

**Administrative Response to the Report of the
University Ombudsperson: 2003-2004**
(November 24, 2004)

Overview:

The Administration thanks the Ombudsperson for her dedicated work on behalf of the University of Toronto community, and commends her for once again producing a very thorough report on her office's activities over the preceding year. This year's report supports our belief that many of the issues raised in previous years have either been resolved or are in the process of resolution, and that we share a common view on areas deserving most attention. The Administration will continue its commitment to invest in the communication of information, the dissemination of best practices, and the training of administrators to ensure that issues of concern are dealt with in a timely and effective manner.

Responses to Recommendations:

The following administrative responses to specific recommendations from the Ombudsperson are made in accordance with the direction made by Governing Council that the University Administration provide an annual response to the Ombudsperson's Report.

Recommendation 1: That, for the purposes of its Administration Response to this year's Annual Report, the Administration provide the Governing Council and the University community with an update on the status of its planned reviews of the University Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (1995) and the Guidelines for Academic Appeals Within Divisions (1977).

The Provost's Office works closely with the Governing Council Secretariat, in particular the Judicial Affairs Officer, on these matters. We recognize that the two policies are distinct and deal with very different issues and concerns.

We have consulted with the Judicial Affairs Officer in the Governing Council Secretariat with respect to the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*, the Provost has established a group to discuss the Code and its administration. That group could be asked to report in the spring of 2005, and recommend whether revisions to the Code are necessary and/or recommend the development of administrative guidelines for those responsible for administering the code.

Unlike the *Code of Behaviour*, which deals with academic offences, the *Academic Appeal* process focuses on students' right to appeal academic issues. These processes are divisional, with the final right to appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee of the Governing Council. With the support of the University Registrar, the Judicial Affairs Officer is in the process of collecting divisional policies and guidelines for review to

ensure consistency and timeliness. The Academic Appeals Committee will be undertaking a review of the Guidelines for Academic Appeals within Divisions, in accordance with the *Terms of Reference of the Academic Appeals Committee* and under the direction of the Senior Chair. It is anticipated that this review will take place in the spring of 2005.

Recommendation 2: That, for the purposes of its Administrative Response to this year's Annual Report, the Administration provide an update to the Governing Council and the University community related to its health and safety policy/procedural framework for graduate students involved in field research/practicum placements.

This issue has largely been addressed by the appointment of the Safety Abroad Advisor and the ongoing development of a Safety Abroad Policy for the University.

The International Student Exchange Office is currently in the process of creating a Safety Abroad Policy for the University, which will establish a University-wide standard regarding risk assessment, preparation of students participating in out-of-country activities, and an effective emergency response system. Inherent in the Policy will be the combined recognition of the importance of students participating in international activities, and the legal and ethical duties of the University in promoting a safe environment for the participants. In conjunction with the Policy, the intent is to produce a Safety Abroad Manual, which can be updated regularly to reflect changing best practices in the field.

The Policy is in its first draft. We intend to have the Policy ready for review by governance early in 2005, following consultation with relevant groups on campus, among them the School of Graduate Studies, the Faculty of Arts & Science, the Faculty of Forestry, the Faculty of Medicine and OISE/UT.

Recommendation 3: That, for the purposes of this year's Administrative Response in my Annual Report, the Administration provide the Governing Council and the University community with an update regarding the review and approval process for the revised *Policy on Student Housing*.

The *Report of the Task Force on Student Housing* recommended that the *Policy on Student Housing* be updated. The Task Force report went through governance near the end of last year's governance cycle and a working group has been formed to look at the *Report of the Task Force on Student Housing* and develop a new student housing policy. A new policy is expected to be brought to governance during the current academic year.

Recommendation 4: That, for the purposes of this year's Administrative Response in my Annual Report, the Administration provide the Governing Council and the University community with an update regarding its review and approval process for the revised *Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Information Technology*.

The review of the Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Information Technology has been completed. It was approved by the Computing Management Board at its meeting on October 20, 2004, subject to a final review by the legal counsel on copyright issues. This final review has now been completed and the updated document will be announced and posted on the web.

Recommendation 5: That, for the purposes of this year's Administration Response to my Annual Report, the Administration provide the Governing Council and the University community with an update regarding the development of, and approval process for, its new policy related to Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response.

The input and revisions to the proposed new *Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response* were based on extensive consultation in a process that respected the tri-campus nature of the University as parallel consultations were held at UTM and UTSC. The new Policy should enter the governance cycle for approvals in February of 2005.

Recommendation 6: That, for the purposes of this year's Administration Response to my Annual Report, the Administration provide the Governing Council and the University community with an update regarding its possible revision of the University's Statement of Institutional Purpose and its dissemination to the University community.

Given that the University is currently engaged in a Presidential search process, the Administration has decided that it would be appropriate to wait until the appointment of a new President before undertaking a review of the University's Statement of Institutional Purpose.