



TO: Members of the Governing Council

SPONSOR: John F. (Jack) Petch, Vice-Chair of the Governing Council

DATE: December 7, 2006 for December 14, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 9

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Report of the Committee to Review the Office of the University Ombudsperson, 2006

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Under the *Terms of Reference for the Office of the Ombudsperson* (2001), a review of the Office is required at the end of the incumbent's term, in a manner to be determined by the Executive Committee of the Governing Council.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

A first draft of the review Committee's report was considered by the Executive Committee on June 15, 2006. The final report (enclosed) was received by the Executive Committee on November 23, 2006, and the recommendations contained therein were endorsed and forwarded to the Governing Council for approval.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Review Committee's recommendations include:

- The Governing Council's reaffirmation of the very significant role of the Ombudsperson. That Office helps the University to protect the rights of its members, to fulfill its obligations to them, and generally to achieve its mission.
- The Ombudsperson's personal focus on (a) complex cases that require active intervention, and on (b) the identification of areas where policies and procedures might need review. The appointment of a case officer to provide information and referrals – the service provided by the Office of the Ombudsperson in more than half of its cases in recent years.
- The preparation of a new staffing and budget plan for the Office by the President (or designate), and the Secretary of the Governing Council, for presentation to the Executive Committee, to enable the implementation of the recommendation above.
- An additional written report to the Executive Committee to be made early in the governance cycle (additional to the annual report and any special reports required by the Executive Committee) to facilitate any necessary review of policies or their implementation.

- Steps to enhance the awareness of members of the University of the availability of the Ombudsperson's Office, both in general and on the UTM and UTSC campuses particularly.
- Revised terms of reference for the Office.

The Committee is now beginning preliminary work on the second half of its mandate: the search for a new University Ombudsperson.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS: n/a

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT the following recommendations contained in the Report of the Committee on the Office of the University Ombudsperson, 2006, be approved:

1. THAT the Governing Council reaffirm the importance of the role of an independent and impartial University Ombudsperson in assisting the University in protecting the rights of its students, faculty and staff, in fulfilling the University's obligations to its students, faculty and staff, and in achieving its mission to be an internationally leading public teaching and research university that provides an outstanding experience for its students.
2. THAT the Ombudsperson, in work to assist members of the University, concentrate her/his personal efforts (a) on complex cases and (b) on reviewing the effect of University policies and procedures and their implementation, making recommendations for review of those policies and procedures where appropriate.
3. THAT the President (or his designate) and the Secretary of the Governing Council develop a staffing and budget plan for the Office of the Ombudsperson for presentation to the Executive Committee of the Governing Council and that this plan inform the search for a new Ombudsperson.

That plan will enable the Ombudsperson's Office to engage a case officer to provide information and referrals, and in that way enable the Ombudsperson to carry out recommendation 2 above.

That plan will also ensure that the services of the Office of the Ombudsperson are available on each campus of the University on a reasonable basis.

4. To facilitate the work of the Ombudsperson, especially her/his work in recommending the timely review of policies and procedures,

THAT in addition to the Annual Report and such other special reports as may be required from time to time by the Executive Committee on behalf of the Governing Council, the Ombudsperson make a general written interim report to the Executive Committee in the early part of the annual governance cycle.

5. (a) THAT, in consultation with the Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost, Students, the Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity, and appropriate faculty, staff and student leaders, the Ombudsperson (i) develop a plan for enhancing the awareness of members of the University of the availability of the services of the Ombudsperson's Office and (ii) monitor the effectiveness of that plan on an on-going basis and take any appropriate steps to improve it.

(b) THAT, in consultation with the Vice-President and Principal of the University of Toronto at Mississauga, the Vice-President and Principal of the University of Toronto at Scarborough (or their designates), and in consultation with appropriate faculty, staff and student leaders on those campuses, the Ombudsperson: (i) develop a plan to improve the visibility of the services of the Ombudsperson's Office at the University of Toronto at Mississauga and at the University of Toronto at Scarborough, and (ii) monitor the effectiveness of that plan on an on-going basis and take any appropriate steps to improve it.

(c) THAT, to enhance the awareness of members of the University of the availability of the Ombudsperson's Office, the President (or his designate) seek to identify a new, more central and visible location for the Office of the Ombudsperson.
6. THAT the Vice-President and Provost, the Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity, the Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost, Students or their designates and the Ombudsperson develop a plan to improve access and utilization of the information available to members of the University on how to pursue concerns they might have with respect to their treatment by University authorities before they involve the Office of the Ombudsperson.
7. THAT the proposed revised Terms of Reference for the Office of the University Ombudsperson be approved in principle, subject to further consultation and consideration, particularly with respect to s. 6 (files); and

THAT the Executive Committee be authorized to approve amendments to that section as well as minor amendments to the other sections that are consistent with their overall direction.
8. THAT, based on the recommendations above, including the revised Terms of Reference for the Office of the University Ombudsperson, the Committee commence the next phase of its work: the search for the University Ombudsperson. As the search continues it will be informed by the staffing and budget plan that will be developed.