

**Administrative Response
to the
Report of the University Ombudsperson: 2005-06**

Overview:

This administrative response is made in accordance with the direction made by Governing Council that the University Administration respond annually to the Ombudsperson's Report.

Response:

The Administration thanks the Ombudsperson for her dedicated work on behalf of the University of Toronto community, and wishes to convey its' appreciation for the effective and collegial way in which she has conducted her work over the course of the last 8 years since her appointment in 1998. This has involved work on more than 2500 files. She has also made 25 recommendations to the University Administration related to policy and process issues in successive annual reports. The Ombudsperson notes that the Administration has responded to 24 of these recommendations through policy and organizational initiatives, with one policy review currently on-going.

The Ombudsperson's 2005-06 Report provides a comprehensive summary of her office's activities over the previous year. This year's Report contains an updated account of the Administration's responses to the recommendations raised in previous reports and identifies two areas where specific recommendations are made.

The first relates to the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (1995). An administrative review of the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*, is currently being undertaken by the Office of the Vice-President and Provost. There has already been wide consultation with divisions across the university to identify recurring issues with the administration of the Code, including timeliness, consistency and other process concerns. The next stage of the process will focus on addressing the issues raised through the development of best practice guidelines and training for those responsible for the administration of the Code at divisional levels.

The Administration agrees with the Ombudsperson's recommendation that there is a need for proactive promotion of the institutional value of academic integrity. Part of this consultation involves discussion of the need for integrating education and discussion of academic integrity issues as a fundamental and intrinsic part of our academic programs at all levels of the institution. The Office of Teaching Advancement has developed a web-site on Academic Integrity which provides an overview of academic integrity issues and resources for faculty, teaching assistants and students. Faculty, departments, and divisions are encouraged to reference this site on course outlines, in departmental

handbooks and web sites, and in any other materials developed for students and faculty. (<http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity>)

The second recommendation concerns the creation of a *Safety Abroad Policy*. An initial draft of this policy was produced by the International Student Exchange Office. As consultations proceeded it was determined that it should be developed in parallel with amendments to the *Policy for Safety in Field Research* (1988). Furthermore, during the past year, the Office of the Vice-President Research and Associate Provost undertook a review of all policies relating to research matters at the University of Toronto, with the aim of ensuring full compliance with external agency guidelines and current practice. As a result recommendations have been made regarding the *Policy for Safety in Field Research* to revise it to better reflect off-campus research and study, and to address teaching, research and insurance issues. Both policies will now be developed jointly through the Offices of the Vice-President Human Resources & Equity, Vice-President Research and Associate Provost, Vice-Provost Students and Vice-Provost Graduate Studies which will collate the necessary information and recommend specific changes to revise the policies as required. In addition to a revised *Safety Abroad Policy*, we will also develop a *Safety Abroad Manual* which will identify best practices in this area. Recommended changes to these policies will be brought through governance during 2007.

It is pleasing to see a further small decline in the total number of cases dealt with by the Office of the Ombudsperson with a significant decline in the non-academic issues brought to her attention. This evolution is noteworthy. It can support the argument that everything is working better than in the past; or, it might equally reflect a dynamic situation in the context of an increased number of equity officers working at the University of Toronto. It is entirely possible, and in fact this is suggested by the Ombudsperson, that individuals who in the past might have seen the Ombudsperson's Office as their only option, are now able to have issues effectively addressed by other University offices.

The Ombudsperson also acknowledges that her office and the Administration are working co-operatively and in a timely manner when issues do arise, and that they share a common view on areas that previously deserved the most attention. This indicates definite progress for which we should all be proud.

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 that may arise are dealt with in a timely and effective manner.