

## Faculty Ombudsperson's Report: May 2007 through April 2008

The Office of the Faculty Ombudsperson is intended to enhance the work of the faculty and the mission of the University by providing support and assistance to faculty. It endeavors to insure that faculty members are treated fairly and equitably. The Office maintains standards of confidentiality, impartiality, independence and informality. The Ombudsperson serves as a resource for communication, problem solving, dispute resolution and referral.

This report covers the general activities of the Office during its second year, from May, 2007 through April, 2008. It offers statistics, an overview of the types of issues and problems presented, and observations.

This year was the second and final year of the pilot program initiated by the President and the Faculty Executive Committee. In the fall semester, the FEC conducted a review and evaluation, submitted to the President, about the operations and effectiveness of the Office. This review resulted in a decision to make the Office permanent, as reported to the Faculty by the FEC at the February, 2008 meeting of the Faculty.

### Statistics (see addendum)

40 faculty members utilized the Ombudsperson's Office during the last twelve months. There were a total of 59 contacts. Of that number of faculty "visitors", 10 had had contact with the Office the previous year and 30 were new "visitors". Most contacts were in person, some were by phone and a few consisted only of e-mail exchanges.

In the first twelve months of the Office's establishment, 32 faculty had used the Office, so the usage rose this year by over 20%. About equal numbers of male and female faculty contacted the Office, though more of the new visitors were male. One faculty person of color had contact with the Office this year.

In this second year, in contrast to the first year, more of the faculty consulting the Office were from those departments reporting to the Dean of the Faculty than from those in the Division of Biology and Medicine. Most were tenured. Several Chairs sought out the Office about concerns affecting their departments and faculty.

### Reasons for contact and concerns presented

Faculty presented a wide range of concerns and issues. Many involved dynamics within their departments. Many others had to do with personal/professional issues. Some were clearly about conflicts or tensions. Others reflected professional development issues. A number of faculty sought information about policies and procedures and/or help with decision making and planning. Faculty members seeking information about policies and procedures often wanted the privacy and confidentiality the Ombudsperson's Office affords until they were ready to discuss the matter with their Chair and/or the appropriate Dean.

Faculty issues about tenure and promotion ranged from junior faculty responses to reappointment reviews to Associate Professors' concerns about promotion processes, especially given departmental dynamics and support. Other issues presented included planning and decision making around grants, sabbaticals and teaching relief, as well as concerns about salary equity, support for research and professional development, and departmental standing. Chairs most often sought a sounding board for dealing with departmental dynamics or concerns about faculty members.

Although the range of topics and problems presented by the faculty do not indicate clear trends, there are two aspects of the faculty experience that seem to characterize the life of most faculty. One is time pressure. Faculty always seem pressed for time. This dynamic impacts the work of the Ombudsperson's Office. Often faculty do not make the time to contact the Office until a problem has progressed further than it might have. Then when faculty do contact the Office, they expect quick solutions and may not feel they can devote the time necessary to producing real change. This is especially apparent when the concerns presented involve long standing interpersonal or departmental dynamics that require significant time and effort if change is to be effected. Faculty also seem reluctant to choose options that involve risk. There is a general wariness about coming forward with concerns in general and, more specifically, about inappropriate behavior or dynamics. Such wariness characterizes faculty in all ranks. It is fueled by fear about the consequences of taking action.

#### Other activities

This year I continued to advertise the presence of the Office and its services, as well as to develop and maintain contact with key administrators and administrative offices. I have also attended faculty meetings, talk back sessions, and forums, as well as other meetings of the faculty, and junior faculty lunches and other events at the Sheridan Center, as appropriate. Two committees of the faculty, the Grievance Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee, invited me to meet with them this year.

I participated in a workshop for department chairs and program/center directors on conflict management, offered through Human Resources. I plan to offer a workshop for faculty on negotiation soon after the end of the academic year.

For professional development and collegial association, I attended the annual meeting of the International Ombudsman Association as well as two gatherings of the East Coast Ombuds Group. I also completed a mediation training workshop.

#### Observations

The Faculty Ombudsperson's Office represents a systemic change at Brown. The following indicate that the Office is filling an important set of needs: the increase in the number of faculty using the Office this year, including those who continued to use it; the percentage of faculty seeking out the Office which is at or above the average among Ombuds Offices; the outcome of the FEC review; and the decision to make the Office permanent. Faculty seem both to be aware of the Office and are making use of it. Such awareness and range of use, however, are also still developing. I have had conversations with faculty members outside the Office in which I have suggested ways in which the Office might serve them that they had not considered or been aware of. I have also offered on numerous occasions to be available to departments or groups of faculty to help them work through transitions, conflicts or difficult dynamics. Thus far, few have expressed interest in such services. Hopefully, that will change as the Office becomes more woven into the fabric of the University.

It is important that the Office continue to work with and be supported by the Faculty Executive Committee and the appropriate Deans and other administrators, especially in promoting the Office as a resource for faculty. I have appreciated their support and contributions this year, as well as their commitment to enhancing the life of the faculty.

Respectfully submitted,  
Flora A. Keshgegian  
Faculty Ombudsperson  
April 29, 2008

Addendum: Statistics for May, 2007 through April, 2008

|                               |           |                            |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| # of faculty utilizing office | New<br>30 | Continuing/recurring<br>10 |
| # of contacts                 | 38        | 21                         |
| in person                     | 21        | 14                         |
| phone consultation            | 13        | 4                          |
| e-mail request only           | 2         |                            |
| e-mail consultation           |           | 2                          |
| consults w/other offices      | 2         | 1                          |
| <br><u>Gender:</u>            |           |                            |
| male                          | 18        | 1                          |
| female                        | 12        | 9                          |
| <br><u>Race/ethnicity:</u>    |           |                            |
| White                         |           |                            |
| male                          | 16        |                            |
| female                        | 12        | 9                          |
| African American              |           |                            |
| male                          |           |                            |
| female                        |           |                            |
| Asian/Asian American          |           |                            |
| male                          |           | 1                          |
| female                        |           |                            |
| Hispanic                      |           |                            |
| male                          |           |                            |
| female                        |           |                            |
| Bi/multi-racial/other/unknown |           |                            |
| male                          | 1         |                            |
| female                        |           |                            |
| <br><u>Area:</u>              |           |                            |
| Dean of Faculty               | 23        | 6                          |
| Biology and Medicine          | 7         | 4                          |

Rank/standing:

|                                |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Professor                      | 7 | 3 |
| Associate Professor            | 8 | 2 |
| Assistant Professor            | 3 | 4 |
| Adjunct Professor (Research)   |   |   |
| Associate Professor (Research) | 1 |   |
| Assistant Professor (Research) | 2 |   |
| Visiting Asst. Prof.           | 1 |   |
| Lecturer/Senior Lecturer       | 2 |   |
| Other (emeritus, unknown)      | 1 |   |
| Chair                          | 5 | 1 |