

Annual Report of the Ombud
2004-2005
July 15, 2005

Personnel:

Vincent Rose, Ombud

Office:

Since the position of Assistant to the Ombud was not filled and the office was scheduled to be moved, the telephone message gave the telephone number and e-mail address of the Ombud. The Office now is scheduled to be relocated for the 2005-06 academic year.

Web page:

The web site <http://www.uri.edu/facsen/Ombud.html> has been kept up-to-date through the efforts of the Faculty Senate Office. The site emphasizes the purpose of the Ombud Office, lists the telephone number and the e-mail address of the Ombud. The site can be reached from the University home page as well as through the Faculty Senate and the Student Senate web sites.

Outreach:

Posters have been placed in various locations in the Memorial Union and in University College. Contact has been maintained with the Student Senate and the Graduate Student Association, the Office of Enrollment Services, Student Life, Counseling Center, Campus Ministry, Graduate School and various undergraduate deans' offices. Flyers were distributed in the student organization mailboxes. The Ombud has attended parent orientation sessions each summer. Flyers have been distributed to parents during these sessions.

The Ombud has served on the College of Engineering Diversity Committee. (For further information on the College of Engineering Diversity Committee activities see the web site <http://www.egr.uri.edu/diversity>.) The Ombud has been a participant in the USDE Change The Culture Grant. (For further information the Change the Culture web site is <http://www.uri.edu/ctc/>.) and has maintained contact with the Office of Disability Services. The Ombud serves as an ex officio member of the Academic Standards and Calendar Committee.

Cases:

Questions have been received from students, parents, faculty, administrators and outside groups. Many of the cases are raised and resolved via the Internet and by telephone. The majority of the problems have involved undergraduate students. Most of the solutions have involved informing people of the appropriate procedures and options. Meeting deadlines and timely submission of petitions would avoid many of the problems.

Housing continues to be an issue. One on-campus issue involved the duplication of keys and the key refund policy. For off-campus housing, it is important that students understand tenants' rights and responsibilities. All renters should have a signed lease. Sample leases, information on tenants' rights and responsibilities, Narragansett housing laws, and much more information are available on the URI Commuter Office website, www.uri.edu/commuter-housing.

Alleged cheating remains a problem. It is important that instructors address the issue of cheating, both in the syllabus and in instructions for class papers and projects. Any prohibition on the use of electronic equipment in exams should be spelled out clearly in written and verbal instructions. Clear directions and frequent communications are important, especially where the final papers are expected to be completed independently. Since these projects are teaching tools it also is important that the students be allowed to review the graded paper so that they can understand the grading process.

Grading continued to be a major issue. It is important that faculty indicate the method of grading in the course syllabus and adhere to the procedure outlined during the course of the semester (see section 8.52.10 of the University Manual). Students need to understand the course syllabi they receive, especially the grading and attendance policies. Methods for mediating disputes about grades have been developed in the colleges. However, in some cases, the appeal procedures that are posted on the college web sites are not readily apparent. In addition, better criteria for the use of NW and NR grades need to be developed and disseminated.

Problems with "PeopleSoft" programming and interpretation of University Policy have been the issue in several cases. These cases have been discussed with personnel in Enrollment Services. One issue related to non-

matriculating students will be referred to the Constitution, By-Laws and University Manual Committee by the Executive Committee.

Questions regarding appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities occasionally arise. Information on the process can be obtained from Disability Services. Students need to be evaluated by the URI Office of Disability Services so that an official letter can be sent to the appropriate faculty outlining the accommodations that are necessary. The faculty should not base their actions on what the student says on letters from other institutions or from parents or on their own feelings.

Timing:

Many of the cases reach the Ombud Office before or at the start of the semester (housing, appropriate registrations, course availability, prerequisite requirements, fees, student payroll, etc.) and, at the end of the semester (grades, dropping of course, cheating, academic standing, dismissal). Housing is an issue during the fall semester and admissions during the spring semester. Cases involving personal conflicts (student-student, teacher-student, administrative office-student) occur on a more random basis.

Future Plans:

Contacts will be maintained with the various student service offices.

Efforts will continue on codifying the procedure for appealing grades.

The Office of the Ombud is in the process, again, of being relocated. As soon as the office is relocated information will be available on the website.

A student assistant to the Ombud for 2005-06 will be selected in the near future.

Links:

- **Conflict Resolution:** <http://www.egr.uri.edu/diversity>
- **Disability Services:** <http://autocrat.uri.edu/index.php?id=815>
- **Graduate Student Manual:** <http://www.uri.edu/gsadmis/TOC.html>

- Ombud Home Page: <http://www.uri.edu/facsen/Ombud.html>
- Off Campus Housing: http://www.uri.edu/commuter_housing/
- Student Handbook: <http://www.uri.edu/judicial/>