

## FROM THE OMBUDS OFFICE

# DID YOU KNOW?

<http://www.uvss.uvic.ca/ombudsperson>

- The ombuds office is an independent, confidential and impartial resource for UVic students, faculty and staff, focused on student fairness issues.
- The ombuds office was created 30 years ago, in May 1978, after a 6-week pilot project by the Alma Mater Society (today UVSS). The first ombuds were graduate or senior undergraduate students operating on a part-time basis.
- The office became a professional office in 1983. It now operates full-time with funding from undergraduate and graduate students and a grant from the university administration. The ombuds reports to an advisory committee with representation from students, staff, faculty and the university administration.
- The office receives over 400 student inquiries or complaints per year, as well as questions from faculty and staff on student-related issues and procedures.
- The majority of students who visit the office about an academic issue are dealing with it at the instructor or chair/director level: a consultation with the ombuds provides tools and coaching for communication, dispute resolution and the effective use of appeal procedures.
- The ombuds provides an impartial perspective on individual cases or on systemic questions. Over the years, the ombuds has made recommendations regarding: grade review procedures, grading practices, exam invigilation, fee reduction appeals, due process in cheating and plagiarism cases, privacy, and the academic concession process.
- The ombuds is active on campus committees and participates in policy and procedure development. In the 80s and 90s, ombuds activities contributed to greater awareness about sexual harassment, behaviour and human rights issues, and the need for services for specific student populations. More recently, the ombuds has worked on issues of mental health, and accommodation and access for students with a disability.
- Ombuds have contributed to the development of academic ombudsing in Canada and beyond by acting as a resource to new ombuds offices, by publishing in the peer-reviewed California Caucus Journal and by assuming leadership roles in ombuds associations. The current ombuds received the Pete Small award in 2006, for her contributions to the ombuds profession.
- After leaving the office, past ombuds went on to law practice, provincial ombuds offices, senior positions in the BC civil service, careers in education, the Baptist church, administration, and private practice. Some are still connected to UVic as a consultant, donor, administrator or member of an advisory board.
- **The office is working on a history and archive project. It will mark its 30th anniversary in the fall. Watch for an announcement in September.**

If you have been a member of the Ombuds Advisory Committee or if you have some information about the history of the office, please contact Martine Conway at [ombuddy@uvic.ca](mailto:ombuddy@uvic.ca), (250) 721-8357 or Room SUB B205.