

Administration's Response to Recommendations in the *Report of the University Ombudsperson, July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002*

General Comments

We are pleased to see that the Ombudsperson is observing a decline in complaints received. The Provost's office has appreciated the guidance offered in previous reports by the Ombudsperson. In the past year we have significantly improved our training of academic administrators, as well as support for them, in order to assure appropriate implementation of policies and procedures. In March 2002 the Provost and the Vice-President, Human Resources, jointly created a new position for a Senior Employment Legal Advisor, who provides support centrally and to the Divisions, to improve our practices.

Recommendation 1(a): That the Administration review the University's current "Guidelines for Academic Appeals Within Divisions" with a view to facilitating the alignment of divisional process, and provide University-wide circulation of any such revised Guidelines to remind Divisions of their responsibility in helping to ensure consistent academic advising and timely procedure and practice with respect to the disposition of formal petitions and appeals of petition denials;

Response: The Vice-Provost, Faculty and legal counsel will work with the Judicial Affairs Officer to determine whether a formal review of the Guidelines will be required. We are also planning workshops and the preparation of support materials for Divisions to ensure consistency in administration of procedures.

Recommendation 1(b): That, as part of its review of the current "Guidelines for Academic Appeals Within Divisions," the Administration conduct an analysis of current requirements and projected needs, in light of the expected enrollment expansion, with respect to resources/personnel involved, University-wide, in academic counseling related to the preparation of petitions/appeals, and in the administration of formal petitions and academic appeals.

Response: The Academic Divisions regularly review support for such activities and effort is being taken to ensure that service levels are maintained or improved during enrollment expansion.

Recommendation 2: That the Administration consider a model similar to the Study Abroad Advisor, in terms of helping to ensure consistent University-wide practice in the implementation of the Policy for Safety in Field Research, as it applies to the University's graduate programs in which field research activities could involve serious health, safety and/or emergency concerns.

Response: The Provost's Office will convene a group of the relevant stakeholders, to include members from Research and International Relations, the Office of the Vice-

Provost, Students, the School of Graduate Studies, Environmental Health and Safety, and Risk Management and Insurance. The group will discuss ways in which our obligations can be met.

Recommendation 3: that, for the purposes of this year's Administrative Response to my Annual Report, the Administration provide the Governing Council and the University community with an update regarding the review and approval process for the revised Policy, Procedures and Terms and conditions for Appointment for Research Associates (Limited Term) and Senior Research Associates.

Response: The draft policy has been circulated to Research Associates for comment. It will then be reviewed in final form by the Administration and taken to Governance. Unless there are significant concerns during the consultation, we anticipate this process will be completed this academic year.

Recommendation 4: That, for the purposes of this year's Administrative Response to my Annual Report, the Administration provide the Governing Council and the University community with an update regarding the deliberations of its Task Force on Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response.

Response: The Task Force chaired by the Vice-Provost Students, has met several times, and staff are now preparing a draft policy and draft model for consideration by the senior academic administration. The administration aims to bring forward both the policy and a plan for ensuring familiarity for all senior decision-makers in the new year.

Recommendation 5: That Academic Divisions be made aware/reminded of their responsibilities given the current legislative and policy framework regarding students with disabilities, and that they be encouraged to consult the expertise of the membership of the Equity Issues Advisory Group in terms of presentations/seminars and printed communication materials for Division/Department Heads, Chairs, Directors, and other academic, administrative and student community members. This recommendation particularly applies to consulting, on an ongoing basis, the expertise of the Directors of Accessibility Services at all three campuses as the legislative framework for individuals with disabilities undergoes change, and as the Ontario Human Rights Commission increases its focus on the issues of accommodation and accessibility for individuals with disabilities within the province's educational institutions.

Response: The lead role in responding to the new obligations under the Ontarians with Disability Act (ODA) is being taken by the Vice-President of Human Resources, Angela Hildyard. Several initiatives are already under way, including work on barrier-free construction and elimination of physical barriers through the Accommodation Facilities Directorate standing committee on barrier-free access. Professor Hildyard is leading the staging of a major conference on equity on campus in March 2003.

Recommendation 6: That, since the revised Code of Student conduct is now in place as of July 2002, the Administration move forward with its planned review of the “Appropriate Use of Information Technology” guidelines in order to clarify for members of the University community the most appropriate process and procedures in addressing situation involving information technology-based harassment and/or disruption.

Response: The Academic Advisory Committee has struck a working group to review the guidelines and make suggestions for revisions. Student Affairs, in the Vice-Provost Students area, will work with this group to ensure the revisions are appropriate within the context of computer use in residences and student use for co-curricular activities. Once AAC has approved the revisions they will be forwarded to CMB for approval and system administrators will be notified. The revised guidelines are expected to be complete within this academic year.

Recommendation 7(a): That, for the purposes of the Administrative Response to this year’s Annual Report, the Administration provide an update to the Governing Council and the university community, on the status of, and timeframe for, its planned review of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters;

Response: The Vice-Provost, Faculty and legal counsel will work with the Judicial Affairs Officer to determine the timing of a review of the Code and to propose a process. While the Administration is hopeful it can get to this task in this academic year, there are many competing priorities. Presently, we are also planning workshops and the preparation of support materials for Divisions to ensure consistency in administration of procedures.

Recommendation 7(b): That, in view of the increasing number of academic misconduct cases, the Administration, as part of its review of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, consider the adequacy of current resources in terms of personnel, University-wide, who are involved in prevention-focused education of the general student population about Code offences, as well as in the administration of the Code up to, and including, the proceedings of the Discipline Appeals Board.

Response: The Academic Divisions regularly review support for such activities and effort is being taken to ensure that service levels are maintained or improved during enrollment expansion.