Why an Ombudsperson is Essential on Every Campus

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Goals for this Session

- Background information on Canadian HE and the lack of a national strategy or provincial legislation mandating a University Ombudsperson on all campuses
- Period of Growth of the University ombudsperson in Canada
- Professional Ombuds Associations in HE, ACCUO and International Links
- HE Ombuds Growth Internationally with examples of HE Ombuds-mandated legislation
- The DIALOGUE: What is our Future in HE Ombudsing in Canada? Why are We Valuable to HE? How do we Promote the Growth of the Ombuds in HE?

WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN COMMUNICATING OUR VALUE?
Background on Canadian Higher Education (HE)

- 387 HE Institutions (Universities - 40%, Colleges/technical - 60%)
- 87 universities and approx 60 colleges are accredited
- Canada is the only major industrialized country lacking a national integrated educational system; education delegated to provinces in 1867; 13 separate jurisdictions today
- No mandated ombuds position – individual institutional decision
- 26 % of universities and 5% of colleges have an ombudsperson
- 1st ombudsman was at Simon Fraser (1965) on a student initiative
- Today 40% of HE ombudspersons are funded jointly (SU-Univ)
Factors Influencing the Introduction of Ombuds in HE

- Movements of the 1960s on – Human Rights activism examples: Quiet Revolution Quebec; Women’s Movement; Gay Rights Movement; Aboriginal Rights Movement; Anti-Vietnam War Movement; Students Rights Movement; Anti-Capitalist Movement (Hippies); Student Rights Movement (Students for a Democratic Society – SDS/SDU - demand for representation on University committees and student rights to appeal unjust university decisions)

- University unrest examples: The “Computer Riot” at Sir George Williams University in 1969 (now Concordia, Montreal) over 400 students occupy the computer lab because of charges of racism toward black students; Kent State University Massacre (1970) - 4 students killed by Ohio national security guards while protesting the Vietnam War (many American students in Canada); FLQ Crisis (1970) FLQ rallied U de Montreal students to gain support to free FLQ prisoners; the Black Panthers (Fred Hampton) visited Western Canadian campuses in 1969

- Royal Commissions and Legislation: Status of Women; Human Rights Acts

- Provincial-legislated Ombudsman in Canada in the 1970s
1965 - 2015 Canadian HE Ombuds Growth

• 1965 Simon Fraser – our 1st Canadian Ombudsperson
• 1970s Carleton; Concordia; Dalhousie, Alberta*; UQAM; Western Ontario; Toronto; McMaster; Victoria; Algonquin C
• 1980s Laval; Manitoba*; Dawson; McGill; Lakehead; U de Montreal; New Brunswick; Windsor*; Brock; Douglas; Laurentian*; Waterloo
• 1990s Bishop; Camosun; Ecole Polyt. de Montreal; Fanshawe; Wilfred Laurier*; Athabasca; Ryerson; Seneca; Sherbrooke
• 2000s HEC Montreal; York; Mount Royal*; Confederation; UBC
• 2010 – Ottawa; Calgary; NAIT (2015)
Why so Few HE Ombuds in Canada

- No legislative requirement for publicly-funded institutions to have an ombudsperson
- Independence of Canadian HE institutions
- Funding constraints
- Nature and security of funding (independent vs dependent)
- Size of institution
- Isolation of the position and variation in Terms of Reference
- Misunderstood role in terms of its benefits to University community
- Closed or morphed to a different role (e.g., Student Advocacy)

HOW DO WE EDUCATE OUR HE COMMUNITY ON THE VALUE OF THE OMBUDS ROLE?
ACCUO/AOUCCC Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons

- A network of HE colleagues met for years in Canada and US (UCOA, CCCUO)
- ACCUO is formally established in 1983
- We are the 1st HE Ombuds group in NA
- Today’s Membership: 48 Members representing 32 institutions (25 Universities; 7 Colleges)
- 1970s – 1990s – highest growth period

- 50 YEARS ! HOW DO WE GROW THE CAMPUS OMBUDS?
ACCUO PROMOTES QUALITY HE OMBUDSING

- Standards of practice introduced in June 2012 – Impartiality; Confidentiality; Independence; Accessibility
- List: Serve for Members on Policy Questions related to Casework
- New Ombuds toolkit provides guidance to setting up a new ombuds mandate and running an ombuds office
- Frequent Questions and Answers
- Sample documents for Ombuds Work
- Compendium of best practices in fairness
- Compendium of Court cases

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE OUR SERVICES BETTER?
HE International Networks

USA 1973  – CCCUO California Caucus of College and University Ombuds (formal organization as of November 2014)
UCOA – 1984 - University and College Ombudsman Association (1984, changed to Ombuds in 1992) – then merged with TOA to form the International Ombudsman Association in 2005
EUROPE 2003  – ENOHE European Network of Ombudsmen in Higher Education
ACCUO & ENOHE hold joint conference in 2010
MEXICO 2005  – REDDU Red de defensores...de los derechos universitarios
SPAIN 2007  – CEDU Conferencia Estatal de Defensores Universitarios

OMBUDS NEED GLOBAL NETWORKS TO PROMOTE THEIR VALUE!
CEDU SPAIN: STRATEGIES FROM ABROAD

• CEDU Spain - 63 of the Universities in Spain out of 78 have Ombuspersons
• CEDU has 61 members
• Legislated in 2001- and adopted definition:

“To ensure respect for the rights and freedoms of teachers, students and administrative staff and services to the actions of the various bodies and non-university services, the universities established in the organizational structure of the University Ombudsman Figure. Their actions, aimed at improving university quality in all its areas, shall not be subject to any imperative mandate any university authority and come under the principles of independence and autonomy. It shall be the Articles set out the procedure for election or appointment, term of office and dedication, as well as its operation.” Spain http://www.cedu.es/
HE Ombuds Growing Internationally

- 2010 – REDDU – Mexico - First International Seminar on Human Rights in Higher Education
- 2011 – Austrian student ombudsman is enshrined in law
- 2011 – Australian law creates the Overseas Student Ombudsman
- 2012 – UNAM, Mexico granted UNESCO Chair for developing a model to establish University ombudsman in Latin America
- 2013 – National Ombudsman oversight for Ireland’s publicly-funded colleges and universities
At the 2014 ENOHE conference in Warsaw, there was a resolution to promote the university ombudsman in order to protect the rights of students and other members of the University community.

2014 – Warsaw Poland – The “Warsaw Resolution” promotes the establishment of university ombudspersons where they do not exist; this resolution was to be brought to The Bologna Ministerial Conference Yerevan, Armenia in 2015.
Is there a future plan?

- ACCUO Communications Plan
- Student Connections (CFS)
- Academic Connections (AUCC, ACCC, CAUT)
- Student Service Connections (CACUSS)
- Ministries of Education by Province/Territory
- Now your ideas
LET’S DIALOGUE ABOUT OUR FUTURE IN HE

- In your view, what is the most significant change you have made in your role as an ombudsperson on your campus?
- How do we promote and celebrate the value we bring to our campuses?
- What are the challenges we face in our profession?
- How do we support each other, nationally and internationally?
- What changes would you like to see in promoting the role of the ombudsperson in HE in Canada and throughout the world?
- What strategies have we learned across Canada and abroad?
WHERE WILL WE BE IN 2065?

- What is your vision of the HE Ombudsperson in 2065?
- How will we celebrate our 100\textsuperscript{th} birthday?
- Will we be the essential ombuds on every Canadian campus?

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?
Acknowledgements

This presentation draws from the following materials presented by Martine Conway and Kristin Robillard.


“Fifty years of ombudsing in Canadian College and Universities: reflections on the past and challenges for the future”, Kristin Robillard, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada ENOHE Conference Warsaw, Poland May 2014

Notation: * these ombuds offices have closed: Laurentian; Manitoba (closed twice; Windsor; Wilfred Laurier; Mount Royal; Alberta (closed and reopened); others have morphed to Student Advocate offices: Manitoba (before closing a second time, it opened a separate Student Advocate); New Brunswick; Waterloo.

Online sources:

- http://www.cedu.es/
- http://www.enohe.net/warsaw-resolution/
- http://chronicle.com/academicDestination/Canada/63/