

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Office of the Ombudsman is available to all members of the University community. The Ombudsman deals with individuals and groups who have complaints to register, suggestions to offer, proposals which they are unsure how to present or implement, who feel that their problem is not receiving adequate consideration or is not being properly handled in the regular campus channels. The office also serves to facilitate communication between the administration and individuals or groups.

The Office of the Ombudsman is administratively responsible to the Office of the Chancellor, but also has a close staff relationship with the offices in Student Affairs. The Office has a general responsibility to the campus community as a whole, and the success of the Ombudsman depends upon the general acceptance of his usefulness and probity by faculty and students as well as the Administration.

The Office is new to campuses and there is no set pattern for its functions within the University structure. The role of the Ombudsman is still in the process of definition, but there are certain characteristics which appear to be emerging clearly:

- 1) The Ombudsman may advise, recommend, offer solutions, serve as a negotiator, suggest policy changes, etc., but he does not have formal administrative power in any area.
- 2) The Office is outside regular administrative channels.
- 3) The Ombudsman has access to necessary information and files.
- 4) The files and records of the Ombudsman are confidential.

July, 1969 - July, 1970

Staff: The Ombudsman is a .66 FTE appointment with the other third, an appointment as lecturer in History. General office support and supplies have been provided by the Dean of Students Office. In addition, he is assigned a half-time secretary. The Ombudsman's position involves considerably more than 27 hours a week, but the low volume of paper work makes the secretarial staffing adequate. Support from the Dean of Students Office has been excellent.

The Office has served individual faculty and staff as well as students, but the largest volume of business has come from student, both graduate and undergraduate. This year, over 300 individual students were seen by the Ombudsman, and in addition he attended and spoke to a considerable number of groups.

Cases or problems covered a wide range which included:

- 1) Problems involving admission, readmission and graduation.
- 2) Problems involving academic departments.
- 3) Individual course grades.
- 4) Financial problems of individuals and groups.
- 5) Legal matters.
- 6) Problems involving administrative offices.
- 7) Housing, parking, food and other miscellaneous complaints.

The division between academic and non-academic matters was roughly 50/50.

In addition, the Ombudsman served on several committees which included the Advisory Committee to the Vice Chancellor, Business and Finance; the Dean of Students Advisory Committee; Financial Aids Advisory Committee.

An important part of the Ombudsman's campus function is that of a communications link and source of accurate information. Complaint and suggestion forms addressed to the Ombudsman are widely distributed. A campus directory listing of the Rumor Bureau brings inquiries concerning rumors (generally false) from staff and faculty as well as students. The Ombudsman also speaks to campus and off-campus groups who wish information on aspects of the University.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

In the relatively short time since its establishment, the Office has proved its utility. As the campus grows and the Ombudsman's Office becomes better known, the position will become full time. The needs for communication, the problems arising from organizational complexity and the maze of the individual are all likely to grow as the campus enrollment moves toward 25,000.

Robert B. Herschler
Campus Ombudsman