

**Report of the University Ombudsperson to the Governing Council
For the period July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

My Annual Report this year, in addition to informing the University community about the activities of my Office for the period July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005, will also serve to inform the Governing Council's review of the Office of the University Ombudsperson in early 2006. Therefore, in addition to providing the usual statistical summaries of the issues brought to my attention, and of my responses to them, I have included an updated account of the administration's responses to my recommendations since my initial appointment in 1998, an analysis of my Office's changing profile and role within the larger organizational context, and a few comments for the Governing Council's consideration in determining its Terms of Reference for the upcoming review.

STATISTICS AND HIGHLIGHTS

There were a total of 301 queries and concerns brought to my attention by students, faculty and administrative staff members last year, representing an eighteen percent decrease from the previous year's 367. The caseload average since 2000 is 328. Given my year-to-date activity, I would project this year's caseload to be in the range of 340 complaints and queries. Appendices 2 through 11 of this report provide detailed and comparative caseload information, accountability information related to my Office's service delivery and responsiveness, and case summaries to provide examples of our complaint resolutions and outcomes.

OPERATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

This is the seventh annual report that I have prepared since my appointment in 1998, and during that time I have worked on more than 2200 files. We have introduced many operational improvements at the Office of the University Ombudsperson during this timeframe, including our website (www.utoronto.ca/ombudsperson), communications materials such as posters and bookmarks, our *ad hoc* consultation network, and in 2001, the restoration of the Office to a full-time service.

During this period, the University has been home to many important changes including its most senior administration and administrative structures, its tri-campus organizational structures and numerous policies, guidelines and practices. New policies have been introduced and others revised to improve academic procedures and streamline processes. Most recently, the University has established a broadly representative Equity Advisory Board whose membership includes the Equity Officers, student government representatives, faculty and administrative staff representatives, myself and numerous other university community members with particular interest in institutional equity and fair practice and process. Improvement in communication by the University with its

community members, a perennial concern of this Office, has been clearly recognized as a priority in terms of the major student communication “portal project” that is currently in implementation in an ongoing, three-stage process.

Overall, as I indicate in my report, I have found members of the University administration to be increasingly aware of issues involving procedural fairness, and very responsive in terms of acting promptly to remedy any defects in process that come to light. It is my experience, on a case-by-case basis, that offices and individuals involved in various matters continue to welcome, almost without exception, suggestions for improving communications with students, faculty and staff, and for resolving conflict in ways that are respectful and fair for all concerned.

Mary Ward
November 2005