

# **Ombudsperson's Annual Report**

for the period

**July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001**

## **Listening and Learning: The Value of Student Complaints**

**Submitted by:**

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*Presented to Academic Council  
Ryerson University  
Tuesday, December 4, 2001*

## **OMBUDSPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT – July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001**

### **Listening and Learning: The Value of Student Complaints.**

For some people, the word 'complain' is cloaked in negativity, whereas others see a complaint as a vital source of unsolicited feedback and therefore a critical aspect of quality control. A measure of an organization's commitment to the people who make it work and the people who use its services can be seen in how it views complaints and in its complaint management processes.

In many proactive organizations, the role of Ombudsperson is integral to managing complaints for both the short and long term success of the organization. As a result, the number of Ombuds roles in both the private and public sector has been increasing steadily over the past ten years. Both public and private sector organizations have identified the existence of an Ombuds role as part of their management philosophy, i.e. conflicts are inevitable, complaints are important and thus they want to be sure they are addressed impartially and properly. Others have found the role to be extremely cost-efficient with respect to resolving disputes early and fairly. A university, like any organization that provides a service will, by definition, generate untold numbers of complaints. My role as Ombudsperson at Ryerson is to assist in the fair resolution of those complaints and to provide a conduit by which we can benefit from them so that the community in which we all work and learn is seen to operate in a fair and civilized manner.

As a university exists not only for the purpose of learning for today but also attempts to inculcate a lifelong penchant for learning, it is an ideal environment for analyzing current complaints and using the results for the advantage of all members of the Ryerson community - both present and future.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **What does the Ombudsperson do at Ryerson?**

The Ombudsperson is an impartial, independent resource who assists with the resolution of disputes, usually in an informal fashion, using a variety of problem solving strategies. When all avenues of appeal have been exhausted, and it is believed that a decision was made unfairly, the Ombudsperson may investigate the decision-making process. The Ombudsperson may also conduct an investigation on her own initiative. The Ombudsperson may make recommendations, which are equitable to all parties, when appropriate. In addition, the Ombudsperson hosts discussions and forums about matters that may be of interest to any member of the Ryerson community and reports annually to the community on the activities of the Office.

#### **The History of the Ombudsperson Role at Ryerson**

The position of Ombudsperson was put into place in 1997. A committee composed of students, faculty and staff spent the previous year detailing the terms of reference for the operation of the service. Prior to that, a number of members of the Ryerson community researched the operations of long established university Ombuds offices across the country and made suggestions for best practices and organizational structure. The office is funded via student levy which was authorized by a referendum held in 1996. It is worthy of note that a large percentage of the universities in Canada have had Ombuds offices for many years. For example, University of Toronto, University of Victoria and the University of Western Ontario have had Ombuds offices in place for more than 20 years. Increasingly, community colleges are establishing Ombuds offices as well. By comparison, in the U.S., the first University Ombuds office was established in the 1960's.

### **Terms of reference for the Ombudsperson and the Ombudsperson Committee**

The manner in which the Ombudsperson is required to operate is explicitly defined in the terms of reference for the position. In addition, the requirements established for the Ombudsperson Committee which provides support to the Ombudsperson is also defined in a separate set of terms of reference. The full text of this material can be easily accessed on our website at [www.ryerson.ca/ombuds](http://www.ryerson.ca/ombuds). Some of the more salient points that everyone should be aware of are:

- a) the Ombudsperson will not act as an advocate for any party during the investigation of a complaint
- b) the Ombudsperson may not investigate a matter until all levels of appeal have been exhausted
- c) the Ombudsperson has unrestricted access to all records held by the University and her requests for information must be given priority.
- d) the Ombudsperson committee has financial oversight responsibilities and provides advice and guidance on marketing and promotion. However, the members have no involvement in the handling or review of cases. All case work is completely confidential to the Ombudsperson's office.

### **Office operations for 2000-2001**

- a web-site was established for providing information on how to use the Ombudsperson service as well as on how to approach an appeal of a decision (Fall of 2000)
- the competition for the hiring of a new Ombudsperson was completed (November 2000)
- a part-time position of Assistant Ombudsperson was created (December 2000)
- the terms of reference for the operation of the Ombudsperson office and the committee were revised (Spring of 2001)
- a data base was developed for use in trends analysis (Spring 2001)
- a forum on developing effective probationary contracts was hosted by the Ombudsperson and the Registrar's office (June 2001)

## **In Appreciation**

The Ombudsperson Committee has demonstrated great commitment to the Ombuds service by meeting every month for the past six months. Prior to that, the Committee spent many hours conducting the competition for hiring a new Ombudsperson. All of the committee members deserve special recognition for an especially demanding year. The seven members of the Committee are:

CHAIR - **Frank Cappadocia** – General Manager of CESAR, **Keith Alnwick** – Registrar, **Cory Wright** and **Odelia Bay** – Former RyeSAC President and Current RyeSAC President, respectively, **Pat Corson** – Faculty member, **Liz Devine** – Manager, Skills Development, Student Services, **Andrew Noble** – RyeSAC Student Issues and Advocacy Coordinator, **Nazmin Zaver** – CESAR President

In addition, I would like to thank those who brought their complaints to my attention. In some cases it took a great deal of courage to do so. In many cases, we have received information that can be used to provide insight into how to assist in the reduction of systemic and system-wide problems.

In the seven months that I have served as Ombudsperson for 2000-2001, I have spoken to hundreds of people who make up the Ryerson community. I would like to thank those of you who have shared information generously and welcomed me warmly to the University community.

In addition, I would like to thank the people I have called to discuss a complaint who have responded promptly from a problem solving perspective. This is a hallmark of effective dispute resolution. Similarly, I would like to commend those who reach out to our office to discuss what needs to be taken into account to ensure fair process. As well, I congratulate those who are in the midst of trying to improve policies, processes and procedures and who consult widely to get the most relevant information and best advice and counsel available.

## **Pro-active Actions Taken**

A number of positive initiatives have been undertaken by the University, RyeSAC, and CESAR. These actions, which are listed below, have been chosen to demonstrate the importance of organizations constantly looking forward to ensure student needs are anticipated and met in a professional, helpful manner:

### **University**

Increased availability of comprehensive information accessible on the Ryerson Website, e.g. the Calendar, the Student Guide, 24/7.

Reviewed and revised the Course Management policy for undergraduate students.

Reviewed and revised the Student Code of Academic and Non-Academic Conduct with substantial input from a wide variety of community members.

Collected material and drafted a policy, for consideration by Academic Council, for accommodation of students' religious observance requirements, using a broad reference group.

### **RyeSAC – Full-time & Graduate Students' Association**

Opened the Working Students Centre.

Approved the establishment of RyeACCESS - a student-run community service, providing non-academic support, for those with alternate abilities and needs.

Collaborated with the Ryerson Faculty Association to refine the course evaluation process.

Collaborated with the Learning and Teaching Committee for the maintenance of "conditional" standing in Ryerson's promotion policy.

### **CESAR – Continuing Education & Part-time Degree Students' Association**

Expanded services via an improved student lounge, increased number of computers and availability of Internet access.

Conducted focus groups with 68 Continuing Education students to take the "pulse" of their constituency with respect to their experience at the university and to receive in-depth input on the types of services desired for the future.

Coordinated successful Student Leadership retreat.

Finally, the University, RyeSAC and CESAR have embarked on the construction of a large, tailor-made Student Centre together. This is a significant undertaking that has been in the planning and development stage for many years. The leadership of all three organizations is to be commended for moving forward with this significant project.

## **Concerns**

For this reporting period, I have focussed on three major issues which I believe deserve attention based on the information I have received and collected in my capacity as Ombudsperson. I have developed recommendations based on the principles of prevention and pro-activity.

## **Availability of Academic Advice**

Many students complain that faculty are not physically accessible for discussion of academic concerns, i.e. unwilling to set up time to meet; meeting is set up for same time scheduled for other students; and, if available, some faculty are unwilling to spend more than a few minutes with a student or are dismissive of the student's concern.

When I am discussing student concerns regarding appeals of academic standing, requests for re-instatement or problems with probationary contracts, it often comes out in discussion that students were not advised of the means the University makes available to assist them to succeed. For instance, they have not been required to pursue the Method of Inquiry/Study Skills courses and/or have not been apprised of their utility with respect to long-term success. In other situations it becomes apparent that students are not aware of and have never been encouraged to make use of the many other supports available to them, e.g. the Writing Centre, ESL resource centre, tutoring programs, peer support or mentoring programs. I recognize that many attempts are made during orientation week to apprise students of all the foregoing resources. Unfortunately, due to information overload, this type of information may not be retained. It would be useful for department and program personnel to reiterate their availability throughout the year, as well.

With some frequency students ask me what courses they should take in order to improve their situations. As you would expect, I always refer them back to their program or department. They often say they have attempted to get advice and have been told that the department head does not have time to deal with matters of this nature or that this type of information is not provided. I am told that they are instructed to determine for themselves what they should take. I always encourage them to try again as the department or program is best positioned to provide this kind of information.

I have not had the opportunity to follow-up with the programs or departments in all of these cases so I don't know if what I have been told in each instance is true. However, in making an inquiry to one department I was advised that the department did not provide this type of advice. The frequency with which these kinds of concerns come up from a wide variety of unrelated students suggests to me that this kind of advice is not as easily accessible as it should be for academic staff and students to work together for the greatest rates of retention and student success. It is also worthy of note that the potential influx of more and younger students, via the arrival of the 'double cohort', who will have no experience in a university setting, suggests that there will be even greater demands on the existing system for the provision of academic advice.

Recommendation:

1. A system should be devised for those programs or departments which have not already established academic advisor roles, which requires that the provision of academic advice be given a high priority. Specific individuals with the requisite skills, knowledge and time should be designated to provide academic advice.

### **Institutional Response to Conflict**

Conflict is a natural, healthy and normal part of daily interactions between people who provide services and people who use services. Ideally, conflicts would be addressed in a respectful way by both parties involved and would be resolved expeditiously. In many instances when conflicts are not resolved successfully between the parties themselves, they escalate into disputes involving other aspects of the organization and are generally costly both in time and reputation. In other cases, one of the parties may walk away yet feel aggrieved for many years in the future.

The effective implementation of policies is a positive way to deal with conflict between students and the university. By definition, policies are a useful means for reducing the potential for negative forms of conflict by providing a transparent means for all concerned to understand what information will be taken into account and how a decision will be made in order to resolve a conflict. The easy availability of this type of information reduces ambiguity about how a conflict is normally handled and therefore contributes to consistent and fair decision-making.

As I am relatively new to the Ryerson community, I am constantly looking up policies in order to respond to queries. When I contact various personnel to clarify their understanding of how a policy should be applied, I am sometimes surprised to be told that they are unaware of the existence of such a policy. In all instances when this has occurred I have not had the impression that those responding were unwilling to follow policy, rather they did not know such a situation was covered by policy. These kinds of gaps in knowledge are problematic for obvious reasons.

As one would expect, policies are designed to guide the making of decisions that fit into the circumstances contemplated by the designers of the policy. However, fair and thoughtful decision-makers recognize that some situations will not be explicitly covered by policy and by necessity, they will be required to exercise discretion. The exercise of discretion should always be a considered act – never capricious or biased – and must also be transparent. The decision-maker must be able to provide the explicit criteria used in arriving at his or her decision and when necessary, justify and explain any inconsistency with decisions made previously on similar matters.

A situation which causes me concern with regard to the appropriate application of policy and the exercise of discretion is illustrated in the following situation. A student was coping with serious familial and medical difficulty. Interestingly enough, professors and departments responded to requests for assistance in a variety of ways. For example, one professor gave the student a grade of 'incomplete' (INC) even though only 5% of

the course work had been completed; another professor in another department said the student could not receive an INC as the policy required that 50% of the work be completed. In a third instance, the student was given a completely different option. The three different responses to the same situation in which the same policy was being applied made it very difficult for the student to know what standard had to be met in order to be eligible for a particular designation.

Recommendation:

2. Given the technology that exists within the University, a user-friendly data base, which can be accessed via Ryerson users only, e.g. an Intranet site, should be developed that allows users to type in 'key words' and bring up all existing policy on the particular subject that concerns them regardless of whether it has been approved by the Board of Governors, Academic Council or administrative units.

Note: In the interim period, all University personnel and students who need information on policies approved by Academic Council can make use of the 'gopher' system which contains all the policies approved by Academic Council from its inception to the present. To access the gopher system: go to the Ryerson website; in the address bar type in: <gopher://gopher.ryerson.ca/>. The section of 'gopher' which is up-to-date is found under the heading of Academic Council. The 'gopher' system is 'old' technology yet I have found it to be a very time-efficient means for finding University approved policy on all academic matters. In addition, the Ryerson calendar and the Student Guide are available on the web

3. The programs and departments which do not produce a 'Student Handbook' should be encouraged to do so as to provide students with department or program specific information which will assist them to make maximum benefit of the resources available. A Student Handbook is also an excellent means for ensuring students are aware of the expectations and standards they will have to meet when studying in a particular program or department. The development of this kind of resource does not have to be costly in time or money given the ease with which existing printed material can be posted on a web-site.
4. All decision-makers should be oriented to the standards they have to meet in order to have been seen to have made a decision fairly.

### **Academic Misconduct - Plagiarism and Cheating**

As an inadequate or inappropriate response to academic dishonesty can be very damaging to a university's reputation and can create very negative feelings among students who behave honestly, each department must respond appropriately and consistently to what appear to be similar violations of the Student Code of Academic and [Non-Academic] Conduct.



I have seen a form that was designed by the Electrical Engineering Department which outlines on the back of the form the steps that have to be followed when a student is alleged to have committed some kind of infraction under the Student Code of Academic and [Non-Academic] Misconduct. This kind of initiative serves both the University and the student well as the use of the form itself ensures that there can be no misunderstanding of what each party has to do if an allegation of academic misconduct is made.

It has come to my attention that, on a number of occasions, suspicions of academic misconduct were raised with students when other students were present. In some instances it was determined through investigation by the department that there were no grounds for charges to be laid. As a result, the students requested that those who had overheard the allegation be advised that the charges were not founded. As one would expect, there were some logistical difficulties associated with getting this information distributed discreetly and appropriately. It is imperative that any allegations or discussion of suspected misconduct be handled with the highest level of confidentiality and professionalism so that all parties' reputations are not sullied in any way prior to a determination of the facts of the situation.

#### **Recommendation:**

5. All academic staff should be oriented on a regular basis on to how to respond to situations which raise suspicions of academic dishonesty with respect to: the range of acceptable means for investigating or determining if academic misconduct has occurred; the importance of maintaining the student's confidentiality when making an allegation of academic misconduct and the types of situations which, if founded, would likely attract a particular penalty.
6. Appropriate forms should be produced by the University or each department for use by academic staff with students when dealing with suspicions or allegations of academic misconduct.
7. Instructors should provide verbal and written notice, e.g. course outlines should describe what academic misconduct is; that plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated; and the range of penalties that may be imposed for committing various forms of academic misconduct.
8. Students should make themselves familiar with what constitutes academic misconduct and ensure they conduct their research and complete their work in a manner that precludes the possibility of being accused of such behaviour.

#### **COMMENTARY**

##### **Service Statistics**

**When you review the statistics for July 1, 2000 - June 30, 2001, you will note that a number of new categories have been added in the section which describes the**

**type and numbers of complaints received by this office. As I have only served in the position of Ombudsperson for seven months of this period and I am not able to investigate all of the complaints received, I have chosen not to comment on these figures at this juncture. I will be better positioned to make useful commentary on these issues after the next twelve-month period.**

### **Planning for Success**

**It is expected that many of the members of the 'double cohort' will pursue undergraduate studies within the greater Toronto area. While it is impossible to predict what percentage of the double cohort will enrol at Ryerson, the potential for an influx of more and younger first year students is high. Also, as we know that Ryerson is the most transferred into university in Ontario, many students already arrive at Ryerson with a set of expectations based on whatever post-secondary institution they were enrolled in previously. The comments which follow are put forward to assist with planning for future success of all students.**

As I participate in the U 201 sessions which are held for students who have received a standing of probation, suspended or withdrawn, I have the opportunity to speak to many students informally who have not been successful academically. Many of them are shocked, many are embarrassed and many are angry. It is note worthy that the data collected from surveying 1000 Business students who have an academic standing of Probation, from 1998 to date in conjunction with the delivery of the Method of Inquiry/Study Skills sessions, has shown that the majority of students who have not been successful academically say it is not because they lacked the ability to master the course material. Rather it is their self-assessment that the reasons for poor performance were within their control, e.g. they managed their time poorly, didn't study effectively, didn't work effectively at the beginning and couldn't catch up, etc.

As the University's goal is to provide as many students as possible with a valuable and positive learning experience, a proactive approach for student success which contains the following elements, could be considered:

- Regularly scheduled sessions at various times throughout the academic year on how to succeed within a program or department, e.g. the type of services available within the program and/or department and how to access them. As well, students often need to be re-oriented to the resources which all students may make use of like: the Writing Centre; the English as a Second Language Resource Centre, peer support and mentoring programs, personal development and counselling services within Student Services, and the Method of Inquiry/Study Skills Sessions offered by Student Services. While orientation at the beginning of the semester is very useful, students may need to receive the information again when they have a better sense of what university life is really like and are able to relate what they are being told to their own experience.
- It should be clearly communicated to students by both instructors and department or program heads, who students should contact if they encounter difficulty either

academically and/or personally, e.g. the Chair, the Associate Chair, the Assistant Chair, the Director, the Associate Director, the Program Director. The previous list illustrates the many different positions that exist in various departments and schools throughout the University. As a result, it can be very difficult for a student to know who the 'go-to' person is, in a particular department or school, especially when they are in their first years of their programs.

- Students who receive a 'conditional' standing should be contacted by the program or department to discuss the steps the student can take immediately to improve the likelihood of future academic success.

As explained at the beginning of this section of this report, I have chosen to place greater emphasis on selected major issues that have emerged from the complaints I have handled rather than reporting on a larger number of issues as has been the norm in the past. In addition I have provided specific recommendations for consideration. I hope that you find this to be a useful approach and, if not, that you will provide me with your feedback as to what kind of information would be more helpful to you in the future.

I would like to thank Diane Dyson who serves as Assistant Ombudsperson for her support to me personally and her ongoing attention to the concerns presented by those who complain to this office.

I hope that through this report all members of the Ryerson community will have the opportunity to reflect on the role they play in creating a civilized and respectful community and one that responds fairly and expeditiously to student concerns.

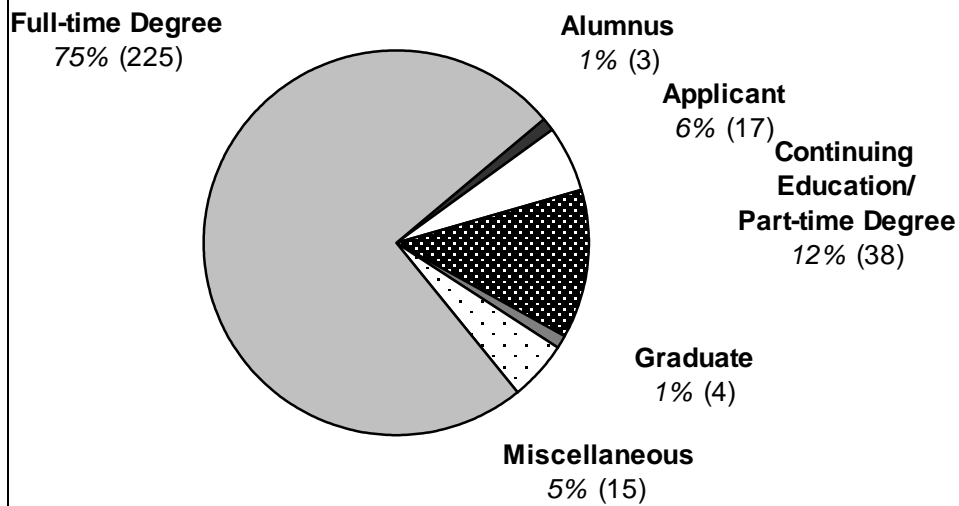
Respectfully submitted,

Nora Farrell, Ombudsperson

**Service Statistics: July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001**

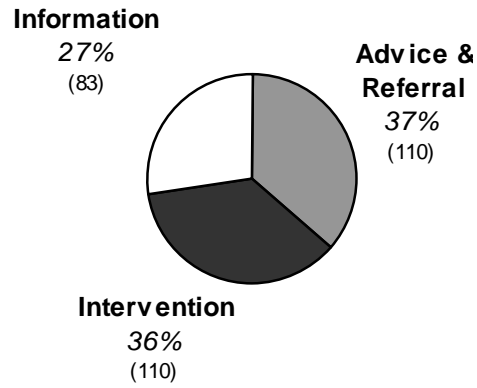
# Constituencies Served

*Office of the Ombudsperson, Ryerson University, 2000-2001*



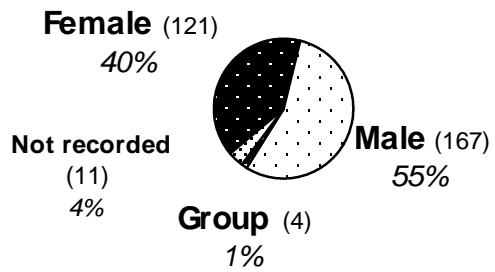
## Action Taken

Office of the Ombudsperson, Ryerson University, 2000-2001



## Clientele by Gender

Office of the Ombudsperson, Ryerson University, 2000-2001



**Table 1 – Types of Complaints Received ( in descending numeric order)**

Academic Appeals	58
Conduct – Instructor	44
Academic Standing	30
Admissions	24
Re-instatement/Re-admission	20
Conduct – Staff	18
Registration & Records	17
Curriculum Advising	13
Fees	13
Financial Aid	12
Academic Misconduct	09
Safety & Security	08
Outside of Jurisdiction	07
Student Conduct	07
Practicum/Placement	05
Requests for information	05
Transfer Credits	05
Residence	04
Student Unions/Associations	04
Total	303

**Table 2**  
Comparative Figures by Constituency Served

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>00'01 (12 months)</b>	<b>99'00 (12 months)</b>	<b>98'99 (12 months)</b>	<b>97'98 (12 months)</b>
Full-time degree	226	264	241	210
Part-time degree		17	18	14
Applicant	17	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Graduate students	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Continuing Education	38	52	44	49
Special Students		4	5	2
Alumni	3	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Miscellaneous	15	26	19	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>302</b>

Special Students: Students on letter of permission  
 Miscellaneous (97 - 00): Alumni and Admissions  
 Miscellaneous (00 - 01): Parents of students, university personnel, members of the general public

<b>Action Taken</b>	<b>00'01</b>	<b>99'00</b>	<b>98'99</b>	<b>97'98</b>
Information	110	15	18	21
Advice/Referral	83	227	213	199
Intervention	110	121	96	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>302</b>

Information: Providing information on policies and procedures  
 Advice/Referral: Providing information and discussing possible options with students  
 Intervention: Taking action, with the students' permission, to assist in some way to resolve the concern, e.g. clarifying information, facilitating, mediating, conducting investigations

**Table 3**  
Comparative Figures by Type of Concern Received

<b>Types of Concerns</b>	<b>00'01 303</b>	<b>99'00 363</b>	<b>98'99 327</b>	<b>97'98 302</b>
Academic Appeals - includes Academic Standing	88	96	77	70
<b>Academic Misconduct</b>	9			
Accessibility	0	7	9	13
Advanced Standing	0	2	6	3
Admissions	24	27	16	17
Athletics	0	7	0	0
Challenge Credits	0	4	3	6
<b>Conduct - Instructor</b>	44			
<b>Conduct - Staff</b>	18			
Course Requirements	0	15	0	12
<b>Curriculum Advising</b>	13			
Fees	13	32	38	35
Financial Aid	12	24	21	15
<b>Information Requests - no complaint</b>	5			
Late Withdrawals	0	3	4	0
Library	0	13	10	8
Non-Academic Complaints	Category Omitted	30	23	27
<b>Outside Jurisdiction</b>	7			
Pre-requisites	0	2	3	0



<b>Types &amp; Number of Concerns Raised</b>	<b>00'01 303</b>	<b>99'00 363</b>	<b>98'99 327</b>	<b>97'98 302</b>
<b>Practicum/ Placement</b>	5			
<b>Registration &amp; Records</b>	17			
Reinstatement /Re-admission	20	26	34	30
Residence	4	18	24	18
<b>Safety &amp; Security</b>	8			
<b>Student Unions/ Associations</b>	4			
Student Conduct	7	30	31	25
Team work	0	20	15	12
Transfer Credits	5	7	13	11

**Note: The categories which appear in bold print were added in the year 2000'01.**

## THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE TO THE OMBUDSPERSON'S FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT, 2000/01

It is unquestionable that any institution, especially an academic one, can only improve if there is a mechanism for problem solving. The Ombudsperson provides such a mechanism. The collegial approach to the reporting and discussion of problems which arise during the course of the year is greatly valued and respected.

This year there are eight recommendations arising from the Ombudsperson's report, all of them of an academic nature. Many of the recommendations deal with issues related to student success and retention, and the communication of information. The responses to each recommendation are as follow:

**Recommendation 1 - Advisors:** The need to give proper advice to students who find themselves on academic probation has been duly noted. This past summer a workshop was held to discuss probationary contracts and a standardized contract was developed. The Secretary of Academic Council has distributed this standard contract to all chairs and discussed it with them at chairs' meetings in conjunction with the revised appeals forms to which they are integrally related. All chairs seem to accept the new basic format, and it is anticipated that it will be used, in some form, by everyone. The new probationary contract requires that the courses to be taken are specified, and that specific Methods of Inquiry courses also be required as needed. Students are to be advised that they can not change the provisions of the contract without approval. It has been made clear to the departments that students must discuss the contracts with someone in the department, preferably a faculty member or trained departmental assistant. In addition, students who are given a conditional standing will now be contacted by their department and the departments will devise a system to work with these students, either individually or in groups, to help raise their standing.

The issue of ongoing advisement of students is pertinent to the issue of retention, and the Vice President, Academic will be raising this as an issue at an upcoming deans' meeting to determine ways in which it can be addressed.

**Recommendation 2 - Policies:** The policies of Academic Council are currently under review. They have been divided into three categories: archived policies (those which have been superceded by another policy); removed as a policy (those things which have been listed as policies, but are actually not policy); and current policies. All of the supposedly current policies have been referred for review to either standing committees of Academic Council or to other offices which are responsible for the policy.

Work is currently underway to revise the policies in several ways in order to make them more useful and usable.

- reformat policy so that it is separated from narrative reports, thus making the policy statement clear;
- separate the policy from the procedure and guidelines so that is possible to alter a procedure as needed without altering the policy;
- clearly state what office or committee is responsible for the enforcement and review of the policy;
- condense policies so that there is, for example, only one policy on promotions or course management or admissions. This will eliminate the large number of policies which exist in each area and those which only amend major policies;
- amend those policies which are out of date;

all policies will be rewritten and replaced in their entirety when they are amended.

In addition, the Secretary of Academic Council is working to establish a website for these policies which will be accessible from the Ryerson homepage. As they are revised, policies will be put on the site. As it develops, it may be possible to provide key word searches of these policies, but the new format will already make the use of policies a much easier task.

**Recommendation 3 - Student Handbooks:** The development of departmental handbooks will be discussed at the same dean's meeting at which the issue of advisement is discussed, as these are clearly related issues. Some guidance to departments on the development of such handbooks can be provided by the use of examples from existing handbooks.

**Recommendation 4 - Decision Making Standards:** Since, in many respects, all administration, faculty and staff at the University are decision makers, the way to best convey the standards of the University is through constant communication. The development of all of the above items, which will provide clarity of this information, is essential to this process. Means of communication within the community will be discussed further.

**Recommendation 5 - Response to Academic Misconduct:** The Student Code of Academic Conduct is currently under review with an eye toward making it more understandable to all members of the University community. Members of the Ombudsperson's Committee are assisting in this process. Once the new Code of Conduct is presented and is approved by Academic Council, its dissemination will be accompanied by discussion with the departments about faculty obligations in terms of confidentiality and enforcement.

**Recommendation 6 - Forms for Misconduct:** Appropriate forms can be developed as part of the current review process.

**Recommendation 7 - Course Management and Misconduct:** It is not clear that every course outline at the University needs to specify what is written in the Code of Academic Conduct. More importantly, students need to be made aware of the existence and content of the Code, and where it can be accessed. This can be done at orientations, through the departmental handbooks, and by the faculty in their course orientations on the first day of class.

**Recommendation 8 - Policy on Misconduct:** See Recommendation 7.

This report, including the comments on Planning for Success, will be passed on to the deans for discussion. All of these items are related, important to retention strategies and student success, and are worthy of discussion and action.

Dr. Errol Aspevig  
Vice President, Academic

November 20, 2001

