Examples of faculty advice sought/concerns/issues:

- Conflicts with students
- Conflicts with peers
- Consult re teaching effectiveness, feedback and coaching
- Present workshop through MRFA
- Presentations for faculty and sessionals

CASE EXAMPLES:

a) Practicum denied related to sanction

A student was denied the completion of a DFS experience for two-year period. Following a thorough investigation the student was given the opportunity to consult

with the Provost/Vice President Academic with the result that the DFS experience was provided in a one-year timeframe

***Fairness Principle: Providing an appropriate opportunity to be heard before making a decision.**

b) Academic concession denied

A student who failed a math assessment requirement in one course was required to withdraw from the co-requisite course and lost the tuition for both courses. Following an investigation and consultation with the Registrar, the process was altered to permit refund of tuition for the co-requisite course.

***Fairness Principle: Providing reasons for a decision**

c) Staff Conflicts

A group of support staff with inter-team conflict and conflict with faculty

Procedure: Workshops presented, at the request of the Chair, to promote understanding of conflict style, both preferred and actual, dealing with conflicts, high conflict people and supporting a respectful work environment.

***Principle: Conflict can result in decreased productivity and efficiency, as well as increased hostility.**

d) Faculty Conflict:

Two faculty members from a team engaged in escalating conflict

Procedure: Mediation, at the request of the Chair, with both of the faculty members present. Two-hour session

OBSERVATIONS

The guiding principle that informs the work of the Office of the Ombudsperson is responding to problems as they arise and promoting resolution as early and informally as possible. Throughout the year, the Ombudsperson made a number of informal recommendations to persons in authority regarding changes in procedures which would have the effect of making

the university fairer in its operations. In almost all cases, these recommendations were received positively and the suggested changes were implemented. Intervention for the majority of case examples focused on the importance of open, honest communication, an understanding of conflict resolution, the value of an apology in restoring self respect and dignity, and the reminder of the right to work and study in an environment free from personal harassment which includes bullying.

IN APPRECIATION

I would like to thank my administrative support, Janis Frantz, for her thoughtfulness, energy and her technical expertise and efficiency. It is important that the Office of the Ombudsperson continue to work with and to be supported by the university leadership and administration in promoting the Office as a resource for the Mount Royal University community. I have appreciated their support and contributions this year, as well as their commitment to enhancing the campus climate. Finally, thank you to everyone who finds their way to the office of the Ombudsperson. I look forward to seeing more members of the University community in the year to come.

I am always listening to you.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Collins
Ombudsperson
August 2010