

## Annual Report of the Ombud 2010-2011

### **Personnel:**

Vincent Rose, Ombud

### **Office:**

The Ombud was available for appointments in his office in Crawford Hall.

### **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 as well as pertinent sections of the University Manual and links to various offices. The site can be reached from the University home page as well as through the Faculty Senate web site. Procedures for conflict resolution are available under important links by clicking on conflict resolution.

### **Outreach:**

Contact has been made with the various offices. Flyers were distributed to student organizations and to the deans' offices. The Ombud has attended parent orientation sessions. Flyers have been available for parents during these sessions. The Ombud serves as an ex officio member of the Academic Standards and Calendar Committee and as a member of the College of Engineering Diversity 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 or 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.

Grading is 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). Any changes in these policies should be communicated to the students in writing by mid-semester so

students have an opportunity to drop the course. Students need to understand the course syllabi they receive, especially the grading and attendance policies. Since examinations and papers are teaching tools it also is important that the students be allowed to review the document in question so that they can understand the grading process.

The grade appeal procedures are given in University Manual Section 8.26.13. The student appeals to the instructor first, then, in writing, to the department chair. If the chair feels the case has merit it should be referred to a faculty appeals committee. In colleges where there are no departments or where the faculty has voted to use the college system the appeal goes to the dean and then a college faculty appeals committee. This procedure is different than the one for cheating and plagiarism.

Cheating and plagiarism are continuing problems at URI. URI policies are spelled out in the University Manual, the Student Handbook and the Graduate School Manual, all of which may be accessed through links on the Ombud web site. Information also is available on the URI Library web site <http://www.uri.edu/library/guides/subject/genref/plagiarism.html>. Since many students are unaware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism it is important that instructors address these issues, both in the syllabus and in instructions for class papers and projects. This information is especially important where group assignments are involved. Distinctions between group and individual work should be spelled out clearly in written and verbal instructions. Clear directions and frequent communications are important, especially when the work is expected to be completed independently. If cheating is suspected, faculty should discuss their concerns with the student and then, if appropriate, follow the procedures in the University Manual Sections 8.27.17-19. Basically failure in an assignment is reported to the student's dean and is appealable to the instructor's dean. The dean's decision shall be made in a timely manner and is final. If additional action is deemed appropriate a recommendation is made to the instructor's dean for approval to fail the student in the course. The dean's decision is appealable by the student or instructor to the Provost, whose action is final. The instructor or dean may refer the case to the student judicial system. Those procedures are covered in University Manual Sections 9.21.10-31.

Interpretation of University Policy has been the issue. These cases have been discussed with appropriate deans.

#### **Future Plans:**

Contacts will be maintained with the various offices and student organizations.

Efforts will continue to make people aware of the procedures for appealing grades as well as issues involved in academic integrity. It is important that everyone is aware of the differences in the appeal procedures for cheating and plagiarism and for those appealing a grade.